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Happy Holidays!

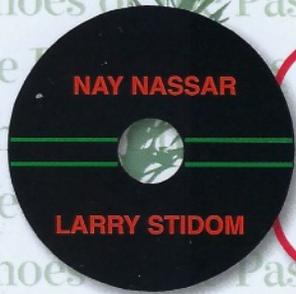
ECHOES OF THE PAST



Frankie Beverly & THE BUTLERS



BUTLERS 2021



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The Star-X Records Story

By Charlie Horner

With contributions from Pamela Horner

Some years back, my friend John Moore and I used to make a couple record hunting trips to Detroit every year. Yes, the airfares, rental cars and hotels were expensive but we always found enough good records to make it worth our while. Detroit was always a great music town and there were plenty of local labels that we couldn't easily find on the East Coast. (This was back in the pre-Internet days when EBay had yet to be invented.)

Small independent record labels have always fascinated me. In Detroit, one of the labels that caught my eye early on was the Star-X label. There was something about a bright orange starry label with artists like Raymond Carbone, the Fresando's, Ricardos and the Dappers that peaked my interest. But as I thumbed through records in Detroit, pulling odd ones to preview on my battery operated portable record player, I began hearing Star-X records with all sorts of music - R&B, Rock-a-Billy, Pop, C&W, instrumentals.

Now, so many years later, having fine-tuned my researching skills, I thought I'd look into the label's history. I don't claim to be an expert on Star-X or its artists but here's what I've been able to piece together.

Star-X Records

In late September, 1957, a Detroit newspaper carried the notice that Star-X Records Inc. was being organized with offices at 19600 Rogge Street to produce pop tunes, rock 'n' roll and country & western music. The company's president was Norbert S. Biernat. Other officers were listed as Ciro Carbone, vice-president and general manager and Arthur L. Dietz, secretary - treasurer. Biernat indicated that Star-X's first releases would be distributed nationally soon.



Star-X 501, The Fresando's "Your Last Goodbye"

Arthur Dietz was a Detroit-based songwriter and the 19600 Rogge Street address was actually his home.

Ciro Carbone was born in Grotto, Italy in 1909. After immigrating to America, Ciro worked for the Ford Motor Company in Detroit before moving to John R Road in the Detroit suburbs of Hazel Park. There he opened a barber shop. Ciro and his wife Helen had a daughter Elaine and three sons, Jackie, Raymond and Robert Carbone. The Carbone family had a strong interest in music, so much so that they were often referred to as "The Singing Carbones." Part of Ciro's involvement in Star-X Records was most likely driven by his desire to find a musical outlet for his sons, Jackie and Raymond, who sang.

In October 1957, Star-X reported signing their first two recording artists, the Frank K. Perry Orchestra and the R&B vocal group, the Fresando's. Little is known about Frank Perry, whose songs "Rock" and "Down Jamaica Way" made up the first Star-X release (# 500),



Left: Raymond Carbone. Right: “Rockin’ On My Rockin’ Horse” Star-X 502

The Fresando’s

In 1957, the Fresandos were a young Detroit vocal group consisting of Aaron Little (lead), James Holland, Robert Barksdale, Cleo “Sonny” Barksdale and Jesse Ledbetter. Future Temptation’s member Otis Williams was in part, inspired to sing after hearing the Fresando’s. “I was lying in bed one night with all th windows open,” recalled Otis in his book *Temptations*. “Suddenly this beautiful sound filled the room. I jumped out of bed and from the window I saw the Fresando’s, a popular local quintet, coming down my street singing their latest local hit acappella.”

Robert Barksdale recalled the songs “Your Last Goodbye” and “I Mean Really” being recorded in a garage studio at 9060 Joseph Campau Avenue in Hamtramck, MI. This is an address that comes up frequently in connection with Star-X Records and appears on a couple of the early Star-X labels. Apparently it was their recording studio.

Instrumentation on the Fresando’s’ record was supplied by Eddie Bartell & his Dukes of Rhythm. Bartell led the house band at the Club Rondevou, located only two miles from Star-X’s Rogge Street address. The label credits for “Your Last Goodbye” to Leo Parks, a manager of the Fresando’s, though

Robert Barksdale told Soulful Detroit’s Graham Finch that the song was mostly written by the group’s lead singer, Aaron Little.

For the reverse side, the label credits only the Eddie Bartell band and not the group, though the Fresando’s are definitely handling the vocals. The song, “I Mean Really,” would be recycled by Star-X later. Following their one Star-X release, the Fresando’s moved on, changing their name to the Five Masters to record “We Are Like One” for the Bumble Bee label. Some members would go on to join the Four Hollidays.

Raymond Carbone

Raymond Carbone was 13 years old when he recorded “My Christmas Problem” and “Rockin’ On My Rockin’ Horse.” It was STAR-X’s third release (#502). The Christmas record, penned by label owners Norbert Biernat and Arthur Dietz, received only a fair “67” rating from *Billboard* magazine in December 1957. The reviewer wrote “the vocalist has a teenage fresh sound.” I’m not fond of the Christmas side either but the flip, “Rockin’ On My Rockin’ Horse” is a great kiddie-lead recording with what sounds to be a black group’s backing. The band is Eddie Bartell’s so the side was probably cut at the



Left: Jackie Carbone. Middle: Jackie Carbone and Danny Dieterick at Hazel Park High School Senior Review. Right: “Jam-Up” Star-X 503.

same session as the Fresando’s songs. Could they be on this record? Pure speculation.

By the time Raymond Carbone finished high school in 1964, he was acting, singing and playing guitar and piano. He’d performed in nightclubs, on television and in benefits. Also in 1964, he sang at the Italian Festival at the Michigan State fairgrounds with a Beatles cover group. Newspapers say he made two records. I only know of the one.

Jackie Carbone

The older of Ciro Carbone’s sons, who went farthest in the music business was Jackie Carbone. Jackie Carbone was just 17 when he recorded his first sides for Star-X but he’d been singing long before that. Jackie won his first talent contest at age 7. From there he sang with the “Make Way For Youth” chorus over radio station WJR and had entertained for the USO. Still in Hazel Park High School when he recorded, Jackie sang in the school choir and performed in the Senior Review - a guitar and vocal duet with another student.

Jackie Carbone’s first record was a strong Rock-a-Billy number called “Jam-Up.” With back-up by the Eddie Bartell band, it was likely done at the same recording session as the Raymond Carbone sides and if so, the vocal group on “Jam-Up” may be the Fresando’s. The A-side is a pop ballad with female chorus backing called “Just Foolin’.”

“Just Foolin’” was at the same time pitched to veteran crooner, Eddy Howard, who waxed a cover of the tune for Mercury Records on April 27, 1958.

The Carbones’ association with Star-X was short-lived. In May 1958, *Billboard* magazine announced that Star-X had been reorganized with Arthur Dietz moving up to vice-president and Doris Kintzer becoming secretary. Apparently, Ciro Carbone was out.

Ciro Carbone did not leave the music business. In mid-1958, Jackie Carbone came out with a song called “Sugar Eyes” backed with “My Spanish Dancing Doll” on the Fox label. Both sides were co-written by Jackie and Ciro Carbone. Some time after that, the record was re-released in Ciro Carbone’s own label, Ciro’s Records (#1001). In addition, a number of copies on Fox have turned up with the Fox logo scaped off and “Ciro’s” written over it in magic marker.

To further confuse the issue, in May 1959, newspapers revealed that Jackie Carbone had just signed a six-month recording contract with MGM Records. His first record was a remake of “Sugar Eyes” b/w “My Spanish Dancing Doll.” The sides were cut in New York City and Jackie took the opportunity to tour six northeastern states and Canada. Newspapers report him doing a record hop in Glens Falls, New York.



Left: The Dappers. Right: Ad for the Dappers, October 1958. “We’re In Love” Star-X 505.

Jackie Carbone did at least two other records for his father’s *Ciro’s* label, ca. 1960. By then the label listed a Woodward Heights Boulevard address, the Carbone family’s new home.

Back to the Star-X Story

Meanwhile, Star-X continued releasing discs. Johnny Fraser recorded a Rock-a-Billy side called “Rock With The Mambo” with the backing of a band called the Regal-Aires. The Regal-Aires waxed the flipside, a Rock & Roll instrumental with a Halloween theme called “It.”

The Regal-Aires became the studio band for several other Star-X records. They backed Rock-a-Billy artist Al Corsal on “Go Devil Go” (Star-X 511), Maureen Sheehan on “Teen-Age King” (Star-X 509) and Carole & Jean on “That’s My Guy” (Star-X 510). They also supplied instrumentation for two other Star-X artists - the Dappers and the Ricardos.

The Dappers

The Dappers were a white teenage doo wop group out of Lincoln High School in Ferndale, Michigan.

The group included Ken Fraser (lead), Austin Kollman, Earl Swanson and Bill Sheerhan. We don’t know if Ken Frazer was related to Star-X recording artist Johnny Fraser, but it wouldn’t surprise us. The Dappers got their start singing at the Dipsey Doodle Drive In in Ferndale, Michigan. Obtaining a manager, the Dappers signed with Star-X for one record, “We’re In Love” b/w “Spellbound” (Star-X 505). That record was apparently enough, as the group moved from singing at American Legion and VFW halls to teen dance clubs to a benefit at Ferndale’s Radio City Theater with WXYZ’s Ed McKenzie. As the record started selling in Detroit and Chicago, the Dappers began singing at Detroit area clubs like the Gay Haven, the Edgewater Inn, the Elmwood Casino (in Windsor, Canada) and the Walled Lake Casino and Amusement Park - opening for groups like the Shirelles, Chantels, Spaniels, Clovers and Imperials. Career highlights included guest spots on Soupy Sales and Johnny Cinger TV shows in Detroit and Dick Clark’s American Bandstand. The Dappers also performed on Dick Clark’s “Dance Party” shows in major cities. After singing for four years, the Dappers broke up in 1960 when members entered the military.



“Mary’s Little Lamb” Star-X 512

The Ricardos

One of my prize finds in Detroit was “Mary’s Little Lamb” by the Ricardos (Star-X 512). It’s an uptempo black vocal group treatment of the children’s nursery rhyme. The flip side is a remake of the Fresando’s’ “I Mean Really.” No, I don’t think the Ricardos are the Fresando’s. The lead sounds different as does the bass singer. I admit, I don’t know anything about the Ricardos but I wish they had done more recording for Star-X.

Other Notable Star-X and Related Releases

There are a couple other Star-X releases that I haven’t come across that are supposed to be notable. Sammy Marshall & the Keynotes’ “I’m Lonely Without You” (Star-X 518) is supposed to be something. I’ve never heard it but Sammy’s other release, “Who Stole the Bone From Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard” (Star-X 519) doesn’t impress me. Dick Mason’s “Cool Cats” (Star-X 506) is pop sounding but it does have a great guitar break in it.

I don’t know much about the other Star-X releases. One that does sound interesting is the Sweet Soul Six doing “Just a Little Bit More.” It’s later than the rest (Star-X 524/525) and has a dark purple label with no stars. It’s still Dietz publishing out of Detroit but appears to be from the late 1960’s. I’ve seen it described as garage rock but have never heard it.

At least one release exists on the Hamtramck label (#100) by Ted Loch & his Orchestra. It carries the

Joseph Campau Ave. address and is undoubtedly a Star-X subsidiary. Ted Loch’s Orchestra is a well-known Polish Detroit area polka band.

In 1961, *Billboard* magazine noted the formation of Redstone Records, owned by Owney Burnett and Bob Holiday. Owney Burnett is the pseudonym of Norbert S. Biernat, previously owner of Star-X Records. Biernat then recorded prior Star-X artist, Sammy Marshall, for Redstone.

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Introducing Classic Urban Harmony Press’ newest book, **“You Don’t Know Me: The Musical Memoir of Stormin’ Norman Seldin”** by Norman Seldin as told to Charlie Horner.

Norman played an important role in a numerous music genres including R&B and doo wop. He managed and recorded Nicky Addeo & the Uniques, the Shondelles, the Valtairs, Barbaroso & the Historians and others. In the mid-60's he was one of the premiere booking agents of doo wop groups in the New Jersey area, promoting dances and concerts starring the Duprees, Vito & the Salutations, Shells, Charts, Olympics and more. Norman once managed Larry Chance & the Earls and Larry wrote one of the back cover blurbs. But that’s just one part of a long career as a musician, singer, songwriter, arranger, producer, manager and record label owner. Norman Seldin's still going strong now, performing 50's style R&B with his 11-piece band. The book is now available on Amazon as is our groundbreaking book, “Springwood Ave Harmony Vol. 1” which we are re-launching this month. That book covers black music from Asbury Park (1871-1945) including spirituals, jazz and blues.

Check out www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net

Star-X Discography

500	Frank Perry	Rock Down Jamaica Way
501	Fresando's w/ Eddie Bartell & his Dukes of Rhythm	Your Last Goodbye I Mean Really
502	Raymond Carbone w/ Eddie Bartell & Orchestra	My Christmas Problem Rockin' On My Rockin' Horse
503	Jackie Carbone w/ Eddie Bartell & Orchestra	Jam-Up Just Foolin'
504	Johnny Fraser w/Regal-Aires Regal-Aires	Rock With The Mambo It
505	Dappers w/Regal-Aires	We're In Love Spellbound
506	Dick Mason w/ High Fives	Cool Kats Heavy Heart
507	High Fives	Hen Cackle, The Relax
508	Tommy Garford Merri Tones	Gypsy Mandolin Goodnight Again
509	Maureen Sheehan w/ Regal-Aires	Teen-Age King You Can't Blame Me
510	Carole & Jean w/ Regal-Aires	That's My Guy Tears Behind Your Smile, The
511	Al Corsal w/ Regal-Aires	Go Devil Go Card Behind My Bouquet, The
512	Ricardos w/ Regal-Aires	Mary's Little Lamb I Mean Really
514	Hayman J. Adler	God Is The Answer God Is The Answer (Yiddish)
515	Hayman J. Adler	Shabes Shabes Alu Alu
516	Tommy Gaylord	Don't Talk - Kiss me Azalea
517	Roger Smith	Dear God (A Prayer For Peace) Mrs. And I, The (A Happy Family Song)
518	Sammy Marshall w/ Keynoters	I'm Lonely Without You I Should Have Listened To My Friends
519	Sammy Marshall w/ Keynoters	Who Stole The Bone Crazy Dog Dance
524/5	Sweet Soul Six	Just A Little Bit More / I Ain't Complainin'