

eral changes in tempo. It's the kind of record that stops conversations in clubs and is a potential monster in the making too but it's going to take a considerable amount of perseverance by DJs because as good as it is, "I'll Never Forget You" is no overnight sensation, it's as complex in its structure as a rubik's cube and only a hard line approach will ensure its longevity.

Another name that sits well with almost any Chicago backroom hero is **Barry Despenza** - and Despenza worked with most - a cursory glance through Chicago releases will throw up such illustrious name checks - "**You're So Right For Me**" **Johnny Sayles** (Dakar), "**Someday, Someway**" / "**Hey Lady**" **Center Stage** (Dispo) (later picked up by RCA); "**Can I Change My Mind**", "**Something You Got**" and "**If It's Love That You're After**" (co-wrote with Carl Walford) for **Tyrone Davis**.

A lesser known item on Despenza's own Dispo label (Dispo 700) throws up a previously unknown singer called **Billy Easton** on a fine double header. "**Why Can't This Time (Be Like All The Others)**" / "**I Was A Fool (To Say That I Didn't Care For You)**". Both sides are arranged by **Donnie Hathaway** with "**Why Can't**" being the stronger of the two. Easton sounds naggingly familiar and it wouldn't surprise me to find this was an illustrious name moonlighting to avoid contractual conflicts. A well stirred dollop of brass, strings and percussion slide in unobtrusively behind the vocal as it glides through less than 3 minutes of unequivocal soul. Particularly effective is the way the brass goads the best out of Easton, sometimes slurring precariously like a drunk negotiating a difficult hurdle.

Chicago is synonymous with groups, **The Impressions**, **The Artistics**, **The Chi-Lites**, **The Sharpees** and, of course, the great survivors, **The Dells**. Several of their sides have already enjoyed more than a fleeting relationship with the stylus of modern soul clubs - "**It's All Up To You**", "**Make Sure**", "**Closer**" and "**Just As Long As We're In Love**", but even these take a back seat to a record that was never a commercial hit, yet is a real powerhouse of a recording where the lead vocals aren't held in check until the spadework has been done, as on many of their releases, but instead cut loose in a hapless fashion on a rolling backing that recalls the glory days of 60's finger-clickin'-soul-struttin' Chicago at its very best. "**Thinkin' About You**" (Cadet 5538) is the side, a veritable classic of its kind sounding as if it were torn from the very veins and body tissue of the group, so perfect is its execution. And so the search for the sound that is embodied in the emotional welding together of human vocals and real instruments goes on.

The Steelers scored a reasonable hit in late '69 when "**Get It From The Bottom**" (Date 1642), a neat little slice of midtempo group soul, hit the mid 50's of the USA Hot 100. The group consisted of a pre-knighted **Wales Wallace**, **Leonard Truss** and the **Wells brothers**, **Wes**, **Alonzo** and **George**.

Flushed with the success of "**Get It**" they landed at Epic and turned out 2 further uptempo numbers, "**Can't Take This Pain**" (Epic 10587) and "**You Got Me Callin'**" (Epic 10773), both of which are fine dancers built on a solid bedrock of a fast slappin' backbeat, dervish sax and supportive back-ups. All-in-all reminiscent more of Philadelphia but the group recorded solely in Chicago to my knowledge. As an added bonus, all 3 flip sides are excellent ballads.

Chuck Ray cut 3 sides which fall conveniently into crossover territory. The earliest sounds late 60's, a superb and gritty midtempo beater called "**I Don't Mind**" for Tam-Boo Records (Tam-Boo 6719). Extremely atmospheric, the employment of bitter/sweet strings and stabbing bass behind Ray's depressed grasp of producer **Eddie Silver's** lyrics are the icing on the cake. This is one of those recordings where the singer sometimes strays the wrong side of the musical charts (ie veers off key) but is the very epitome of the 'single take' and it seems Ray is so heavily into the lyrics he simply lets rip and damn the consequences. Not for the perfectionist but essential hardcore soul. "**Baby Please Don't Let Go**" (Buddah 207) by Ray has had a flirtatious affair with Northern Soul turntables since the mid 70's. Opening with the most dramatic of lines, "*Darling with my heart in my hand, I come to you somewhat of a broken man*", Chuck is firmly entrenched in strings'n'things land. A good record now rising in popularity again. The hat-trick is completed by a '74 recording made for the Gemigo label, "**Reconsider**" (Gemigo 101). Chicago mainstay **Emmet Garner** produced both the aforementioned Buddah side and "**I'll Be There**", the flip of the Gemigo 45. Garner's own immaculate "**So Much Better**" (Maxwell 802) is the very epitome of the genre and remains a highly sought after item.

A few lesser known female vocalists who enjoy crossover potential are **Dorothy Johnson's** "**If It's Not Love Don't Waste My Time**" on a ridiculously amateurish-looking label, **Zot** (521). As with a glut of these Chicago sides, it's masterminded by **Johnny Moore**, who produces, writes and arranges, but it's Ms Johnson who cuts the rug on this achingly soulful floater. Comparisons with **Frankie Gearing** are inevitable. In a similar vein **Albertina Walker** has "**Mama Said Thank You**", a Donny Hathaway gospel song but with ambiguous lyrics. Originally issued on Caritas, it later popped up on Jewel (185).

Shirley Wahls cut some great sides under the Windy City influences of **Jo Armstead**, **Mel Collins**, **Willie Henderson** and **Bill Sheppard**, but it's a double header on King Records (6083) courtesy of the pen of **Karl Tarleton** "**Why Am I Crying**" / "**That's How Long (I'm Gonna Love You)**" which earns the 'attagirl' here. Whether it's the crispness of "Why" with its midtempo airy, roomy production or the hell-for-leather "That's How Long", two indispensable sides.

