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A Historical Overview of Black Gospel Music in Los Angeles

by Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, University of California, Los Angeles

Although in the past two decades much research has been done on gospel music, little attention has been given to the state of gospel music in California and, more specifically, in Los Angeles. James Cleveland, who is known as the "King" or "Crown Prince" of gospel music, believes that Los Angeles is the "western mecca for gospel music" (Cleveland 1987). Gospel music did not crystallize into an art form in the United States until the 1920s and 1930s. Although in the thirties and forties Sallie Martin, Robert Anderson, and other gospel singers and gospel quartets traveled to Los Angeles (White 1987; Moore 1987; Heilbut 1975), there were problems for gospel artists who ventured to come west. While those who performed the more established musical traditions—e.g., spirituals, jazz, blues, and art music—could be assured, to some degree, of a full house once they arrived (primarily because they had developed an audience over the years), the same could not be said for gospel. Ineze Caston, the director of the Gospel Chorus at Trinity Baptist Church in Los Angeles and a native of Mississippi who moved to Los Angeles in the early 1940s, has stated that "it was difficult for them at first because people just were not accepting them. But they continued to come" (Caston 1987).

Some churches were more suppor-

tive than others. For example, during the 1930s and early 1940s, People's Independent Church of Christ, New Hope Baptist, and Phillips Temple Colored Methodist Episcopal often had programs that included gospel music. Some churches even organized gospel choirs, e.g., People's Independent; Zion Hill Baptist; Bethel Church of Christ, Holiness; Progressive Baptist; Emmanuel Church of God in Christ; and Phillips Temple. By the late 1930s and early 1940s certain individuals and groups within the city began to perform gospel music professionally. Although they never received national acclaim, they were considered "stars" in their home towns. Among these were the Ever Ready Quartet, the E-Flat Gospel Singers, the Radio Four Gospel Singers, the Cornerstone Quartet, the Carter Sisters, William Gillespie, Earl Amos Pleasant, Eugene Douglass Smallwood, and Arthur Atlas Peters.¹

By the 1940s gospel music began to flourish in Los Angeles primarily because of the institutional support that it received. Not only could performers depend on continued patronage from the church, but organizations began to give recognition to gospel music. As more gospel choirs were or-

ganized in the different churches, clubs were also formed to develop interest in the genre. Furthermore, other denominations began to organize gospel choirs and sponsor gospel artists. For example, it was not uncommon for the N. P. Greggs Gospel Choir at People's Independent to coordinate a series of events over a period of months to promote gospel music.

It is also noteworthy that some of the performers who made a name for themselves singing gospel music in various churches in the city during the 1930s subsequently organized and became pastors of their own churches during the 1940s. Most noted among them were Arthur Atlas Peters (Victory Baptist Church), Earl Amos Pleasant (Mount Moriah Baptist), Eugene Douglass Smallwood (Opportunity Baptist), and, in Long Beach, California, Nathan John Kirkpatrick (New Hope Baptist). Not only did they establish excellent music programs in their churches, but it was not uncommon for them to organize extravaganzas where gospel music was featured, such as the event entitled "Gospel Music Lane," which occurred in October 1946 for the benefit of the Victory Baptist Church's building fund. The program featured local and nationally known gospel artists: the [Doris] Akers Singers, the Smith

1. This information was obtained from black newspapers in the city: the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and the *Los Angeles Tribune*.

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Jubilee Singers, the Crusaders, the Victory Baptist Trio, and others ("Musical Feast Slated" 1946).

Also during the 1940s the performance of gospel music outside the church setting began to occur on a more frequent basis. The Sallie Martin Singers, mezzo-soprano Ever-Brewer Hudson, and the Phillips Temple C.M.E. Choir appeared in a benefit concert at the Philharmonic Auditorium on November 5, 1944 ("Church Music Concert at Philharmonic" 1944). In 1946 an event called "Spring Singing on Parade" was held at the Embassy Auditorium on March 22. Thomas Dorsey, a pioneer who is now known as the "Father of Gospel Music," made a rare appearance in Los Angeles when he performed at Wrigley Field on April 14, 1946 (Dorsey 1946, 11).

Support also came from the media. As early as 1939 a program known as the Gold Hour was heard over radio station KGfJ nightly at 6:30 P.M. Sponsored by the Gold Furniture Company, located at Washington Boulevard and Central Avenue in Los Angeles, the program featured Floyd G. Covington as Master of Ceremonies. Noteworthy is the fact that Mrs. A.C.H. Bilbrew, the organizer and director of the programs, instituted a gospel song night on each Wednesday evening as part of the weekly series. Initially, Norris J. Stokes, a local performer, was the featured guest. In subsequent shows other artists and groups were presented, e.g., Arthur A. Peters and His Gospel Four, the Four Harmonizers Quartet, Phillips Temple Gospel Choir (William Smallwood, director), Earl A. Pleasant, and the Women's Chorus of the Church of Christ Holiness (Mrs. O'Connor, director).

Several other radio programs in the area promoted gospel music, the two most noted being those that were presented at Saint Paul Baptist Church and Grace Memorial Church of God in Christ. The broadcast at Saint Paul Baptist began in 1947 after John L. Branham, originally from Chicago,

became pastor of the church. James Earle Hines (1916–1960), a native of Georgia who had received extensive training in the performance of both art and gospel music, was hired as the church's new choir director (Heilbut 1975, 12–13, 270–271, 317; Hines 1987). Hines had been well prepared for this new position. Not only had he worked with several church choirs in Ohio, but while in Cincinnati during the 1930s, Hines was asked by the president of the National Baptist Convention, Dr. L. K. Williams, to become a member of the Goodwill Singers—a group that was to represent the Convention in song. On many occasions he also served as national director of the National Baptist Convention Choir when it met in various cities throughout the United States. While living and working in Cleveland during the 1940s, Hines performed with the Wings Over Jordan Choir (Hines 1987), an organization that "won wide recognition during the 1930s–40s as a broadcasting church choir. Founded by Glenn T. Settle, pastor of the Gethsemane Church in Cleveland, Ohio, the choir made its radio debut in July 1937" (Southern 1983, 414).

During the time that Hines was at Saint Paul, the gospel choir (known as the Echoes of Eden) grew to more than one hundred voices and "was heard over the radio in 17 states with a listening audience of one million people, the largest on the West Coast. The first broadcast took place on February 27, 1947, from the 'old church,' at 27th and Naomi Streets" ("Renowned Echo's of Eden" 1986, 8). The group was one of the first church choirs to popularize gospel music and to make commercial recordings ("I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me"—Capitol 40018, April 1947—and "What Could I Do If It Wasn't for the Lord?"—Capitol 40076, June 1947) (Boyer 1988). Although Hines left Saint Paul in 1949, the broadcast continued through 1957 with several people serving as director: R. L. Hatter, R. L. Knowles, Sallie Martin, Allen Jackson, and Maurice McGehee. Cora Martin Moore (daughter of Sallie Martin), a

featured soloist with the Echoes of Eden Choir and a gospel artist and songwriter in her own right, has been the minister of music at Saint Paul since 1958.

Grace Memorial Church of God in Christ came into prominence during the 1940s and 1950s when Bishop William Jack Taylor (1915–1963) was pastor. He was pastor of Orange Avenue Church of God in Christ in El Centro, California, before moving to Grace Memorial in Los Angeles in 1941. Shortly after his arrival in Los Angeles, he began a broadcast of his church service.

By the 1950s Grace Memorial was one of the important centers for gospel music in Los Angeles. It was not so much what the choir sang, but rather the way in which they performed it. Flossie Taylor (1987), wife of Bishop Taylor, says, "We started off with probably fifteen or twenty. We [just used] whoever was there. At one time, we had 115 young kids singing in the choir. We just asked: 'Can you sing? Do you want to sing? We'll teach you how to sing.' And we always tried to hire the best to teach them to sing. So we were noted as having the best choir in town." J. Earle Hines, Arthur A. Peters, Earl A. Pleasant, Thurston G. Frazier, Maurice McGehee, James Cleveland, and others have served as director of the choir.

In the opinion of Charles Johnson (1987), a gospel songwriter and performer who moved to Los Angeles in 1967, "Grace was like the meeting place for gospel singers. They had a broadcast on Sunday nights from 10:00 to 11:00. It was just professional. It was the epitome of what was going on. Many of the gospel singers who came into the city performed there."

In contrast to Saint Paul, Grace Memorial, and other churches that had radio broadcasts, Victory Baptist was one of the first black churches on the West Coast to be televised. Established in 1943 by Arthur A. Peters (1911?–1975), Victory Baptist came to be known as one of the most prominent churches in Los Angeles not only for its music program but

also because of the involvement of Peters in the political affairs of the community.²

According to Johnson (1987), "Victory was a kind of melting pot, a place where a number of the gospel singers would come and sing. During revival time, Reverend Peters, who also sang, actually brought prominent gospel singers to be a part of the revival" Besides the many visiting artists who performed at the church, several local musicians worked at Victory. Among them were J. Earle Hines, Robbie Williams (mother of rhythm-and-blues performer Billy Preston and gospel performer Rodena Preston Williams), R. L. Hatter, Don Lee White, Sammie Carrol, Maurice McGehee, James Cleveland, Thurston G. Frazier, and the present minister of music, Samuel C. Spann. Gertrude Murphy Ward (1901-1981) of the Ward Singers eventually joined Victory; her daughter, Clara Ward (1924-1973), sometimes assisted with the choir (Spann 1987).

During the 1950s, when Thurston Gilbert Frazier (1930-1974) served at the Sunday evening telecast as the director of the Voice of Victory Choir (a group composed of more than 150 voices), Victory reached its greatest acclaim. Born in Houston, Texas, Frazier received much of his early exposure to music from his aunt, Willie Mae Powell, who was an organist; she encouraged him to study music formally and to build a career in the field (Powell 1987). The family moved in the late 1930s to Los Angeles where Frazier completed Jefferson High School and attended Los Angeles City College. After singing with the Wings Over Jordan Choir and directing at Opportunity Baptist and Phillips Temple C.M.E., Frazier went to Victory Baptist. He and Albert A. Goodson (b. 1933 in Los Angeles and composer of the gospel song "We've Come This Far by Faith") also studied with J. Earle Hines and became copublishers of gospel music. After leaving Victory, Frazier and Gwen-

dolyn Lightner,³ former pianist for Mahalia Jackson, formed a community group called the Voices of Hope. In 1959 he joined the music program at Mount Moriah, where Reverend Earl A. Pleasant (1918-1974) was pastor.

Like Victory, Mount Moriah became one of the more established churches in the city. However, the public did not respond to the church's radio broadcast in the same manner as they did with programs at Saint Paul, Grace Memorial, and Victory. Olga Pleasant, wife of Earl A. Pleasant, was the first person to direct the music program. Later, R. L. Hatter and Gwendolyn Lightner joined the staff. The church eventually won great distinction in the community for its music, Frazier and Pleasant working as a team. Both had the ability to sing and the power to conduct and command a choir (Douroux 1987).

Mount Moriah is important also because "it was the foundation through which Margaret [Pleasant Douroux, daughter of Earl A. Pleasant], became acculturated musically [to] gospel. Just as Thurston was an apprentice under Professor [J. Earle] Hines, Margaret was an apprentice under Thurston" (Johnson 1987). Douroux (b. 1941 in Los Angeles) studied music at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but received all of her formal degrees from universities in California. She composed her first song in 1968—"Give Me a Clean Heart," which is included in a number of hymn books. Since that time, she has written more than one hundred gospel songs.

Trailblazers are those who guide and find a path for others. J. Earle Hines, Arthur A. Peters, Earl A. Pleasant, and Thurston G. Frazier were such individuals. What was even more important is the fact that they were supported by institutions within their community. Had there not been a Saint Paul, a Grace

Memorial, a Victory, or a Mount Moriah, these musicians probably would not have had the necessary support to nurture and develop their skills and talents. A spirit of competition and cooperation existed among the performers, and new standards of professionalism were set.

The 1950s and the 1960s can be regarded as a period of change within the field of gospel music in Los Angeles. More people were knowledgeable about and had begun to accept the music. The fact that the tradition had garnered a certain degree of institutional support caused more artists to choose Los Angeles as a place of residence. Coupled with the socioeconomic opportunities available in the city, musicians felt that they could easily maintain a livelihood in Los Angeles. Experimentation with performance style and context began to occur, but this did not mean that traditional gospel music had lost its appeal.

Doris Akers was born in 1923 in Brookfield, Missouri. After her arrival in Los Angeles in 1945, she performed with the Sallie Martin Singers, the Simmons-Akers Singers, and other groups. Yet she came into greater prominence as a solo artist in the 1950s and 1960s, for she was one of the first to bridge the gap between black and white gospel music (Heilbut 1975, 320). According to Johnson (1987), "Doris' style of music is a Euro-Western kind of gospel. She was associated with Sky Pilot, a Pentecostal kind of church that was popular among whites." Composer of more than five hundred songs, Akers (1988) states that she became known as an established songwriter in 1946 with the publication of "A Double Portion of God's Love," published by Martin and Morris Music, Inc. Such songs as "Lead Me, Guide Me," "Grow Closer," and "God Is So Good" are just a few of her songs that appear in various hymnals and religious song books.

Bessie Griffin, born in 1927 in New Orleans, moved to Los Angeles in

2. Peters became the first president of the SCLC when it was organized in Los Angeles (Peters 1977).

3 Lightner is also known as Gwendolyn Cooper (see Heilbut 1975, 302). Her maiden name is Gwendolyn Capps. After her second marriage, she took the name Gwendolyn Lightner.

Overview, continued

1959. Robert "Bumps" Blackwell, her agent at the time, encouraged her to move to work in a movie project. Although the movie did not materialize, she stayed in Los Angeles and starred in a stage presentation called *Portraits in Bronze*. Griffin likes to credit herself as being the first to take gospel into the nightclubs: "I was the first to take gospel singing into the nightclub. We started at the Renaissance on Sunset Strip in the early 1960s. As a result we went to the Ash Grove, another club, and all around Los Angeles and to Las Vegas with a lot of criticism" (Griffin 1987). In spite of the criticism, she became recognized in Los Angeles for her performance of gospel. She was often invited to perform at concerts in churches, colleges, and major auditoriums around the country, and she has traveled extensively outside the United States as a representative of the federal government.

About the same time, Clara Ward and the Ward Singers, who moved to Los Angeles in the 1960s, became known for their performance of gospel music in nightclubs. They regularly had engagements at Disneyland, Las Vegas, and clubs across the country. They were particularly noted for their elaborate and lively stage productions (Spann 1987; Heilbut 1974, 111; Southern 1982, 390-391).

James Cleveland, born in 1931 in Chicago, settled permanently in Los Angeles in 1962. He states that there were two reasons why he decided to move there: "1) A friend of mine wanted me to come out here and work with the church where she was working [Annette May Thomas, daughter of gospel singer Brother Joe May, was working at Greater Harvest Baptist Church⁴]. 2) I just wanted a change from back East. I was kind of looking for another door to open where I could be a little more expressive with my talents" (Cleveland 1987). After working at Greater Har-

vest for several years, he went on the road to promote his new album, *Peace Be Still*, recorded on Savoy MG 14076. Later in the 1960s he established several organizations that have had a tremendous impact on the development of gospel music in general: the Gospel Music Workshop, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in August 1987; the Cornerstone Institutional Gospel Church, established in 1968; and the Southern California Community Choir, which has been in existence since 1969 (Southern 1982, 74). Without a doubt, James Cleveland should be regarded as one of the most recognized gospel musicians in Los Angeles. Because of his accomplishments, contributions, and encouragement to others, his achievements are well respected.

Today, there are many contemporary gospel musicians in the city. Andrae Crouch and his twin sister, Sandra (b. 1942 in Los Angeles), are renowned for their contributions in this area. They were reared in the Church of God in Christ. According to Johnson (1987), Andrae Crouch "is a prolific [composer] and one of America's best gospel writers. Because of his unique style and sensitivity for hearing and ability to play piano, he is able to put all of that together and come up with a good end result. As a result of his performances, Euro-Western cultures began to perform the music."

Some of the other gospel musicians who have established themselves in the city are Charles May (son of Brother Joe May), Rodena Preston Williams, Robert Henry, Quincy Fielding, Ricky Grundy, and Calvin Bernard Rhone. A tradition that started in earlier years but has continued into the present is the preponderance of small groups. In addition, the community choir has also gained popularity. In past years Eugene D. Smallwood, Earl A. Pleasant, J. Earle Hines, Thurston G. Frazier, and Harrison Johnson were some of the forerunners to organize large community choirs. Today, the number of both types—small groups and community choirs—is quite

large. Some of the more prominent include James Cleveland and the Southern California Community Choir, the Quincy Fielding Choral Ensemble, the Everlasting Children of God, James Galloway and New Beginning, Rodena Preston and the Voices of Deliverance, Stan Lee and the Stan Lee Choral Ensemble, the Los Angeles Gospel Messengers, the Pentecostal Community Choir, and Lonnie Morgan and the Voices of Praise.

No longer are there just three or four churches in the city that serve as centers for the promotion of gospel music. As Don Lee White (1987) explains, gospel is probably used in ninety percent of the churches in Los Angeles. Even those church members who consider themselves to be traditionalists use a variety of music types for worship: hymns, anthems, spirituals, and gospel music. So in that sense, gospel is widespread. Some of the churches that are particularly outstanding include Cornerstone Institutional Baptist, Double Rock Baptist, West Angeles Church of God in Christ, Greater Ebenezer Baptist, Saint Paul Baptist, Mount Moriah Baptist, Brookins African Methodist Episcopal, and First African Methodist Episcopal.

Gospel music has infiltrated various mainline institutions that heretofore did not recognize it as a viable form for worship. Today several Roman Catholic churches in the city have adopted gospel (DjeDje 1986). Although it was not the first to begin this innovation, Saint Brigid Catholic Church Gospel Choir, directed by Charles Johnson, is one of the most recognized choirs in the city for its performance of gospel music. Other Roman Catholic church choirs that are known for their performance of gospel music include Transfiguration, Holy Name of Jesus, and Holy Spirit.

The extent to which Hollywood has influenced the development of gospel music in Los Angeles is an important question. Individuals with a variety of responses to the question can be grouped into two categories: those who believe that Hollywood has in no way affected gospel in Los An-

4. The church, after some reorganization by its pastor, Reverend Tim M. Chambers, later became known as Ever Faithful Baptist.

geles and those who believe that, on the other hand, Hollywood has benefited from gospel music. For example, Flossie Taylor (1987) noted that many white performers now sound like blacks because they have adopted a black performance style. Reflecting similarly, Rodena Preston Williams (1987) said: "I think Hollywood is just beginning to realize that we exist. I get a lot of calls from booking agents who are looking for people to do commercials. I had a group to appear on one of the 'Webster's' shows. And that's one of the favorite re-runs they have. We did it about two years ago, and they just keep playing it over and over. And when they want a church scene or a choir, that's when we get the calls. And they're starting to write more of these into their scripts." Margaret Douroux (1987) referred to the fact that most of the individuals in the popular music world have received their musical training in the church, and in that way, gospel music has influenced Hollywood.

The future for gospel in Los Angeles appears to be bright. However, many gospel artists are concerned about respectability and the fact that

the genre is not being recognized as a true art form as are jazz, blues, spirituals, and art music.

In summary, we see that gospel music in Los Angeles has had a rich history. Some of the best and the greatest artists have either traveled to or chosen to reside in the city. With this foundation, gospel musicians in Los Angeles are now regarded as innovators; they are the ones who travel to different parts of the country introducing new styles and setting new trends.

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Music in the Lives of Blacks in California: The Beginnings

by Hanson L. Caldwell, California State University, Dominguez Hills

In approaching the study of blacks in music in the United States, one usually acknowledges the significance of the year 1619, thereafter focusing upon the concomitant emergence of slavery and slave songs. Over the next 246 years, a rich musical heritage evolved that serves as the subject of most current literature on the topic of the evolution of blacks in music in the United States. However, the United States, as geographically defined today, did not exist in 1619. Certainly, California, the state whose inhabitants today contribute in such a vital way to the achievements of blacks in music, was slow in develop-

ing. Wars and substantial migration had to occur first. Consequently, in approaching the study of blacks in music in California, one instead acknowledges the significance of 1579 (the year Sir Francis Drake stopped in the San Francisco Bay area, accompanied by four blacks who then became the first blacks to touch land in present day California), 1781 (the year the city of Los Angeles was founded by a group of families, at least one-half of which included people of African heritage), and 1850 (the year California entered the Union as the thirty-first state); one notes the territory's evolution to statehood through

Spanish and subsequent Mexican rule; and then one awaits the arrival of the twentieth century.

Today, California in general and Los Angeles in particular, is known as the multicultural capital of the country (Risichin 1973). The diversity found in today's population has its roots in the state's very beginnings. During its evolution, there was substantial mixing of cultures, a fact that has had a significant impact upon the development of a black musical culture within the state. Blacks were present in the area from the very

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beginning, but it was a very different kind of presence than one finds on the Atlantic seaboard. A number of the founders of Los Angeles were of African ancestry. People of African heritage helped start the school system in San Francisco and owned Rancho Rodeo de Las Aguas, known today as Beverly Hills, and the area now known as the San Fernando Valley. Four people of African heritage served in the capacity of governor of the territory. However, these early California blacks considered themselves to be of Mexican ancestry and studiously avoided any recognition of their African background. They did not sing spirituals, and neither did the generations that followed.

Actually, the African-American founders and early settlers of the territory were few in number and remained a minuscule percentage of the population for a century and a half. Records show that not until 1850 were there even 1,000 blacks in California, with only 12 in Los Angeles County. Then, between 1850 and 1860, the black population increased to approximately 5,000 with the majority consisting of free blacks immigrating to San Francisco and Sacramento, the area of the state that was growing at the impetus of the gold rush (Lapp 1977). By 1910 the state's black population had grown to 21,645 with a significant number now living in the Los Angeles area (about 7,599). Before taking comfort in the certainty of numbers, however, one must provide a disclaimer. The fact is that the specific numbers are questionable, because the U.S. Census for 1860 only counted free blacks. Furthermore, Kenneth Goode's text, *California's Black Pioneers*, asserts that

Many mulattoes, octoroons and castas, for obvious reasons, opted to pass for white when California came under United States control, and therefore estimates of the number of blacks in California between 1848 and 1900 are confusing (Goode 1973, 107).

Still, it is quite apparent that be-

cause of the practice of race denial, the existence of some racial temperance, the mixing of the cultures, and the generally small numbers found in a black population spread thinly across a vast state, and in spite of the existence of very strong Jim Crow practices in portions of the territory, a strong black musical culture was slow to emerge in California. The black community itself was getting organized, particularly in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas. Methodist, A.M.E., and Baptist churches flourished. Private schools were opened for the children. Businesses and political organizations were established. Medical, legal, and educational professionals emerged, and social clubs provided a framework for secular entertainment. These are the organizations within which a musical culture was to develop. Their musical accomplishments were announced, usually without much detail, in the black press of the territory, including *The Mirror of the Times*, *The Pacific Appeal* (a weekly newspaper devoted to the "interests of the Colored people of California and to their Moral, Intellectual and Political advancement") and *The Elevator*, all of San Francisco, and *The New Age* and *The California Eagle* of Los Angeles.

In the nineteenth century, music in the state (particularly in the Los Angeles area) generally consisted of that provided by army and civilian brass bands, poorly attended appearances by visiting light opera companies from Mexico or traveling minstrel shows from the East, and hymn and oratorio singing in the churches. The more popular songs of the mid-1880s were mining camp songs and cowboy songs.

Blacks seem to have enjoyed similar repertoire. The April 19, 1862, issue of *The Pacific Appeal* provides a review of Sam Pride's Original Colored Minstrels:

We have witnessed the performance of this troupe, and can speak favorably of their ability. They are equal, and in some cases superior to any in their peculiar line. Their per-

formances are amusing and highly ludicrous—exaggerated, of course; all such burlesques must necessarily be, whether of Yankee, Irish or Negro character, but with all, well calculated to excite the visible faculties. All who like to enjoy a good hearty laugh, should go and see them. There is nothing offensive or indelicate in their performances.

Mr. Sam Pride is truly the Champion Banjoist of the world: he produces sounds from his Banjo which we never thought an instrument so crude was capable of expressing; he imitates an entire Band, in fact he almost makes the Banjo play itself. His performances are inimitable ("Sam Pride's" 1862, 3).

Obviously blacks in California enjoyed watching blacks imitate blacks as much as whites did. They also employed the services of white bands for the provision of some entertainment. Rudolph Lapp (1977, 262) gives an account of an all-white band for entertainment, despite the availability of a black band (a group directed by a Samuel Groomes). He further reports on a number of outstanding black musicians:

In their leisure time blacks were occasionally the participants or performers in gatherings that called for music or dancing. In Grass Valley, a black woman provided a most unusual musical event for a mining community. She gave public concerts on the piano, for which she charged fifty cents admission. On festive occasions such as Independence Day, which in the mines was always a time for gala celebration, there was feasting and dancing. "Black Dave" (or "Dan") was evidently the only musician in Weaverville in 1851, and his fiddle was much in demand. On the Fourth of July, Weavervillians danced in the streets to Black Dan's music, and on New Year's Eve it was again Dan who provided the music for the festivities. Frederick Windeler noted in his journal that the musical entertainment in his camp, near Indian Bar in Tuolumne County, was provided by a black cook named Joe (Lapp 1977, 89-90).

Within the institutional framework,

black church services in the San Francisco area typically included the performance of sophisticated anthems, led by distinguished conductors such as George Pennington and A. Loney. Mr. Loney's *Grand Sacred Concert*, given for the benefit of *The Pacific Appeal* newspaper on Wednesday evening, December 10, 1862, at the Powell Street Methodist Church, provides an example of such music enjoyed by blacks of the time.

This same general repertoire was performed by the blacks of Los Angeles. For this information one turns to *The California Eagle*, the newspaper that served the black community of Los Angeles during the beginning years of the twentieth century. It reports performances by the Coleridge Taylor Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Professor W. F. Wheaton and the exciting Wilkins duo (Prof. W. T. Wilkins, piano, and his father, Thomas Wilkins, flute) as the highlight of the Los Angeles celebration program recognizing the fifty-third anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation ("Emancipation Day" 1916, 1). Information is also provided about spe-

cial church services, such as the installation of officers program given by Providence Institutional Baptist Church, wherein "special installation anthems by the choir and special pipe organ selections by Mme. Williams" were performed ("Providence Inst'l Baptist Church" 1916, 3). During the same period Los Angeles was fortunate in having Miss Lorenza Jordan (now Lorenza Jordan Cole) as a resident. Miss Jordan was an outstanding concert pianist "who appeared in nearly every church and hall of any size" throughout the city in one- and sometimes two-piano recitals (with a Mr. John Gray at the second piano).

In general, it is apparent that the music culture of blacks of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in California seems to be music drawn from the Euro-American tradition. Just as the major black church of Los Angeles (First A.M.E. of Eighth and Towne) was housed in a specially designed Gothic structure designed by English architect Sir Christopher Wren, because of the minister's admiration of English architecture, so too the music

admired and performed by this community provided intellectual and cultural affirmation through the quality of its emulation. This did not begin to change until the culture of Southern blacks (primarily from Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana) was imported via substantial migration.

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A Selective Survey of Black Musicians in Los Angeles, 1890-ca. 1945

Bette Y. Cox, *Los Angeles, California*

The history of black musicians in Los Angeles dates back to the nineteenth century. Early musicians lived closely in their communities and leaned heavily on their musical and religious traditions for sources of spiritual and emotional strength.

Race relations and practices in Los Angeles between 1890 and 1945 were similar to patterns that then existed throughout the United States, where racial restrictions caused black communities to look inward and feed on their own artistic richness. In Los Angeles this response to racism opened a creative era that, in the opinions of some who lived it, made separateness

positive. By 1920 a black district existed in Los Angeles with roughly forty percent of the black population residing in an area of town that included Central Avenue. The boundaries of the Central Avenue district covered the approximate area from Eleventh Street on the north to Forty-first Street on the south and from a few blocks west of Central Avenue to Alameda Street, a few blocks east of Central Avenue. This community was a lively place in the 1920s. Numerous churches, local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, and other institutions

and organizations proliferated to serve the needs of the community. A spirit of optimism prevailed, persisting into the 1940s.

The following narrative is a running chronicle of the activities of some of the musicians who were active from these beginnings through the mid-1940s.

In the 1890s there were a number of black singing evangelists who traveled extensively, among them were Colonel James Beck and his wife "Loo." Their daughter, Pearl, per-

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Selective Survey, continued

formed with them, playing the guitar and the violin. The first black musicians to perform on the stage in Los Angeles, they played in an old whites-only hall at Fifth and Hill (later called the Philharmonic). As evangelists, the Beck family toured the entire country, drawing people everywhere to their concerts through their music (Bruington 1982).

During this same period one Annie Tivett played in the Salvation Army band in Los Angeles—the only black musician to do so at the time. And on at least one occasion, she played the banjo with John Philip Sousa's band (Bruington 1982).

Ivan Harold Browning (1891–1978), actor and singer, moved to Los Angeles in 1910. A pioneer in quartet singing, he was a member of the California Jubilee Singers and the Exposition Four, the latter group having been a big success at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1915. Browning later joined the Four Harmony Kings, who were famous for their marvelous singing and musical personalities. Browning was the leading man (Dan Jackson) in the 1924 Broadway production of Sissle and Blake's *Chocolate Dandies*. Browning performed in many cities in the United States and in Europe, where he sang for royalty. As a superb tenor, Browning became known as "The Toast of Paris." He was still performing at the age of eighty-seven, just before his death in 1978 (Browning 1978).

These individuals were the most prominent of the early black musicians in Los Angeles. As the years passed, new groups of blacks arrived, many of them had been educated in the academic disciplines and in the arts. In 1911 the first black public school teacher, Bessie Bruington Burke (ca. 1895–ca. 1975) was hired. She was a strong supporter of the arts and developed an orchestra that was largely composed of rhythm instruments. It was a beginning that led to band and orchestra programs for black children in Los Angeles

(Bruington 1982).

Also in 1911 William Wilkins (1891–1978) opened the Wilkins School of Music. The most charismatic figure of the early pioneer music teachers, he was flamboyant and dramatic, yet a source of inspiration for his students. Wilkins held concerts on the lawn of his majestic home on Central Avenue in the early 1920s. The concerts featured three pianos which could be seen and heard from the passing street cars, with several performers playing at once. Wilkins amazed the community with his results. Though a showman, he was highly respected and admired as a teacher and was enormously popular (Browne 1983a; *The New Age* June 27, 1913).

By the 1920s other trained teachers had moved to the community. Bessie Williams Dones (1890–1985), an outstanding violin teacher and concert violinist, opened her own private studio, which she maintained for many years. Dones had moved to Los Angeles from Riverside, California. As a violinist she became recognized as one of the most outstanding musicians on the Pacific Coast, making concert tours of many California and Colorado churches. Dones studied at the Zoellner Conservatory of Music, where she received a teaching certificate. She also taught at the Gray Conservatory of Music, one of the first music schools in the black community of Los Angeles, where her specialty was ensemble training and where she will always be remembered for her outstanding work. Many of her pupils were chosen to play in the All-City Schools Orchestra in Los Angeles, composed of only the most outstanding students from the city schools (Stovall 1909; Hackley 1909; Beasley 1919, 7; Dones 1963).

Another exceptional musician of this period was Elmer Bartlett, who was considered among the greatest pipe organists in the United States at that time. Bartlett, who studied at the Paris Conservatory and under some of the finest teachers in this country, taught piano and organ in the black community. He is still said to have



Ivan Harold Browning

Photograph courtesy of the author.

been unequalled in his skill and pedagogy (Dones 1963). John Gray (1889–?) was also an exceptional pianist. Refined and cultured, he presented a picture of dignity and evidenced tremendous talent in the recitals of his pupils ("Brilliant Young Musicians" 1912; Beasley 1919). Also part of this group was soprano Florence Cole-Talbert (1890–1961). She studied at the Chicago Musical College where she was awarded a scholarship and from which she was graduated in 1916. A Diamond Medal winner, she was known in the United States and throughout Europe, where she studied and performed. In the 1920s Talbert became one of the first black musicians to sing with an Italian opera company (Dones 1963; *The Commercial Appeal* July 14, 1957).

Excitement permeated the air on Sunday afternoons during the salons and soirées of Madame Sinclair White Murdock, a linguist who had been trained in Russia and in several European countries. Draped in gorgeous attire and exhibiting the essence of elegance and culture, she encouraged her students to aspire to the greatest heights (Browne 1984). Ed "Montudie" Garland (1895–1980), one of the pioneers in the development of

early New Orleans jazz, performed as a young man with Kid Ory and many of the early New Orleans jazz ensembles. In 1921 he moved to Los Angeles, where he performed frequently. At the age of ninety-two, he toured Europe with some of the Legends of Jazz and was still performing just before his death a few years ago. One of the finest bass players of his time, he was known the world over (Garland 1977).

Freita Shaw Johnson (ca. 1900–) established residence in California in 1926. Her choruses sang in motion pictures, and she was the organizer and leader of the Etude Ethiopian Chorus, an outstanding choral group. Hers was the first Negro group in America to have the honor of singing grand opera with Metropolitan Opera stars such as Lawrence Tibbett, Grace Moore, Richard Bonelli, Alessandro Giglio, and others during the 1933 San Francisco opera season. Johnson, having started her career with Lyceum and stock companies, studied at the Oregon Conservatory of Music; in Paris, France; and with Oscar Saenger in New York (Johnson 1983).

In the late 1930s Alma Hightower (1888–1970), an incredibly gifted teacher, opened a school for the performing arts, where she taught hundreds of students until her last serious illness in 1967. She formed the Melodic Dots and a succession of groups known as the Hightower Youth Orchestra. Her students were invited to play at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1939 and 1940, where they won the award each year for the best performance by a youth group. Her former students include internationally acclaimed performers such as Sonny Criss, Dexter Gordon, Chico Hamilton, Vi Redd, Melba Liston, Jay McNeely, and Elsie Smith (Hightower 1957; Brantley 1983b).

Sam Browne (ca. 1910–) was the first black teacher in the secondary schools of Los Angeles. A cum laude graduate of the University of Southern California School of Music, he was well-prepared to give his students a solid foundation and excellent training in music. He further inspired

them by occasionally inviting to his classes as guests such black musicians of stature as William Grant Still, W. C. Handy, Nat King Cole, and others. Some of Browne's students had studied with Alma Hightower as youngsters, therefore being fortunate enough to have been trained by two master teachers (Browne 1983b).

The late Florence Cadrez Brantley (1910–1985), an arranger, songwriter, choral director, and accompanist for many outstanding performers including Jester Hairston, was one of the gifted musicians capable of improvising and performing creatively in any style. She was active with the Negro Musicians Union No. 767 in its early days and had retained in her memory fascinating stories of the events that took place in the union's development. She organized the Los Angeles Negro USO during World War II (Brantley 1983a; Brantley 1985).

Lorenza Jordan Cole (1898–), concert pianist, was a child prodigy who showed musical talent at the age of two. Later, she won numerous contests and achieved great success in auditions. She studied on scholarships and fellowships at Juilliard and in London with Tobias Matthay. She became head of the piano department at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. A Los Angeles product, Cole traveled extensively during her career and has been heard in concerts in many leading cities and universities around the world, receiving critical acclaim ("Young Pianist" 1927; Cole 1978; Cole 1986).

In 1922 Leon (1902–1982) and Otis René (1898–1970), brothers of Creole extraction, migrated to Los Angeles from New Orleans. They composed the song "When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano" and were credited with making the city of San Juan Capistrano famous because of the popularity of the song. Some of their other songwriting successes are "Sleepy Time Down South," "Someone's Rockin' My Dreamboat," "Gloria," and "Rockin' Robin." The René brothers were only two of several successful Los Angeles songwriters of the period (René 1977).

These and other Los Angeles black musicians have made important contributions to the world of music. Not only have they made their mark as performers of spirituals, blues, gospel, and jazz but as music educators, composers, conductors, and opera singers. The list is long and includes opera stars Shirley Verrett and Ella Lee; conductor Henry Lewis; world-renowned choral conductors Albert McNeil and Jester Hairston; Hall of Fame inductee and premiere jazz artist Benny Carter; composer William Grant Still; and many others. Although some of these artists had to leave the United States to be recognized and acclaimed, others have known recognition and appreciation in the larger southern California community, as well as in other parts of this country wherever they have shared their talents and reaped their rewards.

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Jazz Musicians in San Diego

by Stanley Dance, Vista, California

Histories of jazz in California have primarily been concerned with activities in Los Angeles and San Francisco, but San Diego—now the second largest city in the state—has for more than forty years been quietly attracting musicians from around the nation. Since it enjoys an enviable climate, it is not surprising that among these musicians have been several who are only too happy to say good-bye to Chicago's extremes of summer and winter.

Walter Fuller, for many years a trumpet and vocal star of Earl Hines's famous Grand Terrace band, had made a name for himself with a small group by 1946, when he was booked into a club called Eddy's on Second Avenue and C Street in San Diego. As a result of appearances in many different parts of the country, he had become familiar to servicemen, and because the city was then "loaded with sailors," he was an instant success. For four years he played clubs in San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, commuting from time to time to his Chicago home until 1950, when he moved his wife, Ida Mae, and daughter Rosetta (named for the song he did so much to make popular) to San Diego. He played at the Club Royal there for twelve years, and then eight years more at the Moonglow, always finding good musicians with which to work, among them tenor saxophonist Gene Porter (formerly with such leaders as Papa Celestin, Don Redman, and Benny Carter) and pianist Eugene Watson. One of his big discoveries was singer Marie Louise, who later had great success on

records after changing her name to Georgia Carr.

In the early 1940s a well-known bandleader from Texas, Troy Floyd, had come to San Diego to run the Creole Palace at Second and Market Street. It was in the Douglas Hotel and was about the same size as Smalls' Paradise in New York. There was constant traffic from Los Angeles through San Diego to Tijuana a few miles to the south, and business flourished during World War II. In 1953 Floyd married the widow of the great New Orleans clarinetist Jimmie Noone, whose son today bears the same name and instrument and carries on his father's tradition in San Diego and on European tours.

Where in the fifties there were about twenty clubs on the black side of town, there is now not one—an ironic side effect of civil rights triumphs. Segregation still exists in a low-key way. At the last census there were only 34,000 blacks in the city, at least twice as many Mexicans, and of course, many times more whites.

Besides teaching the young Noone a great deal about music, Troy Floyd also employed trumpet player Fro (Frobel) Brigham at the Creole Palace. Brigham had played with Papa Celestin in New Orleans until he was drafted and wound up in the Navy band in San Diego. After the glory days at the Creole Palace, where some of the greatest names in jazz performed, Brigham began an active career as leader of small groups in and around the city, a career he continues to this day. Usually appearing with him on tenor saxophone is

veteran Bud Conway, who earlier worked with Earl Hines and Fletcher Henderson in Chicago. Younger musicians who gained experience with Brigham include Harold Land and Victor Gaskin.

In the 1960s the city acquired an NFL team, the Chargers, which brought in a lot of money. Some of the black football players invested in a nightclub, the Sportsman's Club, where Jimmie Noone's versatile son led the house band—usually six pieces—from 1964 to 1967. Besides clarinet and tenor saxophone, he also played organ when that instrument became fashionable.

Another honored name in New Orleans jazz history is that of Alphonse Picou, of *High Society* fame. His grandson, Ted Picou, lives and works in San Diego, mostly playing tenor saxophone. Pianist Calvin Jackson, after a fulfilling career in Toronto and Los Angeles, spent his last years happily in San Diego. Guitarist Ray Crawford, who played with Fletcher Henderson and Ahmad Jamal before recording with Gil Evans in 1959 and 1960, also makes his home in the city and often works with a trio. Recovered from a serious illness, he is anxious now to take the place on the world jazz stage to which his immense talent entitles him. Walter Williams gained a big reputation with Les Hite, Benny Carter, Johnny Otis, and Roy Milton before leading Lionel Hampton's trumpet section from 1949 to 1954. He now works for a San Diego talent agency.

Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham, whose three recent Concord albums

have led to their appearing at festivals up and down California, as well as in Europe, are among those most active musically. Jimmy plays trombone and arranges; teaches jazz history, improvisation, vocalese, and ensemble at The University of California at San Diego; and together with his pianist wife, Jeannie, takes a prominent part in organizing regular jam sessions and developing the Jazz Society of Lower Southern California, of which

Jeannie is president. Notable in their regular group are drummer John "Ironman" Harris and Dinky Morris, another Chicago saxophonist.

Best-known internationally, perhaps, of all the city's resident jazz musicians is the brilliant alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, who frequently plays local engagements with his son on drums.

Although by no means a comprehensive survey, the foregoing

should not be interpreted as indicating a healthy jazz scene in San Diego. Work opportunities remain limited. Public taste in general is inclined to be square and, when not inclined to Dixieland, too easily swayed by record company hype and radio station playlists. Jazz has strong competition not only from rock and country music, but also from outdoor living, particularly on the beaches and on the Pacific.

Rhythm & Blues in California

by Arnold Shaw, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada

"Now, Rhythm & Blues (R&B) started here in Los Angeles," Johnny Otis, record producer/songwriter/performer, has said. "Roy Milton was here. Joe Liggins was here. T-Bone Walker was here. Charles Brown was here. I was here, and others, too. By '48 or '49, it was set—we had an art form though we didn't know it then" (Shaw 1978, 177).

It was in June 1949 that *Billboard*, the trade magazine, dropped the word "Race" from its chart of "Top 15 Best Selling Race Records" and substituted the phrase "Rhythm & Blues." In the atmosphere of World War II, the term "Race" had become indefensible, and the rest of the industry followed *Billboard's* lead in adopting R&B as a term for recordings by black artists. Incidentally, in its search for a substitute word or phrase, *Billboard* had for a time used "Harlem Hit Parade."

As a style, R&B's antecedents are the big swing bands, boogie-woogie, gospel music, and the blues. Saxist Louis Jordan, who came out of the big, booming band of Chick Webb to launch his Tympany Five, said: "With my little group, I made the Blues jump" (Shaw 1978, 74). Jump they did in the forties, to a strong afterbeat, a honking tenor sax, a whining electric guitar (introduced into the style by T-Bone Walker), and robust "shout" singers. And jump they did for Louis Jordan, regarded as the Father of

R&B, who scored in 1944 with "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" and in 1945–1946 with "Choo Choo Ch-Boogie," a million seller.

R&B was an indigenous response by black artists to segregated entertainment in a period when World War II was being fought against racism. Blacks were still being excluded from major white clubs, from first-run movie theaters, from Broadway shows, and even from some of the swank black clubs. They could also not find employment as musicians in the major Hollywood studios, the pit bands of Broadway shows, symphony orchestras, or the commercial network radio shows.

But wartime industry did augment the financial resources of black people at a time when the major record companies eliminated releases by black artists; faced with the rationing of shellac and other materials, they concentrated their product on mainstream artists. The door was thus open for enterprising independents to make records of black music, and they soon appeared in cities with large black populations and jukeboxes in locations with predominantly black clientele.

There is no question of the importance and significance of Los Angeles in the growth of R&B; but one must be aware that, not unlike jazz, R&B had been developing in different areas of the country throughout the

forties. In New Jersey, as early as 1943, Savoy and De Luxe were releasing black records; Jubilee joined them in 1948. Starting as a jazz label in 1947, Atlantic of New York soon switched to R&B, scoring a Top Ten chartmaker in 1949 with Stick McGhee's "Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee." In Cincinnati Syd Nathan began releasing King Records in 1945, and in Chicago the giant Chess label was in business by 1949. That year in Houston, Don Robey launched Peacock Records, named after the club he owned, and began developing artists like Big Mama Thornton, Johnny Ace, and Bobby Bland. In short, although Los Angeles was a most fertile territory for black artists and labels and although the R&B explosion occurred there, the music was germinating in several other cities.

A likely starting point for R&B in Los Angeles is the year 1945, when a black Tennessee private, stationed in Hollywood, who entertained at Bond rallies, went into a garage and recorded on a primitive tape machine the ballad "I Wonder." Although the record-pressing plants tried to keep their methodology secret, Cliff McDonald, who had worked at a plant, built his own presser in a shack behind his recording studio (his garage). He called his label Gilt Edge. The demand for his recording of Pvt. Cecil

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Rhythm & Blues, continued

Gant's "I Wonder" was so great that the Bihari brothers, who operated jukeboxes in black locales, could not keep their boxes stocked. As a result, the Biharis decided to go into the record-making business themselves, and Modern Records was born as the first of a conglomerate of labels.

Wartime industry drew a large migration of blacks to California, including black artists. For example, *Billboard's* chart of "Best Selling Rhythm & Blues Records" for 1949 includes Modern Records's "Boogie Chillen" by John Lee Hooker, a downhome bluesman from Clarksdale, Mississippi. The Biharis were able to develop an impressive group of black artists, both traditional and modern, that included Elmore James of Vicksburg, Mississippi ("Dust My Broom"); Pee Wee Crayton of Rockdale, Texas ("I Love You So"); Etta James of Los Angeles ("The Wall Flower"); Jimmy Witherspoon of Gurdon, Alabama ("Tain't Nobody's Business"). The great B. B. King, starting with "Three O'Clock Blues" in 1951, has maintained a popular following and chart records into the 1980s.

A strong competitor of Modern in the late 1940s and early 1950s was Aladdin (owned by the Leo Mesner family), which placed three disks on *Billboard's* year-end chart in 1949. Beginning as a jazz label with releases by tenorman Lester Young, the King Cole Trio, and blues singer Helen Humes, Aladdin found a bigger market with blues balladeer Charles Brown ("Trouble Blues"—No. 2 in 1949), Amos Milburn ("Hold Me Baby" and "Chicken Shack Boogie"—No. 8 and 9, respectively, both in 1949), the prolific Lightnin' Hopkins ("Shot Gun Boogie," 1948–1949), and the Five Keys ("Glory of Love," 1951).

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Like Modern and Aladdin, Black and White was a family-owned operation—the Paul Reiner's. It accounted for one of the biggest crossover hits of the day, "Open the Door, Richard" (1947), recorded by Dusty Fletcher on whose vaudeville routine it was based, and produced by Ralph Bass with tenorman Jack McVea.

The beginning of Specialty Records was both impoverished and strange. Art Rupe could afford neither an office nor even desk space. To receive mail, he rented a cigar box that occupied a corner of a desk with other boxes. But before long, his humidor included such artists as Roy Milton ("The Hucklebuck"), Lloyd Price ("Lawdy Miss Clawdy"), Larry Williams ("Short Fat Fannie"), Percy Mayfield ("Please Send Me Someone to Love"), and two giants—the sweet soul-singer Sam Cooke ("You Send Me") and the frenetic Little Richard ("Tutti Frutti").

Imperial was formed in the late 1940s by a former radio executive, Lewis Chudd, who built a flourishing label largely on the creative product of one artist. Playing a New Orleans-styled boogie, Fats Domino scored his first chart song, "The Fat Man," in 1950. Dave Bartholomew, a former Ellington trumpet-player and the leader of a local band, served as his producer. The two collaborated on virtually all of the songs Fats recorded, including the well-known "Ain't That a Shame," and succeeded in producing disks that sold over fifty million copies.

During the forties, the San Francisco Bay area possessed a tireless producer of R&B disks in Bob Geddins, a Texan who managed a record store in Oakland. Geddins launched a series of labels (Big Town, Art-Tone, Cavatone, Down Town, and Plaid, among others) and discovered or developed a score of downhome bluesmen: K. C.

Douglas, Jimmy McCracklin, Juke Box Bonner, Johnny Fuller, and Lowell Fulson. His problem was that he lacked adequate financing and was usually compelled to sell or lease potential hit masters to such L.A.-based companies as Swingtime, Aladdin, Modern, Special, and Imperial. Working with the artists named above and sometimes writing for them, he created such hits as "Tin Pan Alley" by Jimmy Wilson, "I Want to Know" by Sugar Pie De Santo, "The Gamble" by crippled Ray Agee, and "The Thrill Is Gone" by Roy Hawkins.

It would be inappropriate to close this brief survey of R&B in California without noting that Johnny Otis, whom I quoted at the outset, contributed quite a number of hits to the R&B charts of the fifties. Writing, producing, and performing—he plays drums and piano—he created "Double Crossing Blues" (No. 2 in 1950) with Little Esther and Mel Walker. The trio also scored with "Cupid's Boogie" and "Mistrustin' Blues"—the former finishing at No. 5 in the 1950 year-end survey, and the latter, No. 10. The following year, performing with Mel Walker alone, Johnny scored with "Rockin' Blues," the No. 10 R&B hit of 1951. All of these were released on the Savoy label of Newark although they were recorded in Los Angeles.

In the forties and fifties, Los Angeles was to R&B what Chicago was to the blues. And R&B remains today a vital and vigorous form of black popular music, as a recent album by Diana Ross, *Red Hot Rhythm & Blues*, bears witness.

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