

# SOUL DETECTIVE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2008

## CASE SIX: JAMES DUNCAN

IT'S TOO FUNKY IN HERE

LATEST UPDATE: 5/16/08

Are y'all ready?

We're about to open up a whole 'nother can of worms here, folks - an investigation that will take us all the way from the the Cajun Prairie to the Heart of Georgia, and God knows where else...

I was contacted by my friend, and MAJOR soul detective contributor, [Dan Phillips](#) (the man behind the legendary [Home Of The Groove](#)), a while back... here's what he had to say:

Mr. Soul Detective,

I've run across a strange one: two songs on two different labels, with different vocalists, different lyrics, different melodies, and exactly the same backing track!

Now, I know there have been other records that were on the same label and done by the same producer, for example, Allen Toussaint or Johnny Vincent of Ace, where recycled backing tracks were used for several artists. But I think it must be rare for this to have occurred on material from two unrelated labels and producers.

My case in point, which I mentioned in passing to you at Jazzfest last year, is a tune I featured on [April 13, 2007](#) called "Funky Grasshopper" by Hugh Boynton, on a small Louisiana label, Lanor:

ABOUT ME

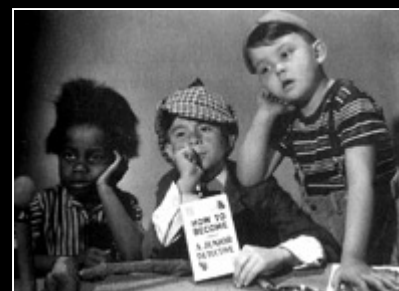


RED KELLY  
THE NORTH FORK,  
NEW YORK

IN VINYL VERITAS

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

SOUL DETECTIVE



Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to join me in my quest to find out as much as possible about these all but forgotten artists.

Each case will be ongoing, with new information added as we receive it. Please feel free to add whatever evidence you may have on the case to the 'comments' section, or you can e-mail me with additional photos, label scans, music or whatever...

EMAIL ME

SOUL DETECTIVE



▶ Funky Grasshopper

As I said in that post, my research revealed that the single was not recorded in Louisiana (as some, including me, once thought), but in Macon, GA about 1970 at the new Capricorn studios. Boynton was a Georgia native from Jefferson and recorded the tune in his home territory, with Lanor releasing the finished product. He is also credited as the writer. The lyrics are lame; and the mix is pretty bad, too. The horns and drums sound muffled and too far back. But you can still get the funk feel. I posted it, mainly as a cautionary tale about judging records by the labels. Anyway, a day or so after the post when up I got the following email message:

Dan,

"Greetings from Portland, Maine, and thanks so much for your great audio-blog! I check it regularly, and much appreciate the music and commentary. Having read your April 13 entry about "Funky Grasshopper",

I'm moved to tell you about a different version of this tune you're sure to dig. It's "I Got It Made (In the Shade)," by James Duncan. I have it on the double-vinyl comp [People Get Up: Original House Party](#)

[Funk & Get Down Jazz](#) (Harmless Recordings #031, 2001). Duncan's tune

has the same instrumental backing, and the lyrics and vocals are both

several steps above Boynton's take (I agree with your assessment all the more having loved Duncan's cut for years). The Harmless comp says

"Made" was originally released on Federal Records (no date given) and



## BURNING QUESTIONS

7 Tommy Young - 'No Explanation'?



case one

JOE HAYWOOD



the update project



case two

LEE BATES



case three

J. HINES



case four

CHARLES 'SOUL' BROWN



case five

ALLEN ORANGE



case six

JAMES DUNCAN



case seven

THE MEMPHIANS



BURNING QUESTIONS



contest one

ELTON ANDERSON



contest two

JAMES RIVERS



contest three

PAUL GAYTEN



SOUL DETECTIVE

the song is credited to Grady Spires/Leroy Tukes. . . ." Chris

Well, that got me curious. I checked my archives and did not have Duncan's track, although I did have another of his Federal funk tunes of the era on a CD comp. So, I hunted around the web and found a 20 second audio clip of "I've Got it Made (In The Shade)" from the now out of print CD version of People Get Up -

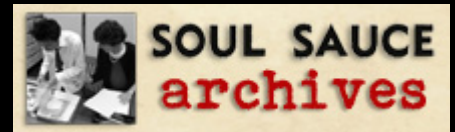


and, as poor as the sound quality of the clip was, I could tell it had at least similarities to "Funky Grasshopper" in the instrumental backing. I also did some research on the Duncan record and found out it was probably released in early 1970 on Federal 12552 - which could put the recording date back into 1969... maybe.

Duncan's Federal cuts were produced by Bobby Smith, who worked both for King and Federal. I have since found out that Smith worked a lot out of Macon, where Federal had a branch office. That other Duncan Federal side, "Stand Up And Get Funky", on the CD comp King Funk, is great, but has more of a psychedelic funk thang going on, rather than the Southern funkified groove of "Shade".



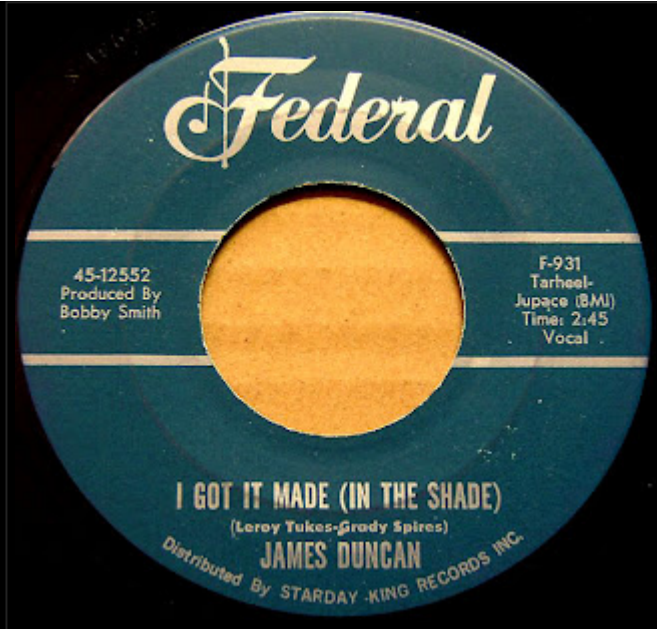
I hunted around the internet for the Duncan single and/or the People Get Up CD, scoring the CD first. As soon as I got it, I did an A/B comparison with "Grasshopper" and determined that indeed it was the same backing track, with the Boynton version having a different, poorer quality mix. Several months later, I found a mint copy of Duncan's 45 on ebay:



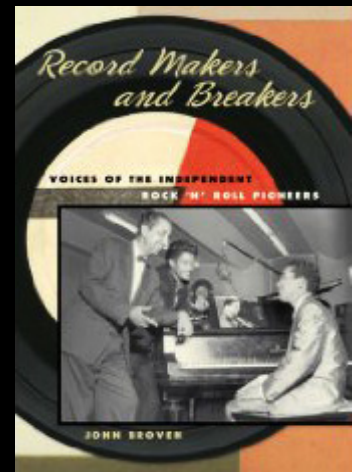
RED KELLY INDEX

RED KELLY SEARCH






Search

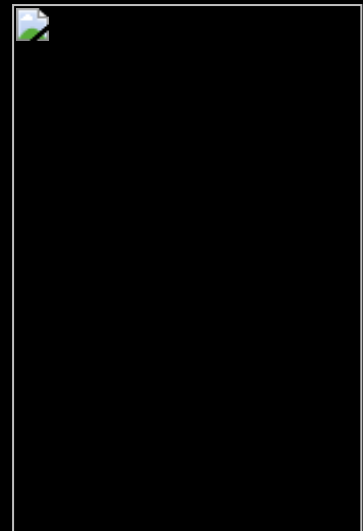


johnbroven.com

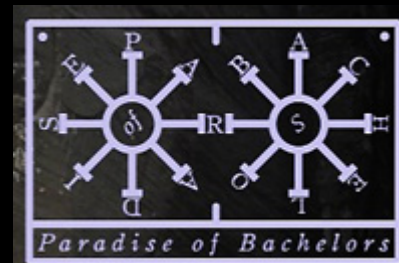
▶ **I Got It Made (In The Shade)**

So, I thought the soul detectives might be the ones to trace how the backing track made the possibly shady hop from Federal to Lanor. Since Duncan's producer worked in Macon, it is possible that "I've Got It Made (In the Shade)" was recorded at Capricorn; or maybe someone on the Capricorn staff was involved in that session and had access to a copy of the tape...

As Chris from Maine said, Duncan's version shows songwriting credits for Grady Spires and Leroy Tukes. Know anything about them? I checked the [BMI database](#), and they are listed for the tune. Ditto, the US Copyright database [which since has become inaccessible online for registrations prior to 1978!!!!], which showed an original registration date for the song of January, 1970. "Funky Grasshopper" and Hugh Boynton are no-hits at both BMI and copyright . So, hmmm, looks like Duncan definitely had the legit version, and probably the original one. But, again, how did it metamorphose into "Grasshopper"? That's the main nut to crack.



I thought Lanor Records owner Lee Lavergne was just an innocent bystander in all of this; but the CD notes for [The Lanor Records Story 1960-1992](#) (Zane) say that Lavergne went to Macon, GA with Boyton and his manager, John Roberts, to record at Capricorn, and issued three singles on the singer. So, he was there at the sessions. Maybe the studio, owned by the notorious Phil Walden, gave them a "special deal" on the pre-recorded track used for "Funky



LINKS

- [Funky 16 Corners](#)
- [Home of the Groove](#)
- [In Dangerous Rhythm](#)

Grasshopper", and they didn't know its origin. Or maybe they did. Since neither song was a hot seller, I guess nobody else (like the songwriters, Duncan, or Federal) found out about the song snatching, until Chris up there in Portland recognized it.

Red, your expert research will certainly help out here, as will any other insights readers can add. Thanks for agreeing to take this one on. Sometimes the search becomes more interesting than the original question. Let's find out.

Dan

Well.

There you have it. I don't know if my research is any more 'expert' than anyone else's, but I'm certainly willing to roll up my sleeves and see what I can dig up... I hope you'll join me!

Thanks, compadre!


1/25/08

Well, here we go.

I've received some EXCELLENT input from one of our Ace Detectives, good ol' Cies from over in Rotterdam... first, though, let's have a listen to the B side (you know how it is) of that James Duncan single:



FEDERAL 12552 B

 [I'm Gonna Leave You Alone](#)

Just a great 'deep soul' number, it was produced by [Bobby Smith](#), long a key player on the Macon music scene. It was Smith who cut the second record ever on a young kid

named Otis Redding, which he initially released on his own Confederate label (whose name was quickly changed to Orbit when R&B stations wouldn't touch it!) in 1961. The Duncan single is from 1970, but still has that same kind of feel to it. So far we've been assuming that this stuff was recorded in Macon, but this side of the record sounded more Muscle Shoals to me...

Well, as fate would have it, one of the things Cies sent along was a scan of 'noted soul authority' (and one of our own detectives, I'm happy to add) [John Ridley](#)'s liner notes for the Kent Compilation [King](#)

[soul sides](#)

[Deep Soul Heaven](#)

[Soul Cellar](#)

[Downtown Soulville](#)

[Stepfather of Soul](#)

[Just Moving On](#)

[Feel It](#)

[The Singing Bones](#)

[Brown Eyed Handsome Man](#)

[The Vinyl Word](#)

[Roy C Forever](#)

[Carolina Soul](#)

[It's Great Shakes](#)

[Memphis Music Confidential](#)

[Georgia Soul](#)

[New York Soul Recordings](#)

[The Blush Orgainzation](#)

[Soul Discovery Radio](#)

[Soul Spectrum](#)

[the tofu hut](#)

[Weblog Gazette R&B Review](#)

[The Roots Canal](#)

[SoulGeneration](#)

[R&B Discographies](#)

[The Funk Files](#)

[jukebox mafia](#)

[Benn loxo du taccu](#)

[The Soul Club Jukebox](#)

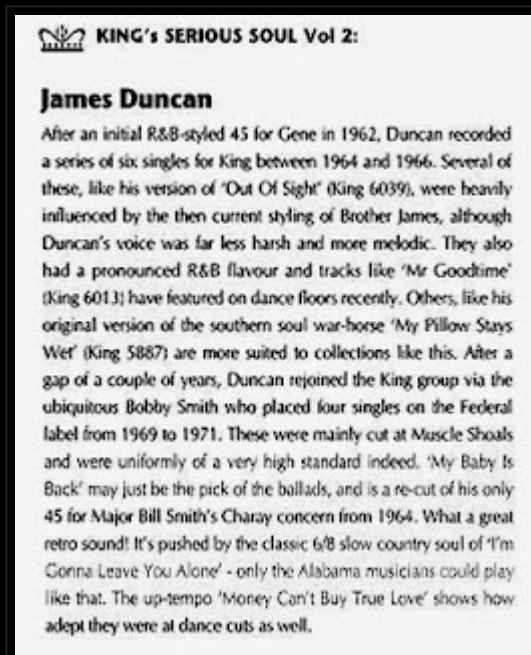
[Free Hiphop Now](#)

**Zielinski**

 I Power Blogger

 SPAM POISON

## Serious Soul Volume Two:



SO, there you have it, as John said "only the Alabama musicians could play like that..." (although the guitar [Eddie Hinton?] sure puts me in mind of Reggie Young). Muscle Shoals it is. So now, the plot thickens - was the funky A side recorded there as well?

Hmmm...

Cies: "My reaction on Prof. Ridley:

- I haven't found James Duncan's Gene 45 in the R&B Indies or other discographies.
- Besides recording in Muscle Shoals, Bobby Smith recorded James Duncan in Macon, Georgia."

OK - here's a Duncan discography Cies came up with:

### KING:

- 5887 - My Pillow Stays Wet King / Here Comes Charlie - 1964
- 5923 - Everybody Needs Somebody / I'll Be Gone - 1964
- 5966 - I Can't Fight The Time / Three Little Pigs - 1965
- 6013 - Guilty / Mr. Goodtime - 1965
- 6052 - Why / Stop Talking To Your Child - 1966

### FEDERAL:

- 12549 - Money, Can't Buy True Love / My Baby Is Back - 1969
- 12552 - I Got It Made In The Shade / I'm Gonna Leave You Alone - 1970
- 12555 - All Goodbyes Ain't Gone / You've Got To Be Strong - 1970
- 12561 - Stand Up And Get Funky / Please Johnny - 1969 (?)

Duncan, James & Duncan Trio - My Baby's Back / Waiting On That Train - Charay 25

Duncan, Jimmy (?) - Out Of Sight / Too Hot To Hold - King 6039 - 1966

We'll be taking a look at some of these records down the line.

On to our man Boynton. Here's the flip of Funky Grasshopper (courtesy of the man who started all of this, [Dan Phillips](#)):



LANOR 571 B

[▶ No More And No Less](#)

Well I'll be a monkey's uncle! I honestly didn't notice this until I got the audio link set up here for this side... it is, once again, THE SAME BACKING TRACK as on the B side of the Duncan record!!! No doubt about it!

What a trip, huh?

The songwriter is credited on the King single as [Kay Stephens](#). According to the BMI Database, this is the only song she ever wrote, but an 'alternate title of "I Can't Take No More" is listed. Here on the Lanor single, Boynton is the only composer credited, but the 'No More' in the title makes you wonder if he was aware of the Stephens' lyrics. The 'Salt and Pepper' referred to on the label must refer to those background singers, as they (thankfully) don't appear on Duncan's version.

Very interesting indeed!

Here's Cies' discography of Mister Boynton:

**LANOR:**

547 - You're No Longer Mine / You Went Back On What You Said

553 - Running Out Of Fools / Girl I Feel It

561 - Can't Live My Life Without You (part 1) / (part 2)

571 - No More And No Less / Funky Grasshopper (the only one credited as 'Hugh Boynton & Salt & Pepper')

**SOUL-PO-TION (Owner: Jesse Boone, Albany,GA):**

144 - We're Gonna Make It / If Loving You Is Wrong

There is also another 45 in the Soul-Po-Tion discography which looks very interesting:

114 - Dr. Huriah Boynton & The New Generation: We're Gonna Make It / If Loving You Is Wrong

(Huriah and Hugh are one and the same person? Until proven otherwise they are one and the same...)

WORLD CLASS:

16083 - Bondurant (Hugh Boynton): You Know Me Inside Out / Come Go With Me

ROYAL (H) Atlanta, GA (The R&B Indies gives a Royal discography and a Royal H discography. Both discographies have only one entry):

Royal 1004 - Dr. Huriah Boynton: Make Up Your Mind/The Prosperity Way - 1983

Royal H 101 - Dr. Huriah Boynton: Make Up Your Mind/The Prosperity Way - 1983

Boynton looks to me as the most interesting suspect of the two...

Sure enough! Anybody have any of these other Boynton records? I'm issuing an APB!

One more thing, there IS a listing on BMI for [Huriah Boynton](#) (not for Hugh), but none of these songs are listed among his five 'work titles'.

Get digging!

2/15/08

Alright boys and girls, ol' red is back in the saddle. As I mentioned over on the B side, It's been kind of tough getting out of 'vacation mode', if you know what I'm saying, but here goes:

First off, let's talk about "Jimmy" versus "James" Duncan.

As Cies postulated up there in his excellent discography, there is one recording on King by a 'Jimmy' that most probably is by our man 'James'. Well, I found the 45 at right on Ebay a while back, and picked it up as part of our investigation. I won't subject you to it, but I can tell you that *this* one is definitely *not* by the same guy, as it's a totally white bread effort featuring [Buddy Bregman](#), the guy who arranged the Ella Fitzgerald songbooks. Oh well.



Anyway, a while back, one of our Ace detectives in The UK, good ol'



Colin Dilnot, sent this along:

*The complete schedule for the seventh annual Macon Music & Heritage Festival (September 2007):*

...SATURDAY

• *Third and Cherry streets, 3 p.m.: Main event featuring headline band, Brick. Other acts include local artists Satellite Papa & the All Stars, Bo Ponder & Old Soul, Back Porch Review, Big Mike & the Booty Papas, Harold Thomas Experience, James Duncan & the Blues Legends and Finesse Band. Tickets are \$5...*

VERY INTERESTING! It certainly seems highly probable that the James Duncan that fronted the 'Blues Legends' down in Macon last year is indeed *our* James Duncan. Can anybody out there confirm that? Anyone ever been to the festival? Sounds like a good candidate for a road trip, baby!

Let's listen to another of those Bobby Smith produced Federal sides on Mister Duncan, the one that Sir Shambling called "the pick of the ballads":



FEDERAL 12549 B

▶ [My Baby Is Back](#)

Great stuff, huh? According to Ridley, this is a "re-cut of his only 45 for Major Bill Smith's Charay concern from 1964" - any of you guys out there have a copy of the original? Major Bill was a colorful character from

Fort Worth, Texas. One of those 'seat of the pants' record guys, his main claim to fame was producing the 1963 #1 smash [Hey Paula](#). He recorded some other cool R&B sides on Charay (most notably on [Pic & Bill](#)) and was the man behind some incredible Texas 'garage' rock & roll classics.

The very cool [DJ Little Danny](#) over at [Office Naps](#) had this to say: "The Maj, in the tradition of the red-faced hustlers who once populated the independent record business, managed to tap dance around some of the finer points of copyright law; his entire working ethos, in fact, was



based on a philosophy of cutting records and distributing them at breakneck speed. Old tracks would be recycled over and over again to fill the missing B-side of a record. New records would be rushed, still warm - still obviously unmastered - to the public."

Words that sound like they could be applied to our current case here, no? Check this out:



Here's a copy of the same Federal 45 we just listened to above, only the catalog number is listed as 928 (which is the *master* number on the original). It says on the label that it was released in 1976, which according to our calculations, is about seven years after it first saw the light of day on Federal 12549. Hmm... any other

Federal 45s I've ever seen were issued with those five digit catalog numbers. It was also my impression that King went out of business in like 1973, so what gives? According to the label, it was distributed by something called Gusto Records in Nashville...

I consulted a cool book I have called [Little Labels - Big Sound](#) and found some things out. After [Syd Nathan](#) died of a massive heart attack in 1968, King/Federal was taken over by [Hal Neely](#) who merged it with his own Nashville based [Starday Records](#). Later that same year, Neely apparently sold it all to the [Lin Broadcasting Corporation](#). In 1971, Neely bought it all back from them (this was when he sold [James Brown's](#) contract and all of his masters to Polydor for \$1 million), and started a new company along with several partners, among them [Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller](#). In Neely's own words, the partnership "did not work," and in October 1973 he sold his interests to the other partners "in a bizarre turn of events, on the flip of a coin." They immediately turned around and sold everything to a guy named [Moe Lytle](#) who owned [Gusto Records](#)... got that? What a tangled web we weave, huh? Anyone out there have any other King or Federal 45s from this post 1973 period with the three digit catalog numbers? (somebody hand me my anorak...)

Now, let's head on back to the bayou.

About twenty years ago, after reading John Broven's excellent [South To Louisiana](#), I took off myself for the 'Cajun Prairie' in search of some of the old time 'record men'. One of the first places I stopped was at [Lee Lavergne's](#) record shop and studio in Point D'Eglise (aka Church Point, y'all). Lee welcomed me in, and we spent a couple of hours talking about the salad days of Swamp Pop, as well as the new records he was involved in with the likes of [Boozoo Chavis](#) and [Donald](#)

**Jacob**. I left there with a stack of Lanor 45s, and a warm feeling that I had been able to meet a pioneer like Mister Lavergne and shake his hand (I would also get to shake hands with **Eddie Shuler** and **Floyd Soileau** on that same trip, but we'll save that story for another day).



LANOR 509 A

▶ **Life Problem**



Now, I'm not sure if you remember this, but we spoke a bit about Lee during our **First Annual Soul Detective Mystery Contest** back in May of 2006. Lavergne's big breakthrough came with this great record we

have here, which he produced on regional Swamp Pop star **Elton Anderson** at Cosimo's Studio in New Orleans, with **Wardell Quezergue** arranging and **Katie Webster** on the piano (as we found out as a result of the contest - thanks guys!). A remake of **King Karl's** 1956 Excello version, it became, in Lavergne's words, a "smash hit" down there and was picked up for national distribution by Capitol in 1962. Is it me, or does this kind of put you in mind of the Duncan 45? I guess Fort Worth wasn't too far from Houston to pick up a bit of the Swamp, after all.

◀ We've been following up a few excellent leads on whatever became of Anderson in that case (and I'll be reporting more on that soon), but I always wondered about Lavergne. Was he still out there?

Well, believe it or not, there actually is a **Lanor Records website** where you can buy their original 45s at very reasonable prices. After I picked up a few recently, I decided to contact the company and ask about Lee. One of the owners, a very nice woman by the name of Pat Murry, got back to me with this:



*"Hello Red Kelly...*

*In January 1998 Lee Lavergne had a massive heart attack and died in his recording studio. He was not found for several days. We were very good friends of his nephew who lived in Jennings. My husband*

*and I had just retired... My husband had coffee with Lee's nephew several times a week at his business. One day my husband came back & said...'Wanna buy a recording studio?... Well, I thought he fell off the turnip wagon...!!! Long story short...we did just that. Rented a U-Haul truck and hauled 17 loads of 'stuff' (we didn't know what all this was) to Jennings & put it in our almost brand new house and storage building and double carport. It was overwhelming!"*

I bet it was! So there you have it, Lee Lavergne died in his studio there in Church Point, doing what he loved best. May God rest his soul.

Pat went on to say:

*"That was then...this is now...10 years later and again, Lanor Records is For Sale, including almost 10,000 45rpm records(!), equipment, songs @ BMI and a lot of 'stuff'. We would like to retire, again, and enjoy our grandson... You have no idea how much 'stuff' is involved... and the buyer must take it all! ...the music publishing company, record label, recording studio with all equipment, hundreds of CDs, hundreds of cassettes, thousands of 45rpm records, ownership of all songs at BMI, etc, etc. - asking price of \$125,000."*

Wow! Any takers out there? How cool would that be, to become the new owner of this historic Louisiana record label? Unreal. Thank you so much, Pat, You never know, one of our detectives just might take you up on that!



LANOR 561 A

 [I Can't Live My Life without You \(Part1\)](#)

OK, here's another of those Hugh Boynton 45s which, according to the label, was produced by Lee Lavergne at Muscle Shoals Sound. A pretty good record, it finds the MS

rhythm guys in top form (check out [David Hood](#) on the bass!). According to Cies' discography, this was the release right before the **Funky Grasshopper** that started us on all of this. Now that we've more or less established that those backing tracks on Lanor 571 were recorded at Muscle Shoals, this might just have been when Lavergne got a hold of them, possibly as demos - a common practice in those days, sending a producer home with some tape to help drum up future business. That would certainly explain the inferior sound quality on the Lanor singles... hmmm.



Anyway, our man Cies has been busy:

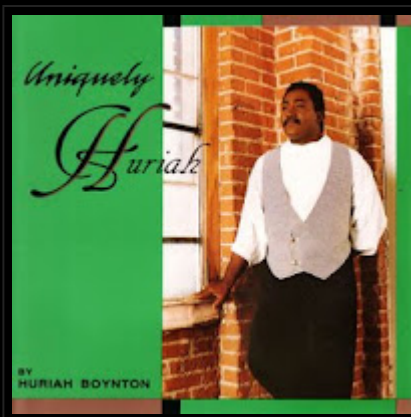
"...Like you I was stunned when I read that both sides of the Duncan & Boynton 45 have the same backing track! But there's more on Boynton... I've done some more research and asked around in the gospel collector's community and found out about three albums by Huriah Boynton:

Huriah Boynton - Uniquely Huriah (Bellmark???) c. 1991

Huriah Boynton - Huriah Has Arrived From The Planet Hugh Boynton (unknown label) c. 2000

Huriah Boynton - Greatest Hits: If You Can't Help Me, Please Don't Stop Me (unknown label)"

Well, *that* should certainly put to rest the question of whether or not Hugh and Huriah are one and the same person! I picked up the 'Uniquely Huriah' CD on eBay for us before I left on vacation:



from BELLMARK 77004

▶ He'll Be With You

Well alright! Huriah's laying it all out here, man! Although I'm sure it's a little too 'nineties' for those purists among you, this is nonetheless a great contemporary Gospel tune, with a healthy helping of soul coming

to you from the planet Hugh Boynton! Ain't the Lord alright?

Cies also sent along the Royal H single:



ROYAL H 101

▶ Make Up Your Mind

Although once again a little too heavy on the synthesizers for most of us, Boynton is nonetheless singing his heart out. Credited to Doctor Huriah Boynton and the Melodic Voices of Macon, Georgia, we've come

full circle here... all roads do seem to lead to Macon in this case somehow, don't they?

Thank You, Cies, Colin and everyone else for your continued interest... now let's figure out how we're going to buy Pat's record

company!

2/26/08

Well, the response here has been overwhelming, folks! Let me start out by extending my thanks to all of you who have contributed to our investigation so far... we really have become a team. Isn't that great?

Alright. Peter H. from over in The Netherlands is back on the scene, and sent me some great stuff. First out of the box is the B side of James Duncan's GENE single from 1962...



GENE 004 B

▶ [Twistin' Baby](#)

Well, seeing is believing, huh? Yes, even though it's not listed in the R&B Indies, or in the Gene discography on [Georgia Soul](#) (more on that in a minute), **James Duncan and the Duncan Trio** did indeed release this

single in 1962. As it turns out, [Brian Poust](#) (the proprietor of Georgia Soul) also joined our team around the same time, and he confirms that it is indeed the same Macon based Gene label as is listed on his site. If you look at the label, it also credits 'Johnny Brown's Band'. Peter: "Johnny Brown could be the guitarist who recorded for Duke (another Texas connection!), Clarence Samuels [the songwriter] on the label may well be the same guy who recorded for Aristocrat amongst other labels." Can anybody expand on that? While we're at it, how about 'The Duncan Trio', anyone know anything about them? While not the greatest of songs, and decidedly in rough shape, we'll definitely take it! Thank You Peter! I'll update our own discography...

Next up, also making the trip from Peter's extensive vaults in Holland, is the original Charay single of 'My Baby Is Back':



CHARAY 25 A

▶ [My Baby Is Back](#)

I think we can all agree with Peter that "The Charay version of My Baby Is Back is not as good as the Federal version, I think ..." but, being the anal-retentive completists that we all are, it's simply a must have. I

do love that musty bayou, out of tune piano and horn section feel, though, right? James is really singing there at the end, man! Once again, Thank You Peter, you are a Prince among men. Do we have a date on this single yet?

OK, like I said, Brian Poust checked in with another of Hugh Boynton's rare 45s:



SOUL-PO-TION 144 A

 [We're Gonna Make It](#)

Alright! This upbeat mover was written and produced by Boynton himself, and shows off his incredible vocal range. I'm guessing from the disco-esque arrangement that it was released sometime in the

seventies.

Brian: "I've never seen that [Soul-Po-Tion] 114 as you have it listed. My Soul-Po-Tion 114 is:

**Jesse Boone & the Astros - If I Ever Fall In Love Again / When Something Is Wrong With My Baby**

"So, not sure what's up there. I've heard that 144 was not a Jesse Boone product but pressed up by someone in the UK. Totally different label design and pressed at United in Nashville, so very plausible..."  
Anyone ever hear anything about all of this?

◀ Brian goes on to say "Before the Capricorn studio, King had it's own studio in Downtown Macon where Bobby Smith worked. Though by the time this track came along, it could easily have been recorded at Capricorn. I'm not well versed enough in the history of the King studio to say for sure..." He is currently following up some leads on Leroy Tukes and Grady Spires [the guys who wrote 'I Got It Made (In The Shade)'], and says he is "98% sure" that the James Duncan that played in Macon last year is indeed our man. It is certainly a pleasure to have the resident expert on Georgia Soul in our corner, Thank You Brian!

Now, speaking of 'resident experts', our man down in Louisiana (and very first soul detective) has indeed been busy! I'm not sure if you saw the 'comments', but [Dan Phillips](#) had this to say:

"Research so far seems to contradict what those CD notes to the Lanor comp said about Boynton's Lanor sessions. I'll quote; 'Boynton's manager, John Roberts had contacted Lee, a deal was made, and they

took the singer to Capricorn studios in Macon, Georgia to record. Three singles were issued on Lanor [actually four, according to the discography]. . . . During the sessions at Capricorn, Lee met Jackie Avery who had put the session musicians together and had some success songwriting... Jackie suggested that Lee work with his wife, Ella Brown...'

"Now, I know CD notes can be wrong; but Avery WAS associated with Capricorn, according to a piece on him at [Sir Shambling's Deep Soul Heaven](#). He worked in the studio there; and his wife, Ella... recorded a bit for Lanor, and sang with Wet Willie, a Capricorn Records act. That puts Lavergne at Capricorn at some point doing sessions on Boynton it would seem. HmMMMMM.

"So, at least one of Boynton's singles says it was recorded in Muscle Shoals. The A and B sides of the "Funky Grasshopper" single have backing tracks taken from Duncan's record, at least one side of which was done in Muscle Shoals... If I did not have those Zane CD notes (by Peter Thompson, owner of Zane, who did the compilation and interviewed Lavergne [Dan has since been able to contact Thompson, and he is going to look into things for us on his end.]), I would happily conclude that everything was done in Muscle Shoals with someone slipping Lavergne the tracks on the sly. But, the Macon connections do not make for simplicity."

No, they sure don't. Dan also later noted that

#### LANOR 553 - Running Out Of Fools / Girl I Feel It

says on the label that it was 'Recorded At Capricorn Sound Studios Macon, Georgia.' Does anyone have that 45? Interestingly, none of Boynton's Lanor singles are listed for sale at Pat's website. It's almost as if Lee Lavergne made a conscious decision to delete them from his catalogue, while continuing to press most everything else...

As Dan noted over on [Home Of The Groove](#), he and I had been running on parallel tracks here on this next one... Way back in his 'webzine' days, [Larry Grogan](#) (you just knew he'd turn up somewhere) did a feature on [Funky 45s](#) which included Boynton's 'Funky Grasshopper', as well as another Lanor single:

#### LANOR 567 A

##### [Soul Pusher](#)

Larry: "I'd be curious to see if Joe Chopper's lawyers had gotten a letter from Willie Tee, because 'Soul Pusher' is a (very) thinly disguised cover of the Gatur's 'Cold Bear'. They take the tune at a slightly heavier tempo and with a dirtier sound..."





Dan: "As you can see, the credit on the Lanor 45 just says 'The Band'. I hadn't thought much about it again until I picked up the record and finally listened for myself. Curious guy that I am, I checked the BMI database to see if 'Soul Pusher' was registered; and it is. The writer is shown as one Levence Lavergne, a/k/a Lee Lavergne, producer and owner of Lanor Records!

"As many label owners and/or producers did back then, he took the writer's credit on the song for himself to make sure any royalties for airplay came his way. I would hope that he did not realize the actual source of the song; but I don't think a judge would have given any weight to that defense. Wouldn't that be instant karma: he co-opted writers credit on a song he thought the band wrote, when, in fact, they 'forgot' to tell him they stole it from Willie Tee. You can't make this stuff up..."



GATUR 508 A

▶ Cold Bear

No, you sure can't. Here's the Gatur's original, which just cranks, of course. It was later released on ATCO.

Dan: "As near as I can tell from dating other Lanor 45s from the period, 'Soul Pusher' came out

in 1971, the same year that ATCO picked up the Gatur's single. I guess what deprived the lawyers of their feeding frenzy on this bit of misdirection is the fact that the 'Soul Pusher' single was a commercial failure, and likely got very little, if any, radio play. For that matter, neither the Gatur's initial release of 'Cold Bear' on Tee's own Gatur label or its subsequent re-issue in 1971 on ATCO made any big waves either. So, in Billy Preston math, that's  $0 - 0 = 0$ .

"'Soul Pusher' certainly can't touch the minimal, tight, feel-good groove of 'Cold Bear'. The Swinging 7 Soul Band never quite gets it in the pocket. Instead of Tee's smooth cruise in a nice ride, they take you down a bumpier back road in a funky rattletrap. Doing this song with horns was a nice idea, though. Still, I am curious about Joe Chopper and the band... Alias or not, Joe Chopper alone is also listed on a later Lanor 45:

## 604 - Welcome To My World / Giving You Love

"I'm... wondering if Joe Chopper and the Swinging 7 were from the Southwest Louisiana area where Lanor got much of its talent, I did some research and am pursuing leads on the singer. If I have found the right guy, whose last name is not actually Chopper, I will let you know. The band is another matter. All I've uncovered is a couple of things that just may be coincidences:



"There was a band called the Swinging Seven that recorded an obscure instrumental funk song with horns called 'Football' on a King single (#6325) around 1970. [Anybody have that 45 and want to share label scans and audio?] I hear it's really hard to find. I listened to a short clip of 'Football' and the players sound a bit more proficient than Chopper's Swinging 7; but I hear only five, rather than seven, instruments on it - there's no organ, either - go figure. And here's the strangest thing: the very next 45 on King (#6326) was by Wayne Cochran and contained a side called 'Chopper 70'. Both those sides can be found on a CD or vinyl collection put out by [Mr. Finewine](#) called [Crash Of Thunder](#).

"Of course, you musical scholars out there know that the King label was affiliated with Federal, which released James Duncan's 'I Got It Made (In The Shade)'. Could there be a tie-in or am I off on one of my many tangents? Discuss among yourselves..."

◀ Dan was planning on posting all of this on Home Of The Groove, and I sincerely thank him for sharing his research and expertise with us! In any event, the whole Soul Pusher/Cold Bear thing provides another indication that Lavergne may have been less than up front from time to time. It does seem odd, though, that the Boynton 45s were deleted, and yet this Joe Chopper single (a much more obvious rip-off) has stayed in print...

Discuss among yourselves, indeed!

4/4/08

OK everybody, I'm back. First off, I thought we'd give a listen to one of those early Duncan sides, recorded with The Duncan Trio back in 1964:

KING 5887 B



### ▶ Here Comes Charlie

Sounding kind of like Joe Tex joined The Coasters, then moved to New Orleans and hooked up with Eddie Bo, this 'novelty' record just cooks right along. Now, we've spoken before about the fact that King operated a studio down in Macon, and that Bobby Smith

worked as a producer there. There's no production credit on either side of this 45... do you think it was recorded there?

I've also heard back from Pat Murry, the head honcho at Lanor:

*"With the purchase of Lanor Records came a few file cabinet drawers...full...of 'stuff'. If Mr. Lee wrote a letter or sent a fax to anyone...he filed a copy. If he received a letter or a fax from anyone...he filed it. He made deals through letters and faxes. He had no computer... I do believe this would be a treasure trove for anyone looking for information and can decipher what it means... We have read correspondence about Muscle Shoals and Macon, GA, etc. - Even a copy of a check that Huey Meaux received on a lawsuit which he collected thousands of dollars and has a notation..."Lee, there really is a Santa Claus"...how Meaux evaded law enforcement, how he was apprehended and letters he sent to Mr. Lee from prison... Hugh Boynton was only 15, I believe, when he recorded his first record and his mother had to sign a paper giving her permission. It just goes on and on..."*

◀ Incredible, Pat! A treasure trove, indeed. I truly hope we can get this 'stuff' preserved. It is living Louisiana history. Thanks!

Alright, if Boynton was only 15 when he cut Lanor 547, he couldn't be much older than that here on #553:



### LANOR 553 A

### ▶ Running Out Of Fools

Submitted by our man Colin Dilnot over in the UK, this one is just so totally cool! I absolutely love the phone conversation that starts things off..."Shirley?" Great, man. Now, just as Dan said earlier, it says right on the

label that it was 'Recorded at Capricorn Sound Studios, Macon,

Georgia'. Can we put a definite date on this record? If we're going with the assumption that 'Funky Grasshopper' is from 1970, that would place this earlier than that... hmmm. Now, I admit that I'm not an expert when it comes to Capricorn. I know ol' Swamp Dogg did some work there with folks like Arthur Conley and Oscar Toney Jr., and that there is a page out there about the [Capricorn Rhythm Section](#), which consisted of Paul Hornsby, Bill Stewart, Scott Boyer, Johnny Sandlin & Tommy Talton in it's final configuration. Sandlin and Hornsby had been members of [The Hourglass](#) with Duane and Greg Allman, and supposedly Duane played on some early studio sessions for Phil Walden at Capricorn (which, of course was also The Allman Brothers' record label). What I'm getting at, I guess, is that the great guitar on here may be played by the ol' Skydog himself...

A question that ace detective Sir Shambling asks about our next selection (which I borrowed from [Deep Soul Heaven](#)) as well:



CAPRICORN 8008

▶ [Your Love Has Brought Me \(A Mighty Long Way\)](#)

John dates this one as being released in 1970. Listed as the arranger on the Boynton single, Jackie Avery had come up out of New Orleans, and was the man behind a lot of great music.

Sir Shambling:

"Jackie Avery's songwriting credits are both substantial and musically very impressive. In the 60s he scored with 'Aunt Dora's Love Soul Shack' on Arthur Conley and 'Make Sure (You Have Someone Who Loves You)' for the Dells, for example, and in the 70s wrote the brilliant 'Sweeter As The Days Go By' again for the Dells and the hard hitting 'Shackin' Up' for Barbara Mason. Perhaps his biggest seller though was the Disco 9000 LP for Johnnie Taylor.

While his wife Ella Brown was singing with the rock group Wet Willie who were signed to Capricorn, Jackie worked in Phil Walden's studio. And it is for his work in Macon in the early 70s that he is best remembered - penning the outstanding 'I Wouldn't Be A Poor Boy' for Oscar Toney and 'Blind Bats And Swamp Rats' for Johnnie Jenkins among many others as well as assisting on the production side of things such as his role on Eddie Kirkland's fine 'The Devil And Other Blues Demons' LP for Trix, on which he also played piano. His strangest credit of course is for his work on Charlie Whitehead's 'Raw Spitt' LP courtesy of the mercurial and imaginative Swamp Dogg himself of course - 'Jackie Avery Tongue



## And Cheek Choir - Background vocals'...

'Your Love Has Brought Me (A Mighty Long Ways)' is an anthemic gospel workout of great energy and conviction. Check out the slide guitar (Duane Allman? Johnny Sandlin?) and wailing background vocals from Ella. The best known version of this track is by Wilson Pickett of course...'

Of course. But, I think I like this one better! Does it crank, or what? Thanks, John, for your always insightful input (even if I did steal it). Now, I would imagine that Ella Brown is also providing the background vocals on the Boynton single (which would coincide with what Peter Thompson wrote in those [Lamor Records Story](#) liner notes), as it appears to be from right around the same time.

Thanks, guys!

5/16/08

You know, it's funny how these things happen.

I was catching up on reading the posts on the ol' [Southern Soul Group](#) today, and people were going on about the 'real versus fake' instrument debate, as it related to some new CD that just came out which was a 'tribute to Otis Redding'. I'm not much into that kind of thing, but something caught my eye. One of the people posting was Peter Thompson, the proprietor of [Zane Records](#), who we've spoken about before. Here's what he had to say:

*"What a shame the press blurb connected to this release names Hugh's first record label as Lamor Records.. 'Running Out Of Fools' by Hugh Boynton is featured on Zane's release 'The Lanor Records Story ZNCD 1009..."*

Huh? I wasn't getting all of this until I read back a little further and clicked through to the CD in question:

Now how about that? That's right, 'Big Hugh' Boynton has just released a CD of Otis Redding songs. No matter what you might think of the record (or the instrumentation), it kind of blows my mind a little that here we are in the midst of this whole 'case', and like, there he is with a new CD. Here's what that 'press blurb' had to say on the CD Baby site:



"Like many of the great singers today, Huriah Boynton started singing at the early age of 5 with his church choir, in his hometown of Jeffersonville, Georgia. Huriah soon developed a passion for singing and performing for an audience. That passion led him to Lamor Records where at the tender age of 14, his recording career began. At Lamor Records, he worked with producer, Jackie Avery and recorded 'Running Out Of Fools' and 'Girl I Feel It'..."



LANOR 553 B

▶ [Girl I Feel It](#)

Which just happened to have been sent to us by our very own UK detective [Colin Dilnot](#). Another great record 'arranged' by Jackie Avery, I'm sure that's Ella Brown singing backup. This side of the 45 may also have an

Allman connection, you'll see why I think that in a minute...

"Huriah went on to perform for sold out audiences in local clubs around Macon, Georgia with the R&B group, 'The Flintstones'.

"In 1979, Huriah moved to Detroit, Michigan where he began his very popular Gospel Ministry, Hour of Grace, Blessings and Healing. 'Bishop Huriah' as he affectionately became known, touched millions with his message and music through his radio and television broadcasts. In 1991, on Bellmark Records, Huriah recorded his first Gospel CD entitled 'Uniquely Huriah' which contained the #1 smash single, 'If You Can't Help Me'. A few years later, Huriah started his own record company, Royal H Records. Under Royal H Records, he recorded and released a smooth, soulful mixture of Gospel and R&B CD entitled 'Huriah Has Arrived From The Planet Hugh Boynton'.

"During his career, Huriah has worked with many of the greats of our times including: George Clinton, P-Funk All-Stars, Four Tops, Al Hudson and One Way, Hamilton Bohannon, David Ruffin of the Temptations, Greg Allmon and The Allmon Brothers and Enchantment..."

SO, I'm thinking that's Greg 'Allmon' working the Hammond here... sounds like him, anyway. So like, David Ruffin? George Clinton? Bohannon? Who knew? The CD Baby site gives a link to Boynton's ['official site'](#), where there's some more biographical info:

"Huriah Boynton's astounding gospel music vocals have energy, a drive that pushes the message of his music, energizing it with big

city rhythms... Huriah Boynton is no stranger to the music scene. He was introduced to the gospel marketplace with his first album release on Bellmark Records, titled 'Uniquely Huriah' and has continued enjoying success from his single smash hit, 'If You Can't Help Me (At The Finishing Line)'... He began... opening services for Rev. Roosevelt Franklin and Rev. J. King. He left Georgia for Detroit where he met the late Al Perkins, a successful Detroit radio powerhouse, who had a vast number of contacts and a deep spiritual commitment. Perkins took Huriah under his wing. 'Al Perkins became my spiritual father,' Huriah recalls. 'He helped me to put my career and my life in the hands of God. I miss him so much'. Perkins helped Huriah's career, redirecting him to radio and television, resulting in a religious program on WGPR/FM in Detroit..."



And so, the Motor City enters the mix... still no mention of that ol' Funky Grasshopper, though, right? What a trip!

Now let's head back to Georgia, or is it Muscle Shoals?



FEDERAL 12549 A

▶ [Money Can't Buy True Love](#)

Is it me, or is this record just AWESOME? It's got me doin' the ol' do over here... *"she ain't no chicken, she don't need your feed. What she wants is a MAN when she's in need..."* I'm right here, baby! Yeah, you right!

How about that freakin' guitar?? Incredible stuff, boys and girls! So, what's the verdict? Macon or Sheffield? Georgia or Alabama?



According to the label, it was written by Duncan, but (and you just knew there had to be a 'but') on the label of the Gusto era Federal re-issue, the composer's credit reads Roy Brown. *Roy Brown? Good Rockin' Tonight Roy Brown?* Well, apparently, that is not the case, and I'm not sure where the hell that came from. According to

the BMI database, it was indeed penned by [J.O. Duncan](#), who (amazingly) is listed as the writer or co-writer of some 220 titles! Once again, who knew?

I finally got to meet Brian Poust, the [Georgia Soul](#) man, down there during the craziness that is the Ponderosa Stomp, but we never did get a chance to talk about the case here... oh well. Now that we've found out all of this stuff about 'Big Hugh', I guess the primary focus of our investigation is now Duncan. Think he's still out there?

POSTED BY RED KELLY AT 8:42 AM

[<< souldetective.com](http://souldetective.com)

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7 COMMENTS:

 [Dan Phillips](#) said...

Red,  
I'm checking my change jar and looking under sofa cushions for enough spare jack to spring for Lanor. Jeez. It's just a short drive up the road from here....  
Maybe my lottery numbers will come in. I'll go light a candle.

I knew Lavergne has passed away and did not even pursue the possibility that Lanor was still in operation. Wow.

I've been out of the loop, due to Carnival season and being just plain up to my eyeballs in projects. So, I just checked back on our mystery today. Great work so far. I am totally red-faced that I did not catch the identical b-side backing on the Duncan/Boynton records - but, as you know, I am not really a deep souler and just didn't listen to them very closely.

Research so far seems to contradict what those CD notes to the Lanor comp said about Boynton's Lanor sessions. I'll quote, "Boynton's manager, John Roberts had contacted Lee, a deal was made, and they took the singer to 'Capricorn' studios in Macon, Georgia to record. Three singles were issued on Lanor [actually four, according to the discography]. . . . During the sessions at Capricorn, Lee met Jackie Avery who had put the session musicians together and had some success songwriting, of note was a million seller for the Dells I WISH IT WAS ME YOU LOVED and SHACKING UP by Barbara Mason. Jackie suggested that Lee work with his wife, Ella Brown. . . ."

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Hmmmmmm.

So, at least one of Boynton's singles says it was recorded in Muscle Shoals. The A and B sides of the "Funky Grasshopper" single have backing tracks taken from Duncan's record, at least one side of which was done in Muscle Shoals.

If I did not have those Zane CD notes (by Peter Thompson, owner of Zane, who did the compilation and interviewed Lavergne), I would happily conclude that everything was done in Muscle Shoals with someone slipping Lavergne the tracks on the sly. But, the Macon connections do not make for simplicity.

Back to work! I have emailed Peter Thompson via the Zane website and asked him to lend a hand. Here's hoping.

Dan

10:27 PM

 Dan Phillips said...


Update. I just noticed in the Zane CD notes that Lanor 553 says on the label "Recorded At Capricorn Sound Studios Macon, Georgia." So, there's one we know for sure.

9:38 PM

 Dan Phillips said...


Red, man, how I love "Here Comes Charlie"! Never heard it before. Your description of the "influences" is right on. Duncan stole from the right people!

10:05 PM

 Anonymous said...

After reading all of this I just had to add that Bishop Huriah "big Hugh" Boynton is on the air on our local radio station Saturdays and Sundays via prerecorded messages from Detroit. He plays some of his gospel recording between his overmodulated words of spiritual healing. I knew about the Tribute to Otis cd, but had no idea about any earlier recordings until now.

3:35 PM

 emil said...

My name is Emil Handke and I was the staff studio drummer for the Starday King Studios in Macon GA.

As I remember this was 69/70. We cut many many R&B tracks for producer Bobby Smith, James Duncan was one of many. I do remember cutting "My Pillow Stays Wet" but my old memory says we cut that at the Original Macon Recording Studios (before Capricorn) in the old Georgian Hotel.

The staff at Starday/King Studios in Macon out on Millerfield road



was, Stanley Kimball, guitar, Calvin Arline, bass, Tommy Goodman, piano, Emil Handke Drums & Julian "Sparky" Sparks, trumpet and horn arranger.

Engineer was Guy McCulsky

Producer Bobby Smith

Staff at the original Macon Recording Studios in the old Georgian Hotel was: (1961 to 1965) Any musician that was in town hanging out at the studio.

Engineer was the famous Dave Harrison (Harrison Consoles) and

Producer was Bobby Smith

I am almost positive that "My Pillow Stays Wet" was cut at the original Macon Recording Studio.


Starday/King had first right of refusal on most of Bobby Smith production. If turned down, Bobby would shop the master or the tracks to several other producers. Major Bill Smith was one who bought a lot of our tracks.

Wow, all this has really taxed my memory! Best I can do on this point.

If you need to get in touch with me it is @

ehandke2@gmail.com

7:45 AM

 Anonymous said...

A quick comment on the Hugh Boynton's "Funky Grasshopper" recording released on Lanor.

It has the same instrumental backing track as "I Got It Made (In The Shade)" as you say, but this backing track, I'm sure, is by the Fame Gang and not by the Capricorn musician.

(sorry but I can't sign this email)

2:30 AM

 ehandke2 said...

Regarding R&B record producer Bobby Smith. Bobby has passed away October 2012 @ 81 years of age. He was the UnSung hero and started the recording scene in Macon GA, early 60's and built the Original Macon Recording Studios in the old Georgian Hotel.

All the blues musicians in Georgia and the deep south at one time or another recorded in that studio. James Brown and his musicians were often hanging out there as well as Little Richard, Otis Redding, Wayne Cochran, the Murray brothers and the list goes on.

Bobby Smith, one of the very last southern R&B blues producers will be missed. He helped so many aspiring artist and musicians. He loved

his music!

God Speed Bobby! Thanks for everything!

6:00 AM

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