

For Collectors Only

In a new feature **STEVE GUARNORI** spotlights the releases of lesser known artists and labels...starting with **FRONT PAGE RECORDS**.

believe Front Page was run by Bobby Robinson, perhaps in conjunction with his brother Danny. Cousin of the more famous Sylvia Robinson of All Platinum fame, Bobby was a NY record shop owner who set up a host of labels over the years, starting in the late '50s and the doo-wop and R&B era.

Through soul in the '60s and '70s (he was instrumental in Gladys Knight's pre-Motown career), then hip-hop in the '80s (the Enjoy label was his), and on to award winning songwriting for Mariah Carey in the late '90s, it can be said that Bobby has done something of everything. Front Page Records and its repertoire of six records, none of which were hits, would have been but a dim and distant memory to Bobby. Listed below are the releases:

JOE HAYWOOD

"Strong Feeling"/"I'm Walking"
(Front Page 1000)

The label opened with a classic piece of deep soul – a ballad penned by Delmar Donnell (later to become a recording artist in his own right). In contrast "I'm Walking" is a driving uptempo number (penned by Robinson) with a clunking piano, bashing percussion, bleating horns and Joe in a frantic search for his baby. Joe had previously recorded three 45s on Robinson's Enjoy label, as well as for Kent.

VICTONES

"I Need You So"/"My Baby Changes"
(Front Page 1001)

The top side is a string-led Ivory Joe Hunter ballad, that didn't sell too well upon release. The B-side is a beaty number with a jerky/funky rhythm, with a rough edged lead singer and plenty of harmonies from the rest of the group. As the song progresses different singers take turns on lead – a bit like the style the Temptations were pioneering at this time.

JIM & LEE

"Adam And Eve"/"I'll Never Change"
(Front Page 1002)

"Adam and Eve" is an uptempo rocking mover that bounces along, from a male duo, no doubt riding on the backs of Sam & Dave's success. It's the B-side though that is far better, being a classic slow deep gem with excellent harmony singing.

JOE HAYWOOD

"In Your Heart You Know I Love You"/"I Cross My Heart (And Hope To Die)"
(Front Page 1003)

A well sung searing soul ballad with Joe in a plaintiff plea to his lady. "Cross My Heart" is a horn-driven Northern sound with a tripping on-the-fours beat. A very infectious side.

By now we are up to 1970, and the label picks up a distribution deal with Stax Records.

LEE MOSES

"I Can't Take No Chances"/"Time And Place"
(Front Page 2301)

Released in January 1970, Lee was perhaps the most successful of the artists on the label, with a string of other records under his belt – having collectible sides on labels such as Musicor, Gates and Maple. A fantastic side this one, as brass and an electric guitar weave a slowish midtempo backcloth for Lee to mesh in his rough-edged vocals. A label highlight. The flip has a faster tempo but is a slightly messy heavy number. Both sides were written by the team of Lewis-Lewis and Farmer.

THE VICTONES

"Somebody Really Loves You (Guess Who)"/"Two Sides To Love"
(Front Page 2302)

The final release in April 1970 was a fledgling sweet soul side, with strings and sweet harmonies. With a falsetto lead this group would have been comparable to (and no doubt in competition with) the Delfonics. The ballad flip is another song in the same vein. And with that the label was closed.

STEVE GUARNORI

Next Time: **JESSE FISHER**



"THE SOUND OF EARTHY SOUL"