

Those Hoodlum Friends – The Coasters
compiled by Claus Röhnisch



THE COASTERS TIME-LINE

1949 Alabama-born California resident, lead singer and bass Bobby Nunn, with the Robins, are contracted to Savoy Records via Johnny Otis.

1950 Johnny Otis Quintette with the Robins and Little Esther (featuring Esther's co-lead Bobby Nunn) hit R&B #1 in March with "Double Crossing Blues", produced by Ralph Bass in Los Angeles.

1951 Leiber-Stoller's first song on record, "That's What The Good Book Says", by Bobby Nunn with the "Robbins", is issued on Modern Records in March, through a deal with sales manager Lester Sill. Charles Brown waxes the first Leiber-Stoller written charter in September, "Hard Times", featuring Maxwell Davis on sax. The record hits R&B #7 in March 1952.

1952 Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller publish two classic songs, "K. C. Lovin'", (later known as "Kansas City"), and "Hound Dog", both recorded in August. Little Willie Littlefield with Maxwell Davis on tenorsax, and Big Mama Thornton with Johnny Otis' guitarist Pete Lewis, do the originals.

1953 Grady Chapman embarks the Robins as tenor and lead singer, and the group is contracted to RCA Records. One song, "Ten Days In Jail", recorded in September, is written by Leiber-Stoller.

1954 The Robins join Leiber-Stoller-Sill's new-formed Spark Records. Texan Carl Gardner, soon 26, debuts as new lead singer on March 13. "Riot In Cell Block #9" is the fresh group's first release in June, followed by "Framed" c/w "Loop De Loop Mambo" in October.

1955 "Smokey Joe's Cafe", recorded in July (or possibly January), and led by Gardner, is the sixth and last Robins Spark record. It hits R&B Top 10 in December, now on Atco Records. The Coasters, with Gardner, and Nunn, Texas-born baritone Billy Guy, and second tenor Leon Hughes, are formed by their manager Lester Sill and Leiber-Stoller on September 28.

1956 The Coasters debut on Atco Records with the Gardner-led "Down In Mexico", recorded in Los Angeles in January, peaking on *the Billboard* R&B chart #8 in March. Adolph Jacobs joins as the group's first guitarist. He leaves the vocal quartet in early 1959, replaced by Sonny Forriest. Follow-up record is "Brazil" c/w "One Kiss Led To Another" in July.

1957 Young Jessie subs for Hughes on a Los Angeles session in February, resulting in the double-sided smash "Young Blood", led by Gardner c/w "Searchin'", led by Guy. Both songs hit pop Top 10 in June, and both chart R&B #1 for a total of 13 weeks. The quintet is awarded a double golden disc for the half-year charter in August. The next three singles, "Idol With The Golden Head", "Sweet Georgia Brown", and "Gee, Golly", are not as successful. "The Coasters" LP, is issued in December.

1958 Gardner and Guy move to New York in January, and sing dual lead on "Yakety Yak" in March at Atlantic's new West 56th Street studio. The song hits R&B and Pop #1 in July. Awarded *Grammy Hall of Fame* in 1999, it introduces two new recruits, West-Coast veterans Will "Dub" Jones, bass (from the Cadets) and Cornell Gunter, second tenor (from the Flairs), who share leads on the flip, "Zing! Went The Strings Of My Heart". The follow-up, "The Shadow Knows", recorded and released in August, fails to score. The group also records "Croccodile" and "Hey Sexy", issued during the CD-era. L-S had moved to N.Y. already in October 1957.

1959 The Coasters hit international with three U.S. Hot pop Top 10 charters, "Charlie Brown", "Along Came Jones", and "Poison Ivy". The latter will peak as their 4th #1 R&B hit in October. "The Coasters' Greatest Hits" album is released that month. Five different versions of "I'm A Hog For You", the Top 40 flip of "Poison Ivy" (originally recorded in August 1958, with one take redubbed in July this year), are to be found on different CDs later. The group ends the year with yet another double-sided charter (both R&B and pop), "What About Us" c/w "Run Red Run".

1960 After "Besame Mucho" in February, the group records an underrated, but wonderful LP, "One By One", in June. That month the Guy-written "Wake Me, Shake Me" hits the charts. In July the magnificent "Shoppin' For Clothes" is waxed, later hitting *the Cash Box* pop chart #57.

1961 "Wait A Minute", written by Bobby Darin-Don Kirshner, recorded already in 1957, enters the pop charts in February. That month "Girls Girls Girls" and "Little Egypt (Ying-Yang)" are recorded, with as usual, Tom Dowd engineering and Mike Stoller at the piano. The latter hits the Hot pop chart #23 in June (and peaks at #16 R&B). New Yorker Earl Carroll (from the Cadillacs) replaces Kansas-born Gunter this summer.

1962 The Coasters' third Atco LP, "Coast Along With The Coasters", is issued in July. Texan Thomas "Curley" Palmer debuts as guitarist on "The Climb" in September, staying with the group almost 50 years. Billy Guy starts to record as a solo artist, still recording with the group for a further ten years (sometimes substituted by his friend Vernon Harrell on stage).

1963 The last Leiber-Stoller produced Coasters Atco single, "The P.T.A.", is issued in January, but fails to attract any attention. Both Bobby Nunn and Cornell Gunter start to compete with the original Coasters via their own separate new off-shoot lineups of false Coasters.

1964 The Coasters are featured on Atco Records' "Apollo Saturday Night" LP, and a single from the album, "T'Ain't Nothin' To Me", written by their new manager since 1961, Pat "Lover" Patterson, hits *the Cash Box* R&B #20 in March. The fine "Wild One" b/w a new recording of "I Must Be Dreaming" is neglected, when issued in October.

1965 The budget LP "That Is Rock & Roll" is issued on the Atco subsidiary Clarion in January. The group appears on the *Shindig* TV-show in February with, among others, a terrific live version of "What Is The Secret Of Your Success?". The original recording of "Let's Go Get Stoned" is waxed in April. James Evans enters as the Coasters' new manager after Patterson's untimely death.

1966 The group's last Atco record, "She's A Yum Yum, is produced by Texas-born tenor saxophonist King Curtis in January on West 60th Street. Curtis had played on all Coasters hits from 1958-1961. The Coasters move from Atco Records to Columbia's subsidiary Date in November, renewing their collaboration with Leiber-Stoller and record "Soul Pad" b/w "Down Home Girl". The single is released in March 1967.

1967 The Coasters wax the original "D. W. Washburn" for Date Records in October. The side is released in July 1968, and later reissued twice on King singles (including the final in 1973). The great song is composed by Leiber-Stoller, like almost all of the group's earlier hits.

1968 Ronnie Bright (from the Valentines) joins the Coasters in April, replacing "Dub" Jones. Ronnie will stay with the group for over 40 years. The Carroll-led "Everybody's Woman" is issued twice this year.

1969 The Coasters record for Lloyd Price's Turntable label with Jimmy Norman the producer. Gardner, Guy, Carroll, Bright, and Palmer appear at the Boston Tea Party. Ten live recordings from one of their shows there will surface on the bootleg CD, "Greatest Hits In Concert", in 2001.

1970 Leon Hughes starts to compete with Cornell Gunter's, and with Bobby Nunn's, West-Coast based false Coasters.

1971 British Joy issues a "Coasters" LP, titled "Hungry", actually featuring Billy Guy-recordings of 1962, done for ABC and Lloyd Price's Double-L. Atco issues "Their Greatest Recordings - The Early Years", a nice fold-sleeve LP, in November. Carl Gardner's legal Coasters hit the U.S. Hot 100 with a re-rendition of "Love Potion Number Nine" on King Records in December – their 20th charter. Written by Leiber-Stoller for the Clovers in 1959, it was recorded in February 1968 with a magnificent lead by Gardner, and is dubbed and remixed by Leiber-Stoller late this year.

1972 "Talkin' 'Bout A Woman", the flip of the Gardner-led "Cool Jerk" on King in April, is a reissue of a Date-side of May 1968, "She Can". The Coasters are featured in the movie *Let The Good Times Roll*. The last record with baritone Billy Guy as a member of the original Coasters, "The Coasters On Broadway" LP on King Records, is issued in December.

1973 Jimmy Norman replaces Guy in the lineup (after several years of subbing for him), and further live bootlegs are recorded in Boston. Jimmy stays with the group until February 1998. "Soul Pad" is reissued on King.

1974 Bill Millar publishes his book "The Coasters" on Star Books in the U.K. The Coasters quintet tour the world. Billy Guy tries his luck as a stand-up comedian and record producer.

1975 Carl Gardner's Coasters produce ten re-recordings of their hits, including "Love Potion #9" and "Down In Mexico" for Trip Records, issued as "16 Greatest Hits", with six "bonus" tracks from Guy's "Coasters" LP (the Guy LP now titled "It Ain't Sanitary" in the U.S.)

1976 Carl Gardner & The Coasters record for Wilson Pickett's Wicked label, resulting in their 37th and final single. Several albums - and singles - hit the market during the late 1970s as "The Coasters", which actually are recordings done by Nunn, Hughes, Jones, and Guy with their different false groups. Gunter's group had recorded a live bootleg in 1970.

1982 Atlantic issues the nice De-Luxe double-LP, "Young Blood", in July, featuring mono hits and other classics (including some King sides).

1986 Carl Gardner's original and true Coasters, now featuring the group's longest lasting lineup, the trio Gardner, Nashville-born Norman, and New-Yorker Bright, plus guitarist Palmer, are managed by Gardner's soon-to-be new wife Veta. Earl Carroll had left in 1980 to reform his Cadillacs. Warner issues the Coasters' very first CD, "The Ultimate Coasters", in October. Grady Chapman, Billy Richards Jr, and Bobby Sheen (all from the late 1950s Robins) try their luck with different "Coasters" incarnations after Bobby Nunn's death in L.A. in November.

1987 Gardner, Guy, Jones, and Gunter are inducted into the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* in January, as the first vocal group receiving that honor. Jones and Guy act together as "The Coasters" in L.A.

1988 The classic Hall of Famers (plus Palmer) reunite for a one-time-event to participate at Atlantic Records' 40th Birthday concert at Madison Square Garden in May. Carl and Veta settle in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

1990 Remnants from Cornell Gunter's Coasters multiply with several new Las Vegas "Coasters" after Gunter's murder there in February.

1991 The Coasters, with Carl Gardner leading his current group in terrific shape, perform at the New York Pops concert at Carnegie Hall in May, and continue doing regular Wolfman Jack gigs in Orlando.

1992 Rhino Records issues a superb double-CD, "50 Coastin' Classics", in November, featuring several sides not issued on U.S. albums prior to this nicely packed mini-box (including a 52-page booklet).

2000 Louisiana-born Will "Dub" Jones, near 72, dies in Los Angeles in January. A bootleg CD, "Charlie Brown", is issued, featuring Atco stereo masters and alternates with studio chat, mostly from 1958.

2001 J. W. Lance, from N.O., joins the group as new tenor in July.

2002 Billy Guy, 66, dies in Las Vegas in November.

2005 Carl's son (born in Texas in 1956), Carl Gardner Jr, takes over the role as lead singer of the Coasters in November. He had sung, on and off, with his father's new-formed quintet already from April 1998.

2007 Gardner's autobiography, "Yakety Yak I Fought Back", is published on AuthorHouse in June. Two definitive Coasters CDs are issued, "Down Home" on Varèse Vintage in August, featuring the Date/King sides, and the Rhino Handmade 4CD-set "There's A Riot Goin' On – The Coasters On Atco" in December, featuring 113 tracks (including the Robins' original Spark sides). Carl Gardner dies on June 12, 2011.

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