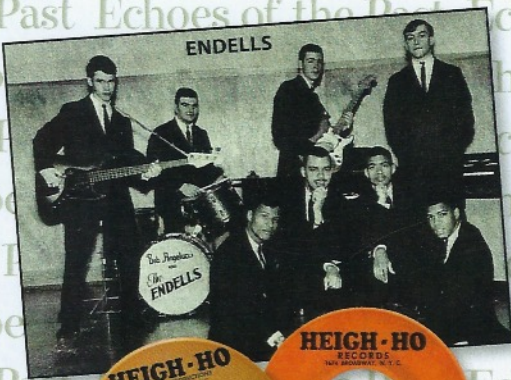


Issue No. 145

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MOTOWN FAMILY

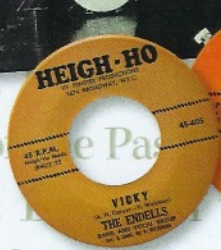
ECHOES OF THE PAST



ENELL'S



SHANTONS



HEIGH-HO RECORDS

VICKY

THE ENELL'S



HEIGH-HO RECORDS

THE MONKEY DANCE

THE ENELL'S



P.A.M.

WHY DON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?

SKIP BROWN

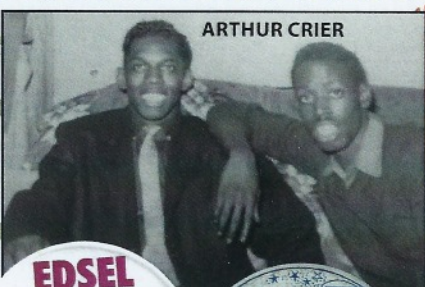


DOT-MAR RECORDS

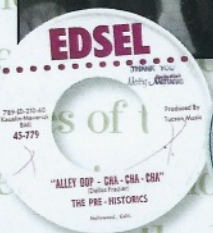
PROMISE THAT YOU'LL WAIT

SKIP JACKSON and the SHANTONS

WHO KNEW?



ARTHUR CRIER



EDSEL RECORDS

"ALLEY OOP - CHA-CHA-CHA"

THE PRE-HISTORICS



VITA RECORDS

ADORABLE

THE COLTS



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Skip Jackson

The Shantons were Just the Beginning

by Charlie Horner and Jeffrey Chambers
with contributions from Pamela Horner

Fans of R&B and Doo Wop music know the name, Skip Jackson, from the late fifties and early sixties recordings by the Shantons. Or, perhaps they know him from his work with Stan Krause in producing songs by 14 Karat Soul. But the whole story of Skip Jackson entails so much more than that. Among other things, Skip was a singer, musician, songwriter, arranger, producer and bandleader. Skip died young and never really got the recognition he deserved. We'll try to correct that here.

Skip Jackson was born Thomas A. Brown in Jersey City, New Jersey, ca. 1940. Although African American, Skip had albinism which made him appear white in photographs.

It's said that Skip got his start playing piano as a young boy on a discarded instrument in a coal bin where his father worked as the building manager. We don't know if that's true or not, but we do know he learned to play piano and bugle at Boystown, in Kearny, New Jersey. In the early fifties, Skip appeared on "Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour" TV show. He made such an impression there, that he was invited to guest on the "Gary Moore Show," where he was billed as "The Kid From Boystown."



The Shantons. Skip Jackson at bottom.
Courtesy of Jeffrey Chambers

In 1958, Skip helped form the vocal group, the Shantons, made up largely from students from Lincoln High School in Jersey City. Other members of the group were Michael Wells, George Flowers and William McCoy. All were from Jersey City.

"We began singing together in the basement of our homes," Mike Wells told Sir Shambling's Deep Soul Heaven website. "And eventually it led to our singing at parties and local dances."

Friends of the Shantons, John and Dotty Martucci, who were also from Jersey City, decided to form the Jay-Mar record label to record them. The first Shantons' release, "Triangle Love" b/w "Lover's March" was recorded in late 1958 or early 1959. Skip was lead vocalist and writer credits for both sides are credited to Skip Brown and John Martucci. By March of 1959, the record was getting a fair amount of air play on radio station WNJR in Newark, New Jersey. While many doo wop fans prefer "Triangle Love," WNJR dee jay Bill Carlton listed "Lover's





March” in his Top-10 (actually #9) on CashBox’s Disk Jockey Regional Record Reports.

Group harmony historian, Angelo Pompeo, who grew up in downtown Jersey City, remembered the Shantons well. “My church was St. Mary’s on the corner of Second and Erie,” said Angelo. “When ‘Lover’s March’ came out, I was down in the basement of the church. They were going to play BIN-GO and in came Skip and the Shantons, They got up on stage and sang ‘Lover’s March,’ acappella.”

The Shantons’ first record was only on the market a short time, when an advertisement for the Shantons playing a teen dance at Jersey City’s Mt. Carmel Recreation Center on May 15, 1959, mentioned the group’s latest Jay-Mar release, “Lucille” b/w “To Be

In Love With You.” “To Be In Love With You” was a magnificent ballad, but the up tempo side, “Lucille,” seemed to get all the attention. Both featured Skip’s powerful leads and the group’s exquisite harmonies.

The Shantons’ third release, also produced by John Martucci, was apparently leased to the Pam label and released around May, 1960. The single paired an up tempo “Jenny Lee” with the standard “Why Don’t You Believe Me,” a good three years before the Duprees version. For the first time, the record label emphasized the name Skip Brown, with the Shantons mentioned only of the ballad side.

By then, Skip and the Shantons were becoming area favorites at local dances. A May 20, 1960, newspaper announced that Skip Brown & the Shantons would be the star attraction at the Mt. Carmel Parish coronation ball held at the Jersey City Garden. They were given billing over TV and recording star, Julius LaRosa. In July, the Shantons appeared at the Palisades Amusement Park, as part of George Tucker’s “Teen Beat,” broadcast live over WNTA Radio.



Still, the Shantons did not attract the attention of any major music trade magazines until their fourth release. “The Christmas Song” b/w “Santa Clause Is Coming To Town,” was reviewed by CashBox Magazine on December 12, 1960. Released on the Jay-Mar label, CashBox gave the A side its highest B+ rating, writing, “The great pop Xmas number gets a pleasing R&B styled ballad treatment from the lead



Second issuing of “The Christmas Song” on the Dot-Mar label, 1969



All record scans from the Classic Urban Harmony Archives

and the rest of the team. Youngsters will like this approach to the item.”

If that had been the end of Skip Brown’s music career, he’d be remembered only as a talented, yet little-known, doo wop singer. Fortunately Skip’s story doesn’t end there. We don’t know what Skip Brown did musically between the end of 1960 and 1966, but sometime during that period he reinvented himself as Skip “Jackson,” jazz artist.

Skip Jackson, Jazz Artist

An August, 1966, news clipping had the Skip Jackson Quartet plus Charlie Santley, appearing in the Jazz Room of the Lounge in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

The mid-1950s through the 1960s were the golden age of organ trios, as Hammond B-3 organs made it easy for jazz clubs to hire three-piece bands - a Hammond B-3, a saxophone and drum set. Skip Jackson’s organ trio featured himself (organ), Tommy Gryce (tenor sax and Charlie Slade (drums).

Skip kept the Skip Jackson Trio going. A free 1968 outdoor concert at Jersey City’s Arlington Park featured Skip on organ, Jimmy Odell on guitar and Glasco Ryales Jr on drums. At the time, the Skip Jackson Trio was working weekends at the Sterlington House in Montclair, New Jersey.

Apparently, Skip Jackson had not totally abandoned his love for vocal harmony, nor his vocal group, the Shantons. In the summer of 1969, Skip Jackson & the Shantons released their fifth single. The record was issued on John Martucci’s new label, Dot-Mar (in honor of John’s wife Dorothy). One side, “I’m On To You Girl,” is now a Northern Soul favorite. The other side, “Promise That You’ll Wait,” is a Viet Nam era ballad. Both sides were written and arranged by Skip Jackson and feature some fine vocal harmony. It is likely that Skip’s band handled the instrumentation. The Shantons had the same personnel except Chris Coles replaced William McCoy. The record was given good reviews by both Cashbox and Record World.

The renewed popularity of the Shantons allowed John Martucci to reissue the group’s Christmas record on the Dot-Mar label. Back in the spotlight, Skip began performing with both his band and the Shantons vocal group.

In addition to playing places like Jersey City’s Audubon Park as Skip Jackson’s Soul Quartet and the Shantons, Skip Jackson & the Shantons again played Palisades Amusement Park, this time as part of disk jockey Hal Jackson’s show. There they shared the stage with the Soul Dukes, Monday Rain, the Exsaveyors and Melba Moore.



Stan Krause and Stan's record.
Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Chambers

As either a jazz quartet or trio, Skip Jackson made frequent appearances between 1969 and 1971, at the Orchid Lounge, a popular jazz club in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

At the same time, Skip was donating his time and talents to numerous community activities. He helped organize and train youths in the Bergen Lafayette area in a drum and bugle corps. He also entertained at a fundraiser for the Jersey City Head Start Program, raising money for the purchase of winter clothing and shoes for youngsters in need.

Stan Krause & Catamount Records

We don't know exactly when, Skip Jackson became associated with Stan Krause and Catamount Records, but it was probably around 1966.

Stan Krause was a major figure in the area's group harmony scene. Stan Krause formed Catamount Records in 1964 out of his Jersey City record store, Stan's Square Records. In the early years, the label issued mostly doo wop acappella records, but in later years branched out into soul, disco and even funk music. Stan Krause and his Catamount label helped launch the musical careers of groups like the Persuasions, 14 Karat Soul, the Royal Counts, Vintage, Jo Ann & the Heartaches and many more. Skip Jackson played a major role in writing, arranging and producing many of the Catamount releases.

One of the first Catamount records to be credited to Skip Jackson was Dave Willis and the Jackson Tones' "I'll Be Home For Christmas," in 1966.



Dave Willis was the original bass singer for the group, Patty & the Street-Tones. Dave sang lead on the record while Skip Jackson played piano and dubbed in all the harmony voices.

The year 1966, was also the time that Skip Jackson started his own small recording studio in Jersey City. Joel Katz recalled taking his acappella group, Joel & the Conchords to Stan's record store, where Skip listened to them rehearse in the back room. Skip recorded Joel and the Conchords' record, "Hurry Home" b/w "Moonlight In Vermont" (Ambler label) and several other sides in his Jersey City studio.

One of the most important groups, Skip Jackson helped guide, was the Persuasions. Stan Krause and Skip Jackson took an interest in the Persuasions in the late 1960s, realizing that if acappella singing could ever break mainstream, this was the group that



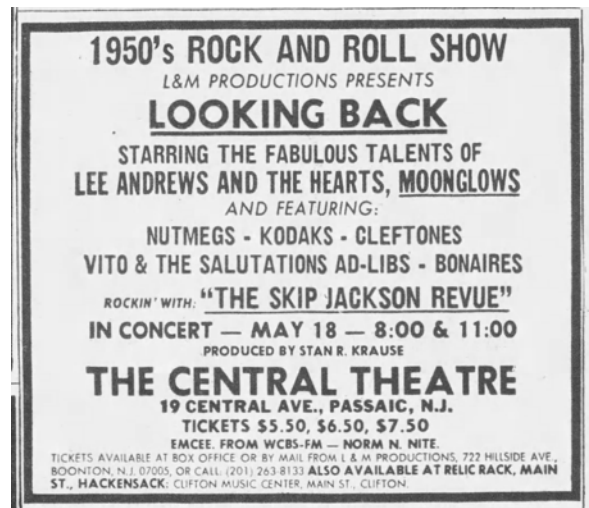
would do it. They rehearsed the Persuasions in the back of Stan's store, with Skip Jackson doing all the vocal arrangements. In 1969, they recorded enough songs for a Persuasions album but didn't release it at that time. It took ten years for those sides to be released, on the 1979 Catamount label LP, "Stardust." On the album, Skip Jackson is credited for vocal arrangements. In the meantime, the Persuasions had gone on to national fame, but even their "We Came To Play" Capitol label LP lists Skip as their musical advisor.

Skip Jackson's longtime friend, Jeffrey Chambers, remembered well the first time he met Skip. "I met Skip in the early seventies," said Jeff. "He was appearing in a nightclub in Bayonne called the Kenya Club. My wife's uncle had a nightclub, with the latest acts. I was walking past the establishment and I heard the music playing. I went in and who was playing? Skip Jackson. He had a B-3 Hammond organ, and he was playing and singing a rock - rhythm and blues sound. After he came off the bandstand, I shook his hand and I told him he was great. He thanked me. My next encounter with him was at Stan Krause's record store. I used to go to Stan's store when it was on Montgomery Street. Skip would run the store for Stan when Stan was out of town. Then, Stan Krause started putting on shows at the this Capitol Theatre in Passaic, New Jersey."

Working with Stan Krause, Skip provided the instrumental backing for Stan's "Looking Back" concert at the Central Theatre, May 18, 1973. On that show were Lee Andrews & the Hearts, the Moonglows, Nutmegs, Kodaks, Clefones, Vito & the Salutations, Ad-Libs and Bonairens. The show was emceed by Norm N. Nite.

That was followed up by a second show on November 10, 1973, featuring the Five Satins, Coasters, Duprees, Earls, Monotones, Ad-Libs and Tiny Tim & the Hits. This time Skip Jackson and Stan Krause co-produced the show with instrumental accompaniment by the Skip Jackson Orchestra.

Jeffrey Chambers, who attended both of those shows, vividly recalled how Skip Jackson opened the second concert. "Skip opened up the show playing the trombone and singing 'Short Fat Fanny,'" said Jeffrey. "He just turned the crowd out. He



was just an all around guy. He blew the trombone and then put the trombone down to start doing vocals. He could do vocals, he could play trombone. He could play keyboard. He could play drums. He played and he sang every note. He did it all."

"Skip gave vocal lessons in the back of Stan's store," Jeff said. "There was an upright piano in the back of Stan's store, and every day, Skip would come in there with an attache case. He would bring in clients, go into the back of the store, and give them vocal lessons. Later on, he had another studio in downtown Jersey City at the Junction. There he had in Kool & the Gang, Tomorrow's Edition, and he even worked with the Manhattans."

Ray Block, founding member of the vocal group, Vintage, remembered Skip Jackson and Stan Krause coming to his group's early rehearsals. Skip Jackson gave input to Vintage's Catamount LP, "We Came To Sing," an album Ray titled after the Persuasions' "We Came To Play." Skip was present when Vintage recorded the album at Variety Studios on 42nd Street, New York City. He also produced their single.

Another Jersey City group that Skip Jackson used to rehearse was the Royal Counts. The Royal Counts had two superb acappella albums and a single on the Catamount label.

Throughout the 1970s, Skip Jackson rehearsed, arranged and, with Stan Krause, co-produced a prolific number of records. A partial list of the Catamount artists that Skip is credited with, includes the Bonairens, Metro-liners, Formula 12 (later to be called



Blue Steam), Greenville, and of course Fourteen Karat Soul.

Fourteen Karat Soul

A book could be written on Fourteen Karat Soul. The vocal group from East Orange, New Jersey, took acappella singing to a new level, through their recordings, appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and *Sesame Street*, *Sister Suzie Cinema*, touring Europe and Japan, recording with the Stray Cats ... we could go on and on. We can't overstate the importance Skip Jackson had on the group's career, especially in the beginning. Skip basically was their mentor. If you look at Fourteen Karat Soul's 1977 Catamount album, "Lover's Fantasy," you'll find that Skip ar-

ranged, produced and engineered the album. He wrote four of the eight songs, including "Doo Wop Disco" and the title song. In addition, Skip played organ, piano, congas, timbales, and trombone on the album.

While working with Stan Krause, Skip Jackson never gave up the desire to record himself as a vocalist. In 1972, Skip recorded a soulful version of the Magnificent Men tune, "Peace Of Mind" b/w "Don't Go To Strangers" for Capitol Records. The female backup singers are thought to be members of the Blossoms.

This was not Skip's only 1970s recording as a vocalist. Having produced the Bonaires' Catamount single of "Heart's Desire" a few years earlier, in 1976 Skip asked Bonaires' George Lavatelli and Dennis Ostrom, along with Tommy Krup of the Hudsons, to back him on a soul rendition of "Creation Of Love." Dennis Ostrom remembered the recording session being done at WWRL's studio. Though both sides of the Catamount single were credited to Calvin & the Catamounts, the flip side, "I Know My Baby Cares For Me," was written and recorded solo by Skip Jackson. Background vocals on that side were most likely overdubs by Skip.



Back to Jazz

As if Skip wasn't involved in enough music activities, he never really gave up his jazz group. His Skip Jackson Trio continued performing around Jersey.



Skip Jackson Trio
Skip is top left.
Courtesy of Jeffrey Chambers

Often, they'd appear at the Junction Lounge in Jersey City, a club below Skip's recording studio.

In the late 1970s, Skip Jackson operated a larger recordings studio in New York City. There he served as production manager for Kool & the Gang. He also worked with the Manhattans, Tomorrow's Edition and other groups.

On March 9, 1980, Skip Jackson helped put together a memorable concert at Newark, New Jersey's Symphony Hall. On the bill were the Manhattans, Clovers, Charts, Laddins, Bonaire, Fourteen Karat Soul, all backed by Skip Jackson's All-Star Band.

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In 1979, Skip Jackson experimented with fusing different genres of music together. With Fourteen Karat Soul he wrote and recorded "Doo Wopp Disco." And with his band, then called The Natural Experience, Skip tried his hand at disco-funk. The record, called "Microwave Boogie" was a groundbreaking eight plus minute long instrumental that was issued on a 12" disc as well as a 45 RPM single. Both are now highly sought after among fans of this style.

Thomas "Skip Jackson" Brown died Tuesday, March 23, 1982, at the Jersey City Medical Center, when he was taken after complaining of chest pains. Skip Jackson was only 42. He accomplished so



Skip Jackson & the Natural Experience
Courtesy of Jeffrey Chambers

much in 24 short years. We can only wonder what he could have done in another 24 years.

I (Charlie) had only met Skip Jackson at UGHAs a couple times. I never really got to know him. That's my misfortune, because had he lived a little longer, I'm sure our paths would have crossed more often. I'm grateful to those who knew Skip and have shared their memories, making this article possible.

First, thank you to my friend and co-writer Jeffrey Chambers, who has kept his fine vocal group, Original Mixed Company going all these years. Thanks also to those whose memories of Skip Jackson added greatly to this article: Ray Block, Joel Katz, Dennis Ostrom and Angelo Pompeo.

I guess it was always part of Stan Krause' and Skip Jackson's dream to take R&B/Doo Wop Acappella singing beyond the Philadelphia - New Jersey - NYC area and make it mainstream. And you know, for a short time... They Did!

* * *

Skip Jackson Discography

As the Shantons

Jay-Mar Triangle Love
 Lover's March
 Jay-Mar Lucille
 To Be In Love With You
 Jay-Mar The Christmas Song
 Santa Clause Is Coming To Town

As Skip Brown & the Shantons

Pam 112 Why Don't You Believe Me
 Jenny Lee [as Skip Brown]

As Skip Jackson & the Shantons

Dot-Mar I'm On To You Girl
 Promise That You'll Wait
 Dot-Mar The Christmas Song
 Santa Clause Is Coming To Town

As Dave Willis & the Jackson-Tones

Catamount 118 I'll Be Home For Christmas

As Skip Jackson

Capitol 3397 Peace Of Mind
 Don't Go To Strangers

As Calvin & the Catamounts

Catamount 131 Creation Of Love
 I Know My Baby Cares For Me

As Skip Jackson & the Natural Experience

Catamount 736 Microwave Boogie

Other Catamounts Skip Jackson Produced

Catamount #		
#117	Vintage	Harbor Lights Ghost Riders In The Sky
#120	Fourteen Karat Soul	The Sun Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy
#130	Bonaires	My Heart's Desire New Me
#132	Metro-Liners	I Don't Stand A Ghost Of A Chance Your Troubles Will Be My Troubles
#133 (dj)	Formula 12	Where Is She (Mono) Where Is She (Stereo)
#133	Blue Steam	Where Is She I Want A Girl
#134	Greenville	Just Got To Party Just Got To Party (Disco)
#737	Fourteen Karat Soul	Doo Wopp Disco Doo Wopp Disco [Instru]
#738	Fourteen Karat Soul	Please Say You Want Me The Trouble With Love

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About the Authors

Charlie & Pamela Horner own and operate Classic Urban Harmony LLC - website, ClassicUrbanHarmony.net. They have co-authored the books, "Springwood Avenue Harmony: The Unique Musical Legacy of Asbury Park's West Side, Volume One, 1871 - 1945" and "You Don't Know Me: The Musical Memoir of Stormin' Norman Seldin." Both are available through Amazon. To subscribe to their Free Email Newsletter, send your name and email address to CUH@att.net

Jeffrey Chambers is a founding member of Original Mixed Company an Oldies band/singing group specializing in Doo-Wop, Motown, Rhythm & Blues, and Classic Soul. They first formed in 1982 and are still going strong in the greater New York and New Jersey metropolitan area. For bookings visit www.thebash.com/oldies-a-cappella-group/the-original-mixed-company