

Issue No. 135

Still \$5.49

TOP 40 RADIO JINGLES

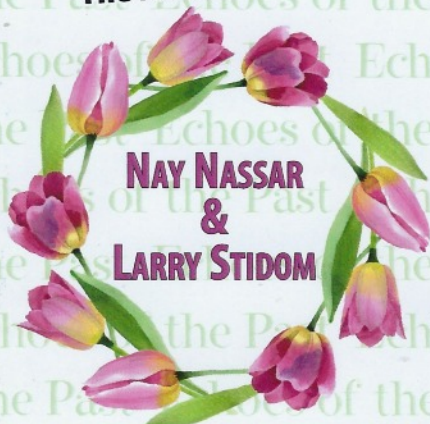
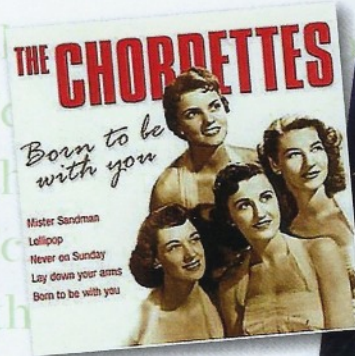
ECHOES OF THE PAST



The Tren-Teens



The Modern Red Caps



Fast Cars and Drive-Ins

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Gerald "Twig" Smith

The Sapphires, Modern Red Caps and much more

By Charlie Horner
with contributions from Pamela Horner

The Philadelphia area may have five million people but when you study the city's R&B music history certain names keep popping up again and again. I first heard the name Gerald "Twig" Smith in the 1970's, when interviewing George Tindley of the Dreams and Modern Red Caps. Twig's name came up again when I interviewed Larry Williams and Fred Cohen of Teddy & the Twilights and again when I talked to George Grant of the Castelles and Modern Red Caps. So, I was amazed to learn that, in addition to being a successful jazz and session guitarist, Gerald was a founding member of the Sapphires.

The Sapphires on the *Swan* label

It's incredible that in this age, a vocal group like the Sapphires who released an album and ten singles, one of which reached #25 on the Pop and R&B Charts, has never had their complete story told in print. It's even more surprising that what little is reported about the group, refers to only their final years as a trio. Ignored is the fact that the group reached their biggest success as a quartet. Such has been the fate of the Sapphires, the group that scored with hits like, "Who Do You Love" and "Got To Have Your Love." This article aims to correct the printed record.

To understand the beginnings of the Sapphires, we need to start with Gerald Smith. Gerald Twig Smith began playing guitar at a young age. "My mom, Mary Smith, started me into playing," recalled Twig. "I was born in the 1040's and both my parents danced professionally. My father was on the road a lot and left my mother to raise us. My mother had been the better dancer. I found out that in one of the troupes that she danced with, she played a ukulele. She got me started on guitar and the rest is history. After playing from 1956 to 1970, I decided to take formal lessons and I'm glad that I did. I studied orchestration, harmony & theory and composition at the Professional Music Studio in Philadelphia. I also studied with local jazz guitarists Thornel Schwartz and Eddie McFadden."



Gerald Twig Smith

Even before he began playing guitar, Twig began harmonizing with some of the many young street corner vocal groups near his South Philadelphia home. "The group that would become the Sapphires morphed into existence from several other neighborhood groups," said Twig. "It had several different names. At first it was the Lyrics and then we became the Persians. Then the name changed to something else and something else after that. Eventually we became the Sapphires."

"We were always just singing doo wop on the corners," recalled Twig. "We would have big singing competitions in South Philly with the guys competing against one another and a bunch of girls standing around, oohing and aahing."

"There was a point where the group was falling apart because guys were going into the military, either being drafted or enlisting," Twig added. "We were missing what we needed to go forward."

"One of our members, George Garner brought Joe Livingston into the group. And then we added Caroline Jackson. Later, her married name became Carol Canty. She was my wife's sister."

Joe Livingston had previously sung with the Pheasants who'd recorded "Out Of The Mist" on the *Throne* label a year earlier. Other members of the Pheasants were Ted Weems (a former member of Lee Andrews & the Hearts) along with Ted's wife and Arnold Edwards. The Pheasants' recordings were produced by Bobby Eli and two sides were released in 1963 while Joe was with the Sapphires.

So, the Sapphires finalized their line up as Caroline Jackson, Gerald Twig Smith, George Garner and Joseph Livingston. All the while, Twig was writing songs, playing recording sessions and performing as the guitarist for the group Teddy & the Twilights. Twig played guitar on Teddy & the Twilights' "Woman Is A Man's Best Friend" and its flip side, "Goodbye To Love" (*Swan* 4102). He also wrote the song "Goodbye To Love." [The complete story of Teddy & the Twilights can be found in *Echoes of the Past* #96, also available at classicurbanharmony.net]

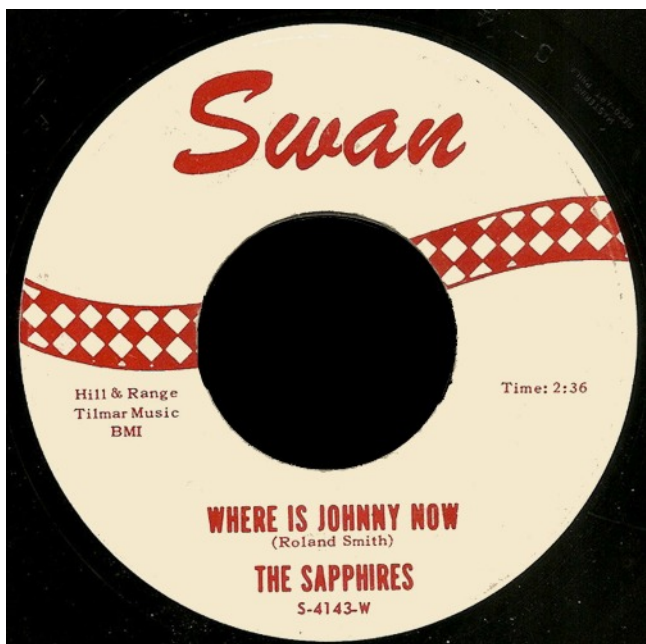
Swan hired Twig to play guitar on Freddy Cannon's 1962 mega-hit record, "Palisades Park." [The amusement park sounds were taped at Palisades Park and overdubbed later.] "I was so green I don't even know how I got the session down," remembered Twig. "They put sheet music in front of me, but I couldn't read music at that time. I just prayed that what I was playing worked, and it did. They paid me \$25 for the session and I thought I was rich. Those were early days. I was still wet behind the ears."



The Sapphires. Clockwise from top:
Joe Livingston, Gerald Twig Smith
Carolyn Jackson, George Garner
Courtesy of Funkadelphia Record Dist

By 1963, the Sapphires were rehearsing on the top floor of the Shubert Theatre on South Broad Street. There in the Shubert Theatre, they met Jerry Ross.

Philadelphia native Jerry Ross had started as an announcer on radio station WFIL, replacing Dick Clark who had moved up to host TV's "Bandstand." From there Ross became an announcer on "Bandstand." Then he moved into the music business, founding the record labels *Sheryl* and *Heritage*. At that point, Jerry Ross' biggest success had been with the North Philadelphia group, the Dreamlovers whose song, "When We Get Married" reached #10 on the *Billboard* charts. By 1963, Ross had signed a deal with *Swan Records* to produce a number of records for them, including sides by the Dreamlovers and *Swan* artist Freddy Cannon. At the time, Jerry Ross' team included arranger and guitarist Joe Renzetti and a young songwriter Ross was mentoring named Kenny Gamble. Ross often used musicians Leon Huff, Thom Bell, Bobby Eli and Bobby Martin on his tracks.



The Sapphires first record,
"Where Is Johnny Now,"
Written by Gerald Twig Smith

After hearing the Sapphires rehearsing, Jerry Ross signed the group and scheduled their first recording session. In late spring, 1963, Ross took the Sap-

phires to Frank Virtue's Studios on Broad Street where they recorded two medium tempo songs, "Where Is Johnny Now" and "Your True Love." "Where Is Johnny Now" was written by Twig under the pen name, Roland Smith. At the time, Gerald was a member of both ASCAP and BMI. Since he'd been writing as Gerald Smith for ASCAP, he chose Roland Smith for BMI compositions. "Your True Love" is credited to Roland Smith and Carol Jackson. Twig didn't play on many of the Sapphires sessions because by that time Joe Renzetti was doing arranging and was a more experienced guitarist.

"Where Is Johnny Now" didn't chart nationally but did well enough locally that Jerry Ross turned the group over to Kenny Gamble and Joe Renzetti for the next release. Gamble and Ross composed the A-side, a haunting ballad called "Who Do You Love." It was paired with another of Twig's compositions, "Oh So Soon." "Who Do You Love" began taking off immediately.

The Sapphires were added to a show running at North Philadelphia's Uptown Theatre produced by WDAS disc jockey, Georgie Woods. Also on the bill were Shep & the Limelites, the Crystals, the Marvels, the Diplomats, Walter Jackson, Billy Mashburn, comedian Flip Wilson and King Curtis' Band.



The show began December 26 and ran through New Years Day.

"Who Do You Love" hit the national music charts on January 11, 1964 and stayed there for 12 straight weeks, reaching #25 on Billboard's Hot 100 Charts. To give an idea of how big the record was, copies were also pressed in numerous other countries, including France, Italy, Sweden and elsewhere.

After a chance meeting of George Tindley at a West Philadelphia Theatre early in 1964, Twig decided to leave the Sapphires and join the Modern Red Caps. [More on this later in the article.] He informed the Sapphires of his decision but agreed to continue performing with them for the next couple months while the Modern Red Caps were in rehearsals.

Realizing Twig would soon be out of the group, Jerry Ross began the process of reinventing the Sapphires as a trio, publicity wise. Promotional photos of the quartet were pulled back and replaced with those of the three remaining members. All the while, Twig continued performing and recording with the group.

In March, the Sapphires were part of a huge Easter week holiday show at the New York Paramount Theatre. Staged by the radio station WMCA Good Guys, the show featured Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, Bobby Rydell, James Brown, the Four Seasons, Lesley Gore, Ruby & the Romantics, Diane Renay, the Devotions, Dean & Jean, Rufus Thomas, Terry Stafford, Chris Crosby, the American Beetles, King Curtis and of course, the Sapphires. "They picked us up in limousines," recalled Twig. "We were intro-

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"BASHFUL ELEPHANT" & Cartoons
Eve. All New! 2 Terrifying Thrillers
BATTLE OF THE WORLDS
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"ATOM AGE VAMPIRE"
STARTS THURSDAY FOR 7 DAYS
ON STAGE IN PERSON
GEORGIE WOODS
WDAS Presents
SHEP AND THE LIMELITES KIRK CURTIS
THE CRYSTALS
FLIP WILSON THE MAR-VELS THE DIPLOMATS
BILLY MASHBURN WALTER JACKSON THE SAPPHIRES
KING CURTIS & HIS BAND

Cashbox ad for "Who Do You Love"
 Courtesy of Funkadelphia Record Dist

duced to everyone on the show. We were thrilled because we thought we were stars."

Returning to Philadelphia, the Sapphires opened for Gloria Lynn and organist Jimmy Smith at the Uptown Theatre. Also on the show were the Jerome Richardson Quintet and comedian Richard Pryor. The show was emceed by WDAS radio personality Del Shields. The Sapphires played numerous other venues including the Steel Pier in Atlantic City.

The spring of 1964 saw *Swan Records* release of a Sapphires album. Twig wrote or co-wrote five of the twelve cuts on the album and sang on most of them. In fact, he is the lead singer on "Forever And Ever." In spite of that he is not in the cover photograph and is not mentioned in the liner notes as being in the group. At the same time *Swan* released a single off of the album, "I Found Out Too Late" b/w "I've Got Mine You Better Get Yours." Both were Kenny Gamble and Jerry Ross compositions. By then Twig had moved on to tour with the Modern Red Caps.

The Sapphires on ABC Paramount

Swan Records would release one more Sapphires record, "Gotta Be More Than Friends" b/w "Moulin Rouge (Where Is Your Heart)." "Gotta Be More Than Friends" was co-written by Twig.

The Sapphires releases on *Swan Records* coincided with the British Invasion. While American record labels fought over the rights to the Beatles songs. *Swan* did have the rights to "She Loves You" which it saw as a way to financial solvency. Unfortunately *Swan's* other artists suffered as *Swan* put most of their promotional dollars into the Beatles record. Jerry Ross was not tied to *Swan* and soon took the Sapphires to *ABC Paramount Records*.

Over the next two years, the Sapphires had six releases for *ABC Paramount*. At *ABC*, the production team of Gamble, Ross & Renzetti experimented with different backgrounds, often augmenting the trio with background backup from singers like Nick Ashford, Valerie Simpson, Melba Moore plus Kenny Gamble and Thom Bell.

The Sapphires on *ABC Paramount* released several sides that are now highly prized in the Northern Soul genre, including "Evil One," "Gonna Be A Big Thing" and "The Slow Fizz."

The only one of their *ABC Paramount* records to chart was "Gotta Have Your Love," which reached # 33 on the R&B charts and # 77 on the Pop charts.

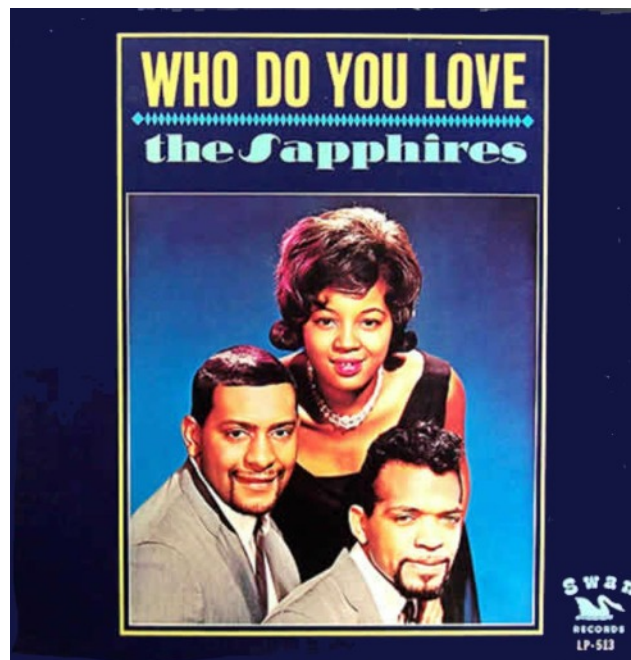
Some time after 1966, the Sapphires broke up as a group. Caroline Jackson Canty, George Garner and Joe Livingston are now no longer with us.

The Modern Red Caps

Returning to early in 1964, while still with the Sapphires, Twig appeared on a talent contest at the State Theatre on South 52nd Street in Philadelphia. There he performed against future "Sound of Philadelphia" guitarist, Norman Harris.

"Somebody dared me to go on this talent contest and I did," recalled Twig. "I played guitar and was pitted against Norman Harris. He won."

The talent contest preceded a regular show that happened to feature George Tindley. George Tindley had already established himself in the music business, having led the vocal groups, the Dreams before joining Steve Gibson's Red Caps in 1957. In late 1961, Tindley split with Gibson's group and



formed his own Modern Red Caps. [The complete story of the Dreams can be found in Bob Bosco's *Echoes of the Past* issue #71 article and also www.uncamarvy.com/Dreams/dreams.html].

The complete Modern Red Caps story can be read at www.uncamarvy.com/RedCaps/redcaps.html.

By then, George Tindley had dissolved his first Modern Red Caps and was assembling a new Modern Red Caps group.

"George was standing in the room watching me play," remembered Twig. "He introduced himself to me. George said he had a bandleader already but didn't think the guy was versed enough to really handle some of that music that George wanted to sing. When he met me at the State Theatre, George took a liking to me because I was playing more towards what he wanted. So George took me to meet his group. He fired the other guy and made me the band leader. At that point I was going back and forth, rehearsing with the Modern Red Caps when the Sapphires weren't doing things. Eventually, I left the Sapphires and went with George Tindley permanently."

The new Modern Red Caps became George Tindley (vocalist), Gerald Twig Smith (music director, guitarist, vocalist), George Grant (vocalist), Kirk Manuel (vocalist, drummer) and Sherman "Slim" Marshall (vocalist and bassist). George Grant had previously been the lead of the Castelles of "My Girl Awaits Me" fame. The Castelles and George Tindley's previous group the Dreams (*Savoy* label) had grown up together in West Philadelphia and had



THE MODERN RED CAPS

Personal Management
 ERNIE PEP
 Phila. Pa.
 HO2-2827

The Modern Red Caps, From left:
 Gerald “Twig” Smith, George Grant, George
 Tindley, Kirk Manual, Sherman “Slim” Smith.
 Courtesy of George Tindley

been “brother groups.” Sherman “Slim” Marshall would later go on to write the songs “Then Came You” for Dionne Warwick & the Spinners and “I’m Doing Fine Now” for New York City, as well as produce the group Sister Sledge.

The Modern Red Caps toured extensively over the next three years. Many of the Modern Red Caps gigs were in and around Philadelphia and nearby southern New Jersey. But the group also played upstate Pennsylvania and as far away as the Catskills and Syracuse, New York.

In August, 1964, George Tindley signed the group to a two-year recording contract with Frank Bendinelli of Ben-Lee Productions. As none of the group’s recordings of the next two years list Ben-Lee as publisher, it is thought that Bendinelli may have sold the masters and publishing rights after the recordings were made.

Late in 1946, Twig and George Tindley wrote the songs “Never Kiss A Good Man Good-By” and “Free.” The sides were arranged by Leon Mitchell, bandleader and arranger for the house band at the Uptown Theatre. The two sides became the group’s only record on *Penntowne Records* (#101), release in January 1965.

Early in 1965, the Modern Red Caps recorded four more of Twig’s and George Tindley’s songs for *Swan Records*: “Empty World,” “Our Love Will Never Be The Same,” “No Sign Of You” and “Tammy’s Coming

Home.” “Empty World” and “Our Love Will Never Be The Same” came out on the *Swan* subsidiary label, *Lawn Records*. The other two sides would remain unreleased until years later when they were issued on CD’s.

Late in 1965, the Modern Red Caps recorded two more sides for *Swan Records*. Both sides were produced by Richard Barrett who had returned to his hometown, Philadelphia after a successful career as a singer (Valentines) and A&R man (discovering the Teenagers, Chantels, Imperials, etc.). One side, “Never Too Young (To Fall In Love),” was co-written by Richard Barrett, George Tindley and their friend, Terry Johnson of the Flamingos.

The second song was a remake of the Flamingos iconic ballad, “Golden Teardrops.” George Grant sang lead, backed by Twig and George Tindley. Former Castelles’ Billy Taylor was brought in afterwards to overdub the floating tenor. Both sides featured a young Teddy Pendergrass on drums and came out on the *Swan* label..

By mid-1966, the Modern Red Caps had expanded the group to seven members. Aaron “Stump” Lewis had replaced Kirk Manuel on drums. New additions included Ray Smith (tenor sax). Vocals were still George Tindley, George Grant, Gerald Twig Smith plus new member, Tommy Cook. Tommy Cook was a veteran Philadelphia R&B singer who’d previously sung with the Strangers (*Checker* label) and the second group of Sensations. [See our article on the second Sensations group in *Echoes of the Past #94* and posted to www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net]

“We had a gig in Scranton, Pennsylvania,” said Twig. “And we were working opposite Terry Johnson &



OUR LOVE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME

by GEORGE TINDLEY
GERALD SMITH

Sheet music to *Lawn* # 254.

Courtesy of Funkadelphia Record Dist

the Modern Flamingos. Tommy Cook was one of the singers with the Modern Flamingos at the time. We knew Tommy from his singing in Philadelphia. And he ended up joining our Modern Red Caps.

By the summer of 1967, the Modern Red Caps were in transition. George Tindley had a cousin, Henry Seaward, who'd been calling himself Henry Trenier and performing as a Modern Treniers group. Any connection to the more famous Treniers group was questionable. Henry joined up with George Tindley, Twig Smith and Henry's girlfriend, Gina. Tommy Cook and Sonny Ross who'd previously been with Terry Johnson's Modern Flamingos might also have been in the group. This group performed briefly as the Modern Treniers.

"We drove down to Miami," Twig recalled. "There was a guy named Dick Jennings who was headlining the show. He had had a huge show with an organ player, a big band and girls dancing on podiums. George wanted to do R&B songs like Jackie Wilson's but Henry said that we needed to sing Broadway tunes from West Side Story. When we got there, Dick Jennings band was rocking. We got fired the first night. The club owner paid us for the weekend but he shot us out of there fast."



The Modern Red Caps. From left, top: George Tindley, Tommy Cook. Bottom: Aaron Stump Lewis, Gerald Twig Smith, Sherman Slim Marshall, George Grant, Ray Smith. Photo courtesy of George Tindley



In July of 1967, the group recorded six songs for *United Artists* that were never released. The label's logbook lists the group as the Modern Red Caps, but with pop titles like "The Sound Of Music" and "When You Wish Upon A Star" it could have been either group. One song, "We Walked in the Moonlight," written by Twig, was a song George Grant recalled singing when he was with the group.



By George & Co. From left: Unidentified; Gerald Twig Smith; Ray Smith; Aaron Stump Lewis; George Tindley; Sonny Ross; Tommy Cook
Photo courtesy of George Tindley.

After a quick trip to Montreal, arguments between George and Henry broke up the Modern Treniers. Then George Tindley assembled a new group made up mostly of former Modern Red Cap members. He called the new group, By George & Company.

By George & Company consisted of George Tindley (vocals), Tommy Cook (vocals), Sonny Ross (trumpet, vocals), Aaron "Stump" Lewis (drums), Gerald Twig Smith (guitar, vocals), Ray Smith (tenor sax), and an additional bass guitarist who was later replaced by Phaon Hughes.

George Tindley signed with the Herbert Paloff Associates agency who booked By George & Company into the El San Juan Hotel in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately Tindley was still under contract with the Jolly Joyce Agency at the time and when Joyce found out about it, By George & Company were forced to cut their stay short by four weeks.

Twig left the Modern Red Caps in 1968 and played behind the Dells for a short time. "When I came home I got back in touch with George Tindley and we did a few things together," said Twig. "Then I started my own group called Warlocks & Witches. We had a four-piece band, two dancers and a female vocalist who sang just like Aretha."

Twig I went on the road with Richard "Groove" Homes for awhile. They toured throughout the South. In fact, Twig played guitar on Holmes' 1981 album, "Broadway" (Muse label). After the album, Holmes, Twig and drummer Don Scott (Shirley Scott's son) toured as a trio.

"Eventually I returned to Philadelphia and took a day job," said Twig. "I had gotten married and was tired of the road. In fact, coincidentally, I married Caroline Jackson's sister. I still played jazz locally with bands like the Gene Varnes Orchestra that featured vocalist Ted Weems, formerly of Lee & Andrews & the Hearts. In 1999 I released my own CD, "Age Of Innocence." Twig continues to play local jazz festivals and venues where he is in constant demand.

* * *

This article is based on the author's interviews over the years with Gerald Twig Smith, George Tindley, George Grant, Billy Taylor, Ted Weems and Richard Barrett. We are grateful to Funkadelphia Record Dist. for their assistance.

For related articles on Teddy & the Twilights, Tommy Cook with the Sensations, Richard Barrett time with Swan Records and more, visit the "Articles By Us" page of www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net

Discography

Sapphires

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Swan 4143 | Where Is Johnny Now
Your True Love |
| Swan 4162 | Who Do You Love
Oh So Soon |
| Swan 4177 | I Found Out Too Late
I've Got Mine You Better Get Yours |
| Swan 4184 | Gotta Be More Than Friends
Moulin Rouge (Where Is your Heart) |
| ABC Pmt 10559 | Hearts Are Made to Be Broken
Let's Break Up For Awhile |
| ABC Pmt 10590 | Our Love Is Everywhere
Thank You For Loving Me |
| ABC Pmt 10639 | Gotta Have Your Love
Gee I'm Sorry Baby |
| ABC Pmt 10753 | Gonna Be A Big Thing
You'll Never Stop Me From Loving You |
| ABC Pmt 10778 | The Slow Fizz
Our Love Is Everywhere |

Modern Red Caps (with Gerald Twig Smith)

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Penntowne 101 | Free
Never Kiss A Good Man Good-By |
| Lawn 254 | Our Love Will Never Be The Same
Empty World |
| Swan 4243 | Golden Teardrops
Never Too Young |
| Doo-Wopp 101* | Since I Met Cindy
Ain't Gonna Worry About You |

* believed to be older sides released in the 1970's