

There have been several labels bearing this name, and this article only focuses on the label run by one time rock and roll artist Lennie Lacour out of his base in Chicago. Lacour had emigrated north from Louisiana to the north Chicago area in the early 60s, and had run several labels in the Chicago / Milwaukee area such as Score, Busy Bee and Dynamic Sound before starting up Magic Touch.

It's worth noting at this point that Magic Touch was not purely a soul label, and Lacour dabbled in other 60's music forms such as rock, punk and garage. However Lennie recognised the power of soul music and helped persuade some of his white acts to record in a soulful style. One of the white acts signed to the label was Mike Peace of Atilla & The Huns (later Filet of Soul); he had four releases on the label and he provides an insight into the scene at that time



Photo by Michael Peace



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*"My band Atilla and the Huns were so impressed with Harvey Scales live performance that we decided right then and there that we would start doing more Soul Music. We eventually became so good at it that we ended up changing the band name to Filet of Soul. Many of the recordings we did managed to fool the black radio station execs into playing our music on solid black stations. This was Lenny's idea. He knew he could promote a white band through his predominately black channels and he knew that he could also get plays on white stations as well".*

LaCour got his singers and bands from Chicago and occasionally Milwaukee. From the latter city the most famous label signings were Harvey Scales and Marvel Love. Lacour also produced many of the sides himself. The label started around 1965, and went in several stops and starts, up until the final releases in the early 80s. Towards the end LaCour tried hard to break into the disco market, and a lot of the better soul releases from this period are hidden away as B sides to disco 45's. Thereafter what happened to LaCour is still a mystery. Mike Peace commented on this:

*"Lennie Lacour in 1977 was working at a recording studio in Maywood, IL Enterprise Studios under the direction of Bob Kader. When Filet of Soul recorded their last LP Album we ran into Lennie there. Later in 1995 I saw and spoke briefly with him in a*

*Taco Bell restaurant in Willowbrook, IL and I know that was not far from his home. He and his son were working together in some sort of delivery business".*

What I have listed below is probably as close to a complete list of the soul related releases as you'll find, but it comes with a lengthy health warning - some of these records are pretty difficult to find, and there may be other soul related releases that I don't have. Also the numbering system is pretty crazy, and goes upwards from 2001, through 3000 series, then 7000, 8000 and 9000 series - despite the variety, they still managed to duplicate a number of releases. Each numbering series probably symbolises a fresh re-launch for the label, and one can only speculate as to why the label kept stopping and starting. The final part of the health warning - there are some excellent 45s on this label, there are also some pretty ghastly efforts, I'll pull no punches as I take you through the soul of Magic Touch. I'd also like to thank Mike Peace for his assistance in providing some insight into the label and Lenny LaCour.

2001 Junior & The Classics "Wise up / Stock blues in B".

This was a Robert Brantley group who had previously cut vinyl on Groovy. Rock meets soul, meets r&b, on this uptempo beater backed with a dreary blues B-side. Hardly an auspicious sounding start for the label, this 45 was distributed by Atco (Atlantic) (Masters 10517/10518).

45-2002 The Suspicions "Soul Beat / A winter's serenade"

You'd think with a title and group name like that, this would be a strong 45? Wrong - an organ led r&b instrumental that's not really going anywhere special - it could almost have been used as incidental music in the 60's TV series "Batman"!, coupled with a dull instrumental combo sound.

Writer credits include S.Perrone, M Shukque and R Giesek - it's a fair bet these were members of the group.

2003 Junior & The Classics "Wise up / Mix up (a Go-Go)".

A second issue for "Wise up", this time with a clichéd uptempo dance craze B side.

2003 Sean Mr Esquire Taylor & The Vic Pitts Cheaters "Never do I worry (about you) / Funky soul dance.

This is a pretty rare 45, good dancers both sides – probably not distributed because of the mix up with numbers.

MT-2004 Marvelle & The Blue Match "Soul Fever / A whole lotta lovin"

The first of two on the label that I am aware of for this group - which was actually led by Marvel Love; more on him later. The A side is an uptempo song espousing the spread of soul music on which Marvelle tries to emulate Wilson Pickett. "A whole lotta lovin" is a much better side, with an almost on the 4's rolling tempo, bleating sax and a catchy tune. A good one.

2005 Gary Brown "Would you laugh at me / Oh my love"

I don't have this 45. Probably the Detroit singer who had other releases.

2006 Evelyn Smith "You don't mean a thing to me / Don't (Make me no promises)"

This was Arranged by Al Vance, one of the members of Harvey Scales backing band the Seven Sounds and someone who was later to work on a host of sides, and most importantly co wrote with Scales Johnnie Taylor's smash hit "*Disco lady*". This side is a credible northern sound, with a young enthusiastic soprano setting down a plea for her old boyfriend to leave her alone. B-side is a slow wailer.

2007 Harvey Scales & The Seven Sounds "Get down /Love-itis"

"Get Down" was also co-written by Al Vance and Harvey Scales, and is a sound in a style not a million miles from what Rex Garvin was doing. In fact this raw uptempo funky and beaty sound was a style that Scales was to make his own for a while with Harvey shouting out orders to the dancers ahead of a weaving sax and bleating horns. "Love-Itis" meanwhile is a gritty driving sound, that would not sound out of place if it was recorded 1,000 miles south where Scales styles his sound a little like Otis Redding. This was the second Atco distributed 45 (12965/12966)

2008 Sean Taylor "Put me down easy / Too late to turn back now"

A song that was written by J. Taylor - I cannot confirm that it is a young Johnnie Taylor, or whether Sean Taylor was a relation. This is a good midtempo soul side with a somewhat thinner backing, backed with an uptempo and quite commercial sounding tale of cheating that once again got national distribution via Atco (13691/13692). "Too late" was the official A side.

2008 Mar J's "Gotta find a way out / Forever"

Popular northern sound in recent years and that has meant that the price has gone way up.

2009 Junior & The Classics "Kill the pain / Please make love to me"

"Kill the pain" is a decent funk record with horn blasts and a 'nasty' lead vocalist, that has changes in tempo between fast and furious breaks to funky slower riffs.. The flip is a bluesy slow side. The fourth single to benefit from Atco distribution (13688/13689).

2009 Non soul - Atilla & The Huns "Hula shake / Hurry back"

Seemingly there were two records numbered 2009.

MTA 16001 Harvey Scales & The Seven Sounds "Broadway freeze / I can't cry no more"

In 1966 Volt Records replaced Atco, and picked up a national distribution deal for Magic Touch, which lasted for precisely one 45 -this ubiquitous dance craze. Both sides of this 45 are set at uptempo pace, "Freeze" being something of a novelty record with it's stops and starts. After this LeCour switches distribution to local Chicago label Chess.....

2069 Harvey Scales & The Seven Sounds "Love is a gas (But how sweet it is) / "(It's too good) Too good to be true"

By now we are in 1969, and bizarrely when the deal with Chess was signed, Magic Touch releases used the main Chess label numbering system for this and the next two releases. Thereafter it continued in sequential order, but was no longer distributed by Chess – you see how confusing this becomes! Both sides of this 45 are good; the top side being good uptempo soul, quite commercial sounding, whilst "Too good to be true" is a credible fast northern style dancer, with a stomping tempo.

2070 Non soul - The Huns of Time "Walking in the vineyards / Here's where I get off"

2071 Non soul - Atilla & The Huns "Vineyards of my time / Here's where I get off"

Chess distribution ends at this point, though Magic Touch continues to release numbers in sequential order, parallel to Chess.

2072 Harvey Scales & The 7 Sounds "Don't you ever let it end"/ The 7 Sounds "The sound of soul"

The A side is a fantastic deep soul side, and probably one of Scales finest moments on vinyl as he pleads and tears his heart out backed by baying female background singers. The flip is instrumental. Fantastic deep soul.

2073 ?

2074 Non Soul - Dino Perrone & The Cratered Moon "Here's Where I get Off / Moon Landing"

This was written by Mike Peace, though the writer credits also name LaCour; this is because Mike's contract specified that LaCour would appear as a writer on his songs (thereby qualifying for writer royalties).

2075 Sonny Freeze "Blue Christmas / Ain't getting nothing for Christmas"

I don't have this 45, and don't know anything about Sonny, except that Mike Peace told me that Sonny Freeze was on a recording session with Filet of Soul as he added some clapping and "*come on baby's*" on a song called "Do Your Own Thing" recorded at Chess Studios.

2076 Marvelle & The Blue Match "A man ain't nothing until a woman takes his name / Don't end up like me"

Marvel Love's second 45 for the label, and once again it is an extremely good deep soul song, with the wedding march for the intro, before a simple probably 3-4 piece combo start the song; one with a raw edge that really 'makes it'. Actually the B side of "Don't end up like me" which is a rolling uptempo sound with a notable sax break. Marvel Love was actually to continue a sporadic but fine solo career highlights being the in demand modern dancer "Don't break that rule", and a remake of the old "No Tell Motel". He was also heavily involved in New World records in the late 70s and 80s (maybe his own label).

2077 Harvey Scales & The Seven Sounds "Welcome home / Track down"

Surprisingly hard to find 45. I don't have this. Horror!

2078 Filet of Soul "Proud Mary /"(Get out get out) We want peace"

This was the band Atilla & The Huns renamed, and led by Mike Peace.

Thereafter the label ceases production for a while. Harvey Scales continues to record for Chess and Cadet through the rest of the 60's and early 70s, recording a number of significant sides, culminating with the gem floater "I'll run to your side" for Cadet.

3002 B B Jones "The real thing / Stoop down (Way way down)"

This 45 was from about 1969 and both songs are guitar led with "Stoop down" being the funkier of the two sides - another dance craze with clichéd lyrics ("Stoop down to the East, Stoop down to the West" etc.)

About 1975 the label restarts the 3000 series with a red logo for one release by Harvey Scales, by now backed by the Seven Seas. I am not sure whether they were the Seven Sounds or not.

3002 Harvey Scales and the Seven Seas "Trying to survive / Bump your thang"

The A side is one of the best soul releases on the label, mixing successfully a hard funk riff with a dance beat, on an effective tale of hardship with Scales questioning the inequalities of our society. At the chorus he breaks into a Curtis Mayfield style of vocal delivery, and I am surprised this has not been played more. Flip captures the "Bump" style popular in discos in 1975.

7004 Connie Mackey "I found a love / Make your life"

I don't have this 45.

7005?

7006 Harvey Scales & The Seven Sounds "Rock the world / Groove on sexy lady"

A heavy laden song that has Harvey once again wishing to change things for the better; sadly the song is not so strong. "Groove on" is better and quite laid back.

8001/8002 The Desperados "Disco dancer / I am lonely"

Forget the A side, the B side is the one here; a slow 'wrist slasher' all about a guy who's missing his girl. Quite well sung, but suffering a bit from a slightly amateurish production. Co penned by Jr. Pillar and the Desperados (sic).

8002 Harvey Scales & The Seven Sounds "Groove on sexy lady / Rock the world"

The numbering system goes wrong again! There were two 8002's. This one is a straight reissue of 7006 - 7006 is sky blue, 8002 is yellow, with "Groove on sexy lady" extended by 20 seconds and promoted to the A side.

8003 C.O.D's featuring Tommy Brown "Gimme your love / Funky disco"

1976 saw just about the last 45 release of any significance for this one time Chicago group who hit with a series of some six 45's on Kell Mac (biggest hit was "Michael the lover"). By now led by one Tommy Brown (he does not appear on the Kellmac line up interestingly enough). This one is a nice release, though slightly off key, it has a catchy midpace lilt and has been a 45 that Soul Sam and myself have both occasionally featured. The B side is "Get out here on the dance floor" stuff.

8004?

8005 Triplet Twins & Double Trouble "Gonna change / Part 2"

Another side that has enjoyed some success with modern collectors (and again occasional modern scene spins). By now the label has changed away from the rabbit in hat with wand logo, to one where Magic Touch is written down the side of the label in ornate writing. The record itself has a slow start, before speeding up, as if the turntable ramps from 33 to 45, before breaking into a chugging dancer. The horns and strings were arranged by Maurice Commander, and towards the end the tricky rhythm makes it a bit tough to keep up with song, all adding to the charm. The Triplet's had been round for a few years, and in fact Leon Triplet is still issuing CD's, including one in 2002.

Here are their noteworthy other sides:

Thomas 809 - "Get it" (slow funky number) c/w "Pretty please", a sort of lightweight Sam & Dave type sound, but quite pleasant.

Markeda 147 "Me myself and I" - strangely the record title is "Tell it to my face", an uptempo side with lots of wah-wah guitars and sounding just right for a Blaxploitation movie c/w "Roote Tooter" which isn't so hot. This record was one issue before Gene Marshall & Ghetto Sons collectible "One shirt".

Jay Pee "Black sensuous girl" - more of a subtle floater c/w a retitled remake of the Markeda 45 "From the rooter to the Scooter".

8006/8007

8008 Bill Meredith Band "Tricentennial Boogie / Thinkin' of Ray"

These are two jazzy instrumentals, the A side being brass led with a fast clip clop beat, while the B side is a slow guitar and sax led workout.

8009

8010 James Monroe "Frontiersman of the galaxy / Funky lady"

By now we are into 1977, and James may well have been a fictitious name, I don't know. Despite a very amateurish production, this is a credible midpace soul 45, and one that is quite catchy. The B side is a semi spoken slowish funk record. Both sides were self penned.

8011

8012 David Marshall "Something about you (that turns me on) / Love maker (Sheet shaker)"

Another single where the singer penned both sides, and in this case both sides of this 45 have girls on call and response, but neither side really works. The A side is the better of the two, and the B side is the faster side, but the lyrics are, as bad as the title suggests.

At this point the label numbering changed again to a 9000 series (though there was also to be a 7000 series release in 1981).

9001 Lenny LaCour "Mona Lisa / Simple life"  
Not for soul fans.

9002 Krystal "Body dance / False alarm"

The top side is a funky and predictable disco 45, but it hides on the B side one of the best releases on the label, a sublime slowie, and a song that sold a few copies. Al Vance co-wrote both sides. The group also had a later release on Spring in 1979.

9003 Harvey Scales "Follow the disco crowd / Love thief "

Harvey is back with another release (1977) and the A side is actually one of the better records of it's genre, and Harvey's lyrics put it beyond the crowd as far as disco records go - in some ways a bit like Z Z & Co "Getting ready for the get down". "Love Thief" is an uptempo tale of a wounded man, and not that good. "Disco crowd" also got issued as a 12" single featuring William Ray "You are what you are", which is quite rare. Lenny used the mixing talents of one Rick Gianatos on several of the more disco orientated releases.

9004 The Delta's "Do the spank / Gonna move on"

I am pretty sure this is the same group who were recording back in the early 70's on New Chicago Sound ("Hey girl just like you" etc).

The A side takes the slower funk style, of say the Ohio Players, but once again it's the B side that will be of more interest to readers here with it's off key horns. Not instance but quite a nice slower sound.

9007 Paul Clarke "Can't I make it up to you / When the feeling hits you"

Butch turned one of these up, and the topside is an uninspiring pop release c/w a weak disco B side.

9008 Lake Shore Drive "The disco scene / Part 2"

Into 1978 with a straight "1-2-3-4 Get on down" disco record.

9011 Brighter Side of Darkness "He made you mine /Disco ball"

After the spoken intro rap, the A side becomes a lovely slow sound. The B side is a disco number (you'd never guess) taken at breakneck speed. Clarence Johnson's group came to Magic Touch after a successful spell at 20<sup>th</sup> Century, released this one 45 then left again.

9018 Clifford Brown "Get your act together / Special lady"

The A side is a very fast (too fast) number - it actually sounds better at -8 speed on your Technics 1212; it's a catchy tune and at a slower pace this would have been good. "Special lady" is almost (but not quite) a modern soul dancer, with regular tempo changes.

7047 Lonnie Larry & The Almighty Sonics - "Don't burn / You can't leave me"

Curiously out of sequence, this 45 from 1981 has a reasonably good tune ("You can't leave me") behind a strong male lead. Sadly once again, being the better soul side it is relegated to the B side of "Don't burn" another disco ditty.

By now we are into 1982, and the last few releases on the label, sadly apart from the last release they won't be of any interest to readers.

9023 Non soul -Lenny LaCour "Rockin' Rosalie versus Disco Bill / Bamboo Walls"

Avoid.

9024 Non Soul -Lenny LaCour "America I love you / Chicago, My Chicago"

Even worse than the above.

9025 ?

9026 Slapjack "Party hardy / Back again"

A side is straight disco, the B side is a very commercial almost poppy sound, poorly produced.

9027 LaJohn & Sheela "too far gone / Everybody's problem"

Reputedly good but I don't have this.

And that's that – all I have on Magic Touch Records from Chicago. Additions would be welcomed, despite some rather dyslexic numbering, I cannot believe there aren't one or two further good soul releases out there somewhere.