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**NAY NASSAR
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Blue Eyed Soul Acappella: The Satan & the Angels Story

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with contributions
from
Pamela Horner



Satan & the Angels LP. Photo in front of the Old Record Gallery in Trenton, NJ. Top, left to right: Ken Williams, Tommy Hedden, Jeff Mathieu. Bottom, left to right: Bob Giquinto, Joe Urbano. (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

The high profile R&B and doo wop vocal groups that originated in northern New Jersey have at times overshadowed the rich talent that came out of other Jersey locations. Our past research has spotlighted fine vocal groups from South Jersey (see “Tyrone & the Nu Ports,” *Echoes* #88) and the Jersey Shore area (see our Asbury Park articles, *Echoes* #99 and 100). Only recently have we begun documenting the equally fine vocal harmony tradition of Central New Jersey (Plainfield’s Del Larks, *Echoes* #86 and New Brunswick’s Con-
tessas and Golden Bells, *Echoes* #106). George Frunzi’s informative article on the Majestics (*Echoes* #107) began to explore the Trenton NJ vocal group scene. We continue the documentation of Trenton’s music scene here, with the story of a late 1960’s white acappella group, who in their short music career produced one of the era’s finest doo wop acappella albums – Satan & the Angels.

The story of Satan & the Angels began with a group of teenagers harmonizing on the

street corners of Chambersburg. “The Burg” as it is sometimes called, was in the 1960’s, a mainly Italian American neighbor in South Trenton.

“One day, Joe Urbano, Mike Pannone, Bobby Giquinto and I just started singing on the corner of Morris Avenue and Division Street in Chambersburg,” said Satan & the Angels’ lead singer, Tommy Hedden. “After that we just kept going.”

“We were just hanging around together and started singing,” Joe Urbano added. “I’d been singing since I was twelve years old, though not with a group.”

The group members were between sixteen and seventeen years old. They were fortunate to meet a fellow named Lee Sands who took an interest in the group. “Lee Sands was a friend who had a deep voice and could do those bass riffs,” recalled Tommy. “He taught us harmony.” It was Lee who named the group Satan & the Angels.

This scene took place in 1966 or early

1967. Since the early 1960's, white teenage singing groups had been harmonizing without instruments (acappella) to songs made popular by black vocal groups in the 1950's. Though fifties black groups had frequently harmonized acappella on the street corners, record companies had chosen to add instrumentation when the groups recorded. Now a new genre of R&B harmony had arisen, where instrumentation was intentionally omitted from the records. The commercialization of acappella recordings had spread from Times Square Records in NYC down the I-95 corridor to Philadelphia, including all the New Jersey cities in between. Many of the new generation of acappella singers were avid record collectors. All were fans of R&B and doo wop harmony.

Since Trenton NJ is closer to Philadelphia than to New York City, Trenton's music scene is more closely associated with that of the nearby Pennsylvania city. Still, Trenton's music scene was to a degree independent and unique. While Philadelphia R&B and Doo Wop record collectors congregated around stores like the Record Museum and Penn Records, Trenton had its own collectors' record store, the Old Record Gallery, located at 30 South Broad Street. In Philly, teenagers grooved to radio personality Jerry Blavat, broadcasting from WCAM in Camden. In Trenton, Ron Diamond [real name, Ron Cutler] pulled in huge ratings. Broadcasting from Trenton's WTTM, Diamond played a mix of his favorite new records (called "Diamond Exclusives") and oldies. Of course, both Blavat and Diamond were popular in Philly and Trenton. Blavat's show had at one time been syndicated on WTTM and Diamond had come over from the Philly FM

station, WIFI. Ron Diamond also had a large following just across the Delaware River in lower Bucks County (including Levittown) and Northeast Philly, here he held dances. [Radio station WTTM gets its name from the famous Trenton Makes Bridge connecting Trenton with Lower Bucks County, PA. On the side of the bridge are the words "TRENTON MAKES THE WORLD TAKES"].

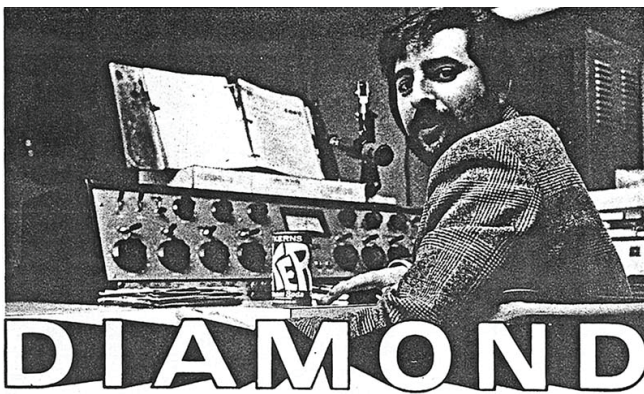
Dances were an integral part of the area's teenage music scene. At the dances, dj's like Ron Diamond and Jerry Blavat would spin records and at times have groups sing to promote their records. The dances were great meeting places for teenagers and were often packed. Ron Diamond held weekly dances at places like the Trenton War Memorial (1 Memorial Drive, Trenton NJ), the Edgely Fire House (Route 13, Levittown, PA), the Feasterville Fire Hall (Bustleton Pike & Street Road, Feasterville, PA) and the Concord Ballroom (7049 Frankford Ave., NE Philadelphia).

As Satan & the Angels developed as a group, they began to develop a following in the Chambersburg area, especially among the young girls. This at times led to friction with the group members own girlfriends, leading Mike Pannone to drop out of the group. Mike's replacement was Kenny Williams.

Kenny Williams was born in Florida but moved to central New Jersey with his family. Living in Robbinsville which was mostly farmland at the time, Kenny used to drive to the Ron Diamond dances at the Trenton War Memorial, where he met Satan & the Angels' lead, Tommy Hedden.

"I was singing with another acappella group called the Four Messiahs at the time," remembered Kenny. We were doing some of the jingles for Ron Diamond's radio show. Tommy and I were friends and he approached me about joining his group, Satan & the Angels. They were without a first tenor, the part that I sang."

The group Satan & the Angels really came together with the addition of Jeff Mathieu. Jeff was the one member of the group not from New Jersey. He lived across the Delaware River in Washington Crossing, PA. A few years earlier, Jeff had sung with a popular acappella group out of nearby Levittown, PA. Though it's believed they never recorded, the Variations were a talented group



WTTM-AM's Ron Diamond.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



Ad for a 1967 Ron Diamond concert at the Trenton War Memorial Auditorium, starring the Magnificent Men, Duprees, Brenda & the Tabulations, Intruders, Drifters and Sam Reed's Band. (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

that underwent a number of personnel changes over several years. By 1967, Jeff was attending college at Penn State University and singing with a vocal group and band called Lamont & the Kings that performed at numerous Penn State parties and concerts, opening for acts like Jay & the Techniques, the Dells, the Lemon Pipers and the Box Tops.

"In 1967 I was at Penn State taking broadcasting," said Jeff. "I had a friend, Don Goldberg, a broadcasting guy who knew Ron Diamond. One night when I was home during the summer, we went over to see Ron Diamond at WTTM while he was doing his show. There were these four young guys standing outside in the hallway singing a little acappella. I was twenty-one at the time and they were about seventeen. They were just starting out as an acappella group but they had a lot of heart and a lot of desire. I'd been singing for awhile so I joined them as a bass singer."

The group was now complete with Tommy Hedden (lead), Kenny Williams (first tenor), Bob Giquinto (second tenor), Joe Urbano (baritone) and Jeff Mathieu (bass).

Pantomime Records

While Northern New Jersey had a number of record labels issuing acappella vocal groups (they weren't called doo wop then), the

Central and South Jersey – Philadelphia area recording opportunities were not as plentiful. One option was Michael Adler's *Pantomime* label that had just issued a popular album called "Philadelphia's Greatest Acappella" [*Pantomime* #2003]. Released in June, 1967, it featured some of the Philly area's better acappella groups including the Destinations, Potentials, Five Fortunes, Sands, Vibratones, Regencies, Natural Facts, Illusions and others.

Earlier in the summer, Jeff Mathieu's college group had auditioned for Michael Adler so it seemed natural for Satan & the Angels to also seek an audition. "We went down and auditioned for Michael Adler in Philly," said Ken. "We thought we were just going down to do a couple cuts on an album he was doing on different groups from the Philly area. Michael Adler said, 'I like the way you guys sound. I'll give you your own album!'"

"Michael Adler asked, 'Do you guys have fourteen songs?'," recalled Jeff. "We said, 'Oh, sure we do.' We actually only had the couple we sang for him. He gave us a date that he wanted us to record. So we went back and worked and worked. I was pretty hard on the group. I pushed and pushed. We had to get these songs down. It seemed like we practiced almost every night during the summer."

Jeff was a record collector and a big



Satan & the Angels LP on *Pantomime Records* (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

R&B fan so the group had a large selection of songs to choose from. He liked the Orioles, Heartbeats, Spaniels, and Harptones as well as the soul groups like the Temptations, Miracles, Intruders and Delfonics.

“Jeff did most of the arrangements,” said Tommy. “He taught us a lot.”

“Most of the songs we did were standards,” said Jeff. “But there were some originals”. The group began working on songs like “Never Let You Go” (5 Discs), “Babalu’s Wedding Day” (Eternals), “There Goes My Love” (Fantastics), “Time Makes You Change” (Dells), “When We Get Married” (Dreamlovers), “Remember Then” (Earls) and many more. Of the original songs, “Trenton’s Medallion” was written by Tommy Hedden. Some originals had origins as street songs, done by local acappella groups. “Let The Bells Ring” was similar to a song Jeff had sung with the Variations. Jeff couldn’t recall all of it so the groups just pieced it together. After several weeks of practicing every evening at Jeff’s farmhouse in Washington Crossing, Satan & the Angels had thirty or forty songs ready.

The scheduled recording session almost didn’t happen. Several days before the recording date, lead singer Tommy Hedden was hospitalized with pneumonia. “I had pneumonia when we recorded that album,” said Tommy. I ripped out the IV’s, left the hospital that day and went to the recording session. They were concerned for my health but I was sixteen or seventeen years old and at that age you don’t care. We did the album in two sessions and you’ll hear a difference in my voice in the two sessions. During the first session I had pneumonia and fluid in my lungs, so my voice was a little lower. But in the second session my voice was higher.” Tommy did all the leads.

The recording session was done at Tony Schmidt’s *Impact Sound Studio* in Northeast



Satan & the Angels pointing to a poster for Ron Diamond’s radio show. Left to right: Joe Urbana, Bob Giquinto, Tommy Hedden, Kenny Williams and Jeff Mathieu. Photo on back of the album cover. (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

Philadelphia. The studio was in the basement of a shoe store at 7102½ Castor Avenue. Impact Sound Studio was gaining recognition by recording many of the area’s soul artists at the time like the Agents, Ronnie Walker, the Exceptions, the Soul Brothers Six, the Temptones and the Emperors.

“Michael Adler produced the album,” said Joe. “We actually cut eighteen songs but only fourteen made it onto the album. We each received 45’s [test pressings] of the other songs but nobody has them anymore.”

“Tony Schmidt did a nice job of [sound] engineering,” recalled Jeff.

The photo on the album cover was shot in front of the Old Record Gallery, 30 South Broad Street, in Trenton, next to the Capitol Theater. “For the album cover, we all had to rent tuxedos,” remembered Kenny. “My mother’s friend, Ray Cox, was a photographer and he took the picture. We never received a penny from the album. With the cost of renting tuxedos, we lost money on it.”

As the end of the summer rapidly approached, Ron Diamond was rushed an advanced copy which he promptly played on his WTTM radio program. Jeff recalls the group’s career being cut short when he returned to col-



lege, but other group members clearly recall singing at Ron Diamond dances to promote the album. These live performances included dances at the Trenton War Memorial, the Concord Ballroom (Northeast Phila.), the Edgely Fire House (Levittown, PA) and the Hugh Carcella Union Hall (Fairless Hills, PA). The group also sang at Jerry Blavat dances. At the Trenton War Memorial, Satan & the Angels took part in a battle of the groups competition against the Variations from Levittown. "They were really better than us but we won because it was our home town," said Tommy.

With Jeff returning to college and Bobby getting married, Satan and the Angels broke up.

"As a group, we were really short-lived," recalled Ken. "I got into the group about a month before they recorded and to my recollection, a month or two after the album we'd split up. To me it was only a three month roll." But the group had fun while it lasted. "We were going to all the dances and afterwards we'd go and sing. We'd go to the Trenton Train Station tunnel or wherever there was a good echo. There was a tunnel in Cadwalader Park (Trenton) where the stream went through. The echo there was phenomenal. We'd be out until the sun came up the next morning."

Many of the group members continued singing after Satan & the Angels.

Tommy Hedden sang with a fine vocal group called Memories, that appeared at Jerry Blavat's club in Margate, NJ.

Joe Urbano spent time in the army and then joined a group called Cop Shoo Bop in 1975. That group would evolve into another group, Stormy Weather. Joe sang with the group for 25 years, playing oldies show, high school reunions, dances and clubs. He now sings occasionally as a soloist.

Kenny Williams wound up as the lead singer in a rock band called the Grass Heart. Ken is now a born again Christian and sings in church.

Jeff Mathieu rejoined his group Lamont & the Kings at Penn State until graduating in the Spring of 1968. A couple years later, while enjoying a successful career in the broadcasting industry, Jeff formed a group called Celebration that started out acappella but soon

added an instrumental trio back up. He still gets together with friends on occasion to harmonize to the old songs.

Notes

1. Taken from the author's interviews and correspondences with group members Tommy Hedden, Joe Urbana, Jeff Mathieu and Ken Williams (2014).
2. Special thanks to Gaet Martini. His assistance made this article possible.

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Gospel and Soul Harmony
through the eyes of
Charlie & Pam Horner**

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Satan & the Angels Discography

Pantomime LP 2004

1967

Never Let You Go
A Quiet Place
Babalu's Wedding Day
There Goes My Love
Time Makes You Change
Zoom Zoom Zoom
Let The Bells Ring
Rama Lama Ding Dong
Trenton's Medallion
Remember Then
When We Get Married
The Storm Is Over
Gee
Will You Hold My Hand

Unreleased

So In Love
Bye Bye Baby
Legend Of Sleepy Hollow
Mickey's Monkey