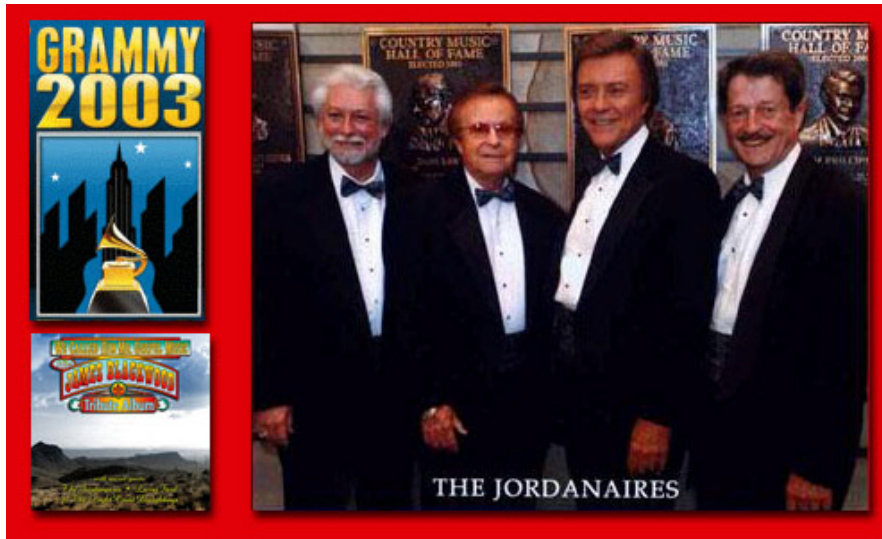


The Jordanares Biography



The Jordanares are Curtis Young, Gordon Stoker, Ray Walker and Louis Nunley

One Sunday afternoon, in 1955, the Jordanares played a show in Memphis with Eddy Arnold. They had just completed the "Eddy Arnold Show" for TV in 1954, and, were in Memphis, publicizing the series. The Jordanares had sung "Peace In The Valley" on the show that afternoon. When the show was over, a young man, blond, quiet and courteous, and, plenty of combed-back hair, came backstage to meet them. He was Elvis Presley, a young, practically unheard of singer, just getting his start in the area. There were a few polite exchanges, then Elvis said, "If I ever get a recording contract with a major company, I want you guys to back me up." He was on "Sun" at that time. Thinking back to that night, The Jordanares' first tenor, Gordon Stoker, remembers wishing Elvis well, "But we never expected to hear from him again," he said. "People were always coming up and saying that. We're still told that."

Sure enough!! Elvis recorded his first session with RCA on January 10, 1956, with Scotty, Bill, and, D. J. . That day, "I Got A Woman", "Heartbreak Hotel", and, "Money Honey" were recorded. On January 11, 1956, Gordon Stoker was called by Chet Atkins to do a session with a "new-probably-wouldn't-be-around-long kid, named Elvis Presley"---oily hair, pink shirt, black trousers. RCA had, also, just signed "The Speer Family". Chet asked Gordon to sing with Ben and Brock Speer so he could use them. On that day, "I'm Counting On You" and "I Was The One" made history by being the first recording session that Elvis, did with vocal background. By April 1956, "Heartbreak Hotel" was "No. 1". After having done several more recording sessions in New York with Scotty, Bill and D. J., Elvis flew to Nashville on April 14, 1956, to record "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You". Gordon was called, again, to sing a vocal trio with Ben and Brock. After the session, Elvis took Gordon aside and told him (not knowing, at the time, why all the Jordanares were not there) that he wanted "the" Jordanares on all his future recording sessions. This time, Stoker saw to it that it was known - and - true to his word - Elvis used the Jordanares on nearly every one of his recording sessions for the next 14 years. At a time when no backing musicians, producers, or engineers received a name recognition on any records, Elvis insisted that he have the "Jordanares" on the "labels" of his records. The reflected glory was enough to earn the Jordanares "Group of the Year" awards well into the Beatles era.

The Jordanares were familiar with Elvis by 1956, partially because, Hank Snow had told the Grand Ole Opry artists that there was a young man "...tearing up the stage..." on some of the Country shows and that "...no one would follow him...", and, that, "...when he left the stage, the audience went with him...". Elvis was, certainly, familiar with the Jordanares. Of all the music Elvis knew and loved, it was the gospel quartets that touched him so deeply. The Jordanares were among Elvis' favorites, because, he heard them every Saturday night on the Grand Ole Opry. Formed in 1948 in Springfield, Missouri, the Jordanares had arrived in Nashville in 1949, immediately securing a spot on the Opry. Their music was spirited and black-influenced, very much in keeping with Elvis's tastes. "We were the first white quartet to sing spirituals...", Gordon Stoker asserted. It was music that moves, that you can snap your fingers to.". Elvis could relate.

The group, Bill and Monty Matthews (brothers, and, no relation to Neal), Bob Hubbard, and, Culley Holt who all hailed from Springfield, MO., soon changed. In 1950, Gordon Stoker replaced the lead tenor, in '52 Hoyt Hawkins replaced the baritone, in '53 Neal Matthews became the second tenor, and, bass singer Culley Holt, left in December '54 to be replaced by Hugh Jarrett. It was this line-up consisting of Stoker, Hawkins, Matthews and Jarrett which made up the group that backed Elvis on most of his sessions in the mid '50s. They also appeared in his movies, and on some of his landmark television appearances. Hugh Jarrett left in 1958 and was replaced by bass singer, Ray Walker. This line-up remained for the next 24 years. Hoyt Hawkins died in 1982, and was replaced by Duane West, who had filled the baritone part, intermittently, since Hoyt had first fallen ill in the '70s. Duane became ill in 1999 and Louis Nunley stepped in. Neal passed away in April of 2000, and, Curtis Young has stepped in. Now the Jordanares consists of Gordon Stoker, Ray Walker, Louis Nunley, and, Curtis Young.

In 1969, when Elvis decided to play long engagements in Las Vegas, the Jordanares opted to stay in Nashville. In doing so, they never found themselves short of work. In addition to their work with Elvis, the Jordanares backed up Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Marty Robbins, Ricky Nelson and virtually every other major name in both Pop and Country music during the '50s, '60s, and '70s; between 2,200 and 2,500 hundred artists and over 30,000 sides recorded in the studios; plus, their stage work, radio transcriptions and shows, and television appearances, to date. "Back around the time of our first hit record in 1957, a record producer told us to forget about the hit parade," Stoker remembered, "Stars are here today and gone tomorrow. The industry needed good backup singers. We didn't think he was telling the truth, but, boy, was he ever. For 23 years we had two to four sessions a day, six days a week."

They reckon that they're on records that have now sold 2.6 billion copies - and they might well be right. In 1976 and 1979, they were given a "Superpickers" award by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences for having sung on more Top 10 discs than any other vocal group in history. In November 1984, they were honored with the "CMA Masters Award" for their lifetime contribution to music. Just for the record, that tally includes Jimmy Dean's "Big Bad John", Jim Reeves' "Four Walls", Loretta Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter", Patsy Cline's "Crazy", Ricky Nelson's "Travelin' Man", Conway Twitty's "It's only Make Believe", Johnny Horton's "Battle of New Orleans", and, literally, hundreds of others. Through Elvis, the Jordanares' influence has passed into the mainstream of popular music. Thinking back to a meeting with Beatle member, Paul McCartney, Stoker remembered his telling him, "When Elvis's records came out, we listened to the vocal backing harmonies. They encouraged us to sing harmony."

The Jordanares are credited with using the "numbers system" before anyone else. Neal Matthews developed it in 1955 for speed in their background work, and, at present, it is used worldwide in the music field. They are an integral part of the "Nashville Sound", now known as "The A-Team"; the original sound that brought stars to Nashville from all over the world, and, established it as a premier recording center of the world.

Speaking with Ray Walker, he noted that in the past 3 years, the Jordanares have worked every week, traveling the world and spending a great deal of that time in Las Vegas, doing their memories of Elvis and "The Original Tribute To Patsy Cline". He adds, "It's great on this side of the hill."

As you know by now, the lives and works of the Jordanares would fill volumes that cannot be addressed here. We hope you enjoy the brief summary that we have been able to include.

The year 2000 was the Jordanares' fiftieth anniversary as a group, as the world knows them today. They are still performing world wide. They're still friends, too. "We don't fight with each other, fuss or carry on," Stoker said recently. "That's right", said Walker, "It's like an enduring marriage, and, we love it." When the industry roasted them a few years ago, there were many jokes about their longevity. "Have you heard the original record of the Gettysburg address," quipped producer Norro Wilson. "Well, the Jordanares are the guys doing the doowops behind Lincoln."

.....and The Jordanares "doowop" on.....

Useful Links for more information on The Jordanares

<http://www.jordanares.net> – The official Jordanares Website

<http://www.raywalker.net/> - Ray Walker's official Website