



Paramount *The Popular Race Record*

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.



September 5, 2013



Charlie Jackson

Dear Dealer :-

Make Every Day A Banner Day :



Ma Rainey

You can do it by using Paramount's consistent line of hit records. Just about the time the trade gets ready to wonder what's the next -- there's a new hit on Paramount keeping things a-humming for the dealer.

Only recently it was Lemon Jefferson's "Black Snake Moan" that was the talk of the trade, then Blind Blake's "Dry Bone Shuffle," and now, well "The Rise & Fall of Paramount, Volume One (1917-32)" is putting the kick in the record business.



Norfolk Quartette

Got "Rise & Fall" in stock? Performers like Jelly Roll Morton and Johnny Dodds have been away just long enough to make their records welcome and create action in sales. You will know automatically where to find this record in your shelves as there will be plenty of calls for it.

Wonder if you have overlooked 12522 by Sister Ernia Mae Cunningham and T. C. I. Sacred Singers -- if you have, lose no time now in cashing in on it. They're asking for it.

There is more -- far more -- for you inside.

Yrs very truly,



Blind Lemon Jefferson

THE NEW YORK RECORDING LABORATORIES
The New York Recording Laboratories

1140 BROADWAY

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

THE WISCONSIN CHAIR COMPANY
Under Trade Name



The New York Recording Laboratories

Manufacturers of Phonograph Records

PORT WASHINGTON, WIS.

September 5, 2013

The Rise & Fall of Paramount Records (1917-1932)

---> A two-volume omnibus of words, images and music, housed in a limited-edition, handcrafted cabinet-of-wonder.

---> A co-release by John Fahey's Revenant and Jack White's Third Man.

---> Volume One, 1917-1927, release date: November 19, 2013.

---> Volume Two, 1928-1932, release date: November 2014.

---> Each volume contains:

- 800 newly-remastered digital tracks.
- 200+ fully-restored original ads and images.
- 6 x 180g LPs w/ hand-engraved metal leaf center labels.
- Deluxe large-format hardcover art book: 250 pages, narrative w. full-color plates.
- Encyclopedia-style reference manual: 360 pages, field guide to artists & repertoire.
- Handcrafted elements: rich woods, lush upholstery, and custom-forged metal hardware.
- Track & Image App: First-of-its-kind music and image player app, allows user mgmt of 800 tracks and 200+ original ads; housed on custom-designed USB drive.

Paramount Records was formed in 1917 with little fanfare and few prospects - its founders ran a Wisconsin furniture company and knew nothing of the record business. Its mission was modest: produce records as cheaply as possible with whatever talent was available. The results were unequivocal: the records sounded bad and sold poorly. Paramount was soon on the threshold of bankruptcy.

In 1922 Paramount's white owners embarked on a radical new business plan: selling the music of black artists to black audiences ("the music of the Race," or "Race Records"). This move, paired with equal parts dumb luck, opportunism, chicanery and a willingness to try anything, paid dramatic dividends.

By 1927, Paramount was the most important label in the Race Records field.

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The Rise & Fall of Paramount Records (1917-1932) (cont'd)

By the time it ceased operations in 1932, Paramount had compiled a dizzying roster of performers -- still unrivaled to this day by any other assemblage of talent ever housed under one roof -- spanning early jazz titans (Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton), vaudeville songsters (Papa Charlie Jackson), the first solo guitar bluesmen (Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake), theater blues divas (Ma Rainey, Alberta Hunter, Ethel Waters), gospel (Norfolk Jubilee Quartette), masters of Mississippi blues (Charley Patton, Son House, Skip James) and the indefinable "other" (Geeshie Wiley, Elvie Thomas).

As a body of work, Paramount inarguably ranks alongside the most potent archives of American art, of any kind, ever assembled. This is the story of how it came to be.

The label's story mirrors that of America itself, riding the waves of modernism emanating from post-WWI-Europe and the sufferings and joys of the Great Migration of black Americans from the South to the Midwest and Northeast. Drawing on talent found in its recording base of Chicago but also farther afield in Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana, Paramount was one of the first enterprises of any kind to truly capture the full range of uniquely American forms of cultural expression -- what America really sounded like in the 1920s and early '30s: its parlor singers, quartets, kazoo benders, balladeers, cowboy crooners, carny barkers, jassers, vaudevillians, blues belters, guitar slingers, songsters, moonshiners and charlatans -- the gamut of Melville's "multitudinous murmurings."

The Rise & Fall narrative takes the form of a curated exhibit of words, images and music with Paramount at its fulcrum, all housed in a lush handcrafted cabinet that harkens back to the wunderkammern, precursors to the modern museum. Crafted as an object to keep and cherish for a lifetime, its form is designed to reveal "evidence of the hand at work," to bring out the tactile richness of hand-sculpted woods and metals, and to meld the rough-hewn with the earliest burblings of American modernism in the 1920s.

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More Details on...the two-volume Rise & Fall of Paramount Records (1917-1932)

---> The Artists

Some of the more than 300 artists featured across Volumes One and Two:

Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Coleman Hawkins, Duke Ellington, Ma Rainey, Alberta Hunter, Jimmy O'Bryant, King Oliver, Jimmy Blythe, Clarence Williams, Fletcher Henderson, Ethel Waters, Perry Bradford, Fats Waller, Johnny and Baby Dodds, Lovie Austin, Tiny Parham, Tommy Ladnier.

Blind Blake, Son House, Jaybird Coleman, Charley Patton, Skip James, Blind Joe Taggart, William and Versey Smith, Tampa Red, Little Brother Montgomery, Blind Joe Reynolds, Jabbo Williams, Blind Roosevelt Graves, Bo Weavil Jackson, George "Bullet" Williams, James "Boodle It" Wiggins, Louise Johnson, Buddy Boy Hawkins, Willie Brown, Henry Townsend, Rube Lacy, Roosevelt Sykes, William Moore.

Big Bill Broonzy, Papa Charlie Jackson, King Solomon Hill, Meade Lux Lewis, Gee-shie Wiley, Elvie Thomas, Charlie Spand, Blind Willie Davis, Bumble Bee Slim, Beale St. Sheiks, James P. Johnson, Ramblin' Thomas, J.D. Short, Freddie Spruell, Mississippi Sheiks, Ida Cox, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Tommy Johnson.

---> Inevitability; The Chicago Connection

What's signed, is signed; and what's to be, will be; and then again, perhaps it won't be, after all.

--Herman Melville, Moby Dick

We don't understand it, what kind of people are they, where are they coming from?

--Art Satherley, Paramount recording mgr., referring to his listenership

Paramount's success -- though it may seem inevitable today -- resulted from a heady mix of tenacity, recklessness, opportunism, sleight-of-hand, and luck -- in particular the fortuitous hiring of one Mayo "Ink" Williams as the first black executive of a white-owned record company. Williams, a Chicago South Sider, early NFL player, bootlegger, impresario, and Brown University graduate, would become a key early champion of those two uniquely American art forms, jazz and blues, while maintaining a not entirely benevolent orientation toward the artists themselves. Via Williams, Paramount scouted talent, ran the offices of its recording operations, and recorded most of its early records in Chicago, unintentionally playing a documentarian's role, capturing the very sounds of the Great Migration in the Midwest.

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More Details on...the two-volume Rise & Fall of Paramount Records (1917-1932)
(cont'd)

---> The Format

And so you may have in small compass a model of universal nature made private ... a goodly huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine hath made rare in stuff, form, or motion ... shall be sorted and included.

-Sir Francis Bacon, from his prescription for the compleat apparatus of the learned gentleman, Gesta Grayorum (1594)

The wunderkammer, or cabinet of wonder, arose in mid-sixteenth-century Europe as a repository for all manner of wondrous and exotic objects whose categorical boundaries were yet to be defined. In essence these collections -- marking the intersection of science and superstition, and drawing on equal parts art, natural history (often faked), ethnography, and archaeology -- can be seen as the precursors to museums.

Intended to be closer to an interactive museum exhibit than a conventional music collection, the Rise & Fall wonder-cabinet gives equal status to page-turning narrative, scholarship and new research by leading experts, original and newly created graphic art, industrial design, and compelling analog and digital music experiences. Both volumes will pull out all the usual stops: handcrafted packaging with inlaid materials, large format hardcover clothbound books, 180g vinyl records plus extensive digital tracks, a complete narrative history of the label, and a visual centerpiece featuring many of the striking original handdrawn Paramount ads from 1922-30 -- ads which birthed the illustration style of Robert Crumb which in turn begat the work of many graphic novelists working today.

---> Woodcraft / Furniture-making in the Bloodline

There are also some interesting parallels with co-producer Jack White's own story: Paramount was a side business of the Wisconsin Chair Company, whose main concern was the manufacture of home furnishings at its factory in Grafton, Wisconsin. Its founders got into the record business almost by accident, after Thomas Edison contracted with them to make Edison brand phonograph cabinets when his factory burned down; they then decided to start their own line of phonograph cabinets; record-making then attended the cabinets.

Jack's pre-White Stripes days were as a furniture maker's apprentice and, had things gone differently, he might still be operating Third Man Upholstery there in Detroit. (His upholstery workshop still takes significant pride of place there at his compound in Nashville!) Jack's great vision, strong design sensibility, and love of the tactile richness of hand-worked wood are soaked into every inch of this project.

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Particulars about Volume One:

The Rise & Fall of Paramount Records, Volume One (1917-27), part one of a two-volume omnibus of art, words and music in a limited-edition cabinet-of-wonder format, is a joint release from John Fahey's Revenant and Jack White's Third Man Records, co-produced by the leading researcher/writer on Paramount, Alex van der Tuuk.

The Rise & Fall cabinet chronicles in words, images and sound the curious tale of Paramount, an early American record label which, despite being run out of a Wisconsin chair factory, with bargain-basement recording and production methods, by men with few connections to and little idea of what black (or rural white) audiences were interested in, nevertheless managed to create a repository of American art that can stand with any this country has produced.

Volume One focuses on the label's improbable rise from also-ran (known for its "tin pan tone") to Race Records powerhouse, exploring how its fortunes were tied to the Great Migration as well as to its unconventional strategies, "open door" recording policy, opportunism, sleight-of-hand, and incredible luck.

---> Included in Volume One:

-800 digital tracks by 172 artists across the Paramount family of labels, including the earliest recordings of:

King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Blind Blake, Fats Waller, Ma Rainey, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, Alberta Hunter, Papa Charlie Jackson, Ethel Waters, Coleman Hawkins, Johnny and Baby Dodds, Bo Weavil Jackson, Jimmy O'Bryant, Buddy Boy Hawkins, Tiny Parham, Jimmy Blythe, and Jaybird Coleman.

-A visual centerpiece comprising the full run of 200+ striking, hand-drawn original ads, fully-restored, as published by Paramount and associated labels in the Chicago Defender newspaper from 1922-27 - ads which birthed the illustration style of Robert Crumb which in turn begat the work of many graphic novelists working today.

-All ads and digital tracks can be downloaded onto the user's hard drive and managed via itunes or other player software, or managed and played directly via the cabinet's proprietary music-and-image player app, housed on a USB drive in custom-forged metal; tracks can be searched, sorted, grouped, and played by song title, artist, performer, catalog number, matrix number, and recording date, and are cross-referenced to their corresponding weekly ad from the Chicago Defender; users can also choose from pre-programmed playlists or listen to the tracks and watch the images in "radio" and slideshow mode.

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Particulars about Volume One: (cont'd)

Included in Volume One:

(cont'd)

-A 256-page large-format cloth-bound foil-stamped hardcover book, with a feature-length narrative by award-winning Chicago-based writer Scott Blackwood, chronicling Paramount's curious tale, along with hundreds of art plates showcasing ads and ephemera from its family of labels.

-A 300-page Field Manual featuring encyclopedia-style bio-discographical entries for 172 artists and their repertoire, with chiaroscuro artist portraits by Tony Mostrom (illustrator for both 78 Quarterly and Derek Bailey's Incus Records).

-A laser-etched, white birch LP folio housing 6 x 180g records, each bearing hand-engraved gold leaf-stamped center labels, and comprising a selection of 87 tracks from the collection.

-Faithful reproductions of Paramount's 1924 and 1927 "Book of Blues" catalogs, and 1920 phonograph brochure from its sister company, Vista Talking Machine Co.

-All housed in a richly-detailed handcrafted quarter-sawn oak cabinet, lushly upholstered in sage green velvet, with custom-forged metal hardware, inspired by the 1920s portable phonograph cases of Paramount and the VV-50 Victrola of its rival, Victor.

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