

***The Answer Is – A Guide to the
Lost Art of the Answer Record***

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Bob Leszczak

BearManor Media

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Dedication

Tying into the “Answer Records” theme of this book, I hereby dedicate it to my luck and the many dreams that have been “answered” in my life. To quote the band Third Eye Blind, it’s been a “Semi-Charmed Life” as every one of the jobs I’ve ever held throughout my life (without exception) has been related to my two passions – music and TV. I worked in an oldies record store in Clifton, New Jersey; sang/toured/recorded with several doo wop vocal groups including the Duprees of “You Belong to Me” fame, as well as the Infernos and Autumns; worked as a Disc Jockey on numerous oldies radio stations from coast-to-coast over four-plus decades winning a coveted “Air Award” along the way in 1999 (while getting to see so much of the USA); wrote and produced a weekly five-hour syndicated oldies radio magazine show called *Solid Gold Scrapbook* voiced by Norm N. Nite for the United Stations Radio Network; performed acting work as a SAG/Aftra extra in dozens upon dozens of TV shows and films; was one of the commentators on CNN’s eight-part *History of the Sitcom* documentary series; and best of all was given the opportunity to write (and have published) twelve books (so far) about my two favorite things, music and TV. In retrospect, maybe the word “jobs” should be changed to “joys.” Creedence Clearwater Revival would call me a “Fortunate Son.”

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to all who “answered” the call and agreed to “answer” my questions about either the original song, its answer record, or both. Thank you, Tom Austin (Royal Teens), Ron Dante (Detergents), Peter Noone (Herman’s Hermits), Diane Renay, Marvin Rosenberg (Safaris), Jay Siegel (Tokens), and Dodie Stevens.

Introduction

Nat “King” Cole had a big hit in 1954 with “Answer Me, My Love.” The Fifth Dimension had “One Less Bell to Answer.” England Dan and John Ford Coley told us that “Love Is the Answer,” but while awaiting an answer, the Beatles got “No Reply, and Ed Ames sang “Who Will Answer?” On the game show *Jeopardy*, Ken Jennings gives you the answers, just as Mayim Bialik, Alex Trebek, and Art Fleming did in the past. Well, that’s exactly what I plan to do in this book – give you the answers. You see, the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were rife with answers to songs of the day. Some answer records were parodies of the original (“Small Sad Sam” by Phil McLean as well as Bob Kayli in answer to “Big Bad John” by Jimmy Dean) while still maintaining the basic premise of the song. The original idea remained somewhat intact. Many answer records provided closure to the stories told in songs (“Tell Tommy I Miss Him” by Marilyn Michaels in answer to “Tell Laura I Love Her” by Ray Peterson). Many continued a story told in a popular tune (“Charlie Brown Got Expelled” [by Joe Tex] because of the mischievous behavior displayed in “Charlie Brown” by the Coasters). And some were rebuttals (“Stay-at-Home Sue” by Linda Laurie in answer to “Run-around Sue” by Dion); but most were desperate attempts to cash in on the success of records ascending the *Billboard* and *Cashbox* charts. Some songs were answered by the original singers themselves (“Judy’s Turn to Cry” by Lesley Gore in answer to her #1 hit “It’s My Party,” “I’m Tossin’ and Turnin’ Again” by Bobby Lewis in answer to his #1 hit “Tossin’ and Turnin’,” “I Found Out” by the Du Droppers in answer to their “I Wanna Know,” etc.). And, of course if a hit song such as “Why Do Fools Fall in Love” (Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers) actually posed a question, it was almost always followed with a response (in this case, by Frankie Lymon’s younger

brother Lewis Lymon and the Teenchords who sang, “I Found Out Why [Fools Fall in Love]”).

Answer records seemingly wore out their welcome just about the time that Disco, Sergio Valente Jeans, Chams Shirts, platform shoes, Studio 54 and puka shell necklaces burst upon the scene in the mid to late 1970s. But prior to that, answer records were abundant, and often became sizeable hits in their own right. Many were issued by the same record company/same label as the original (“Long as the Rose Is Red” by Florraine Darlin in answer to Bobby Vinton’s “Roses Are Red [My Love]” - both on Epic Records, and “I’m Your Soldier Boy” by the Soldier Boys in answer to “Soldier Boy” by the Shirelles – both on Scepter Records). Not included in this volume are the songs of Weird Al Yankovic. His releases are fun/funny/clever parodies, but I wanted to use the 1970s as a cut-off point. He deserves a mention, though as “Beat It” by Michael Jackson became the unrelated “Eat It,” “Jeopardy” by the Greg Kihn Band became “I Lost on Jeopardy,” and “My Sharona” by the Knack became “My Bologna,” (to name but a few).

Admittedly, I don’t have all the answers – no one does. This is not an exact science. I may have missed a couple of additional answers for a few of the songs included in this volume. Some are very rare and very obscure because of (in many cases) a very limited number of pressings on tiny record labels. Forgive me if I may have overlooked a few of your favorites. I’m titling this *The Answer Is – A Guide to the Lost Art of the Answer Record*. Some of the answer records listed in the pages of this book were cleverly written. Others, not so much. Some of these answer songs you’ve definitely heard before, but many were plucked from the very depths of obscurity. To make it easier on the reader, the original songs being answered are presented alphabetically. There is a wealth of information about the original tune, such as title, artist, label, composers, chart position (if any), and year of release. The vinyl record pictures are of the rarely-seen answer record, and *all* are from my own personal collec-

tion of 45s and 78s. Mind you, not all of them are in mint condition. Please excuse writing, wear, dirt, label tears and other imperfections on these records. I wanted to include at least one answer record photo for each entry (many entries include more than one photo), so this explains the selections and the omissions. Pictures in this volume are plentiful. In a few instances there were *numerous* answer records sparked by the original (prime examples being “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” by the Shirelles, “Are You Lonesome Tonight” by Elvis Presley, “A Thousand Miles Away” by the Heartbeats, “Duke of Earl” by Gene Chandler and “Work with Me, Annie” by the Midnighters). In most cases, the original versions of these songs sold millions and likely most readers of this volume have seen them and perhaps have them in their own collections, so showing them would be overkill. There are simply too many answer records to cram into merely one volume, so (you guessed it), I may plan on a Second Volume down the road (an *answer* volume, if you will). Hopefully, this book is the “answer” to all, or at least some of your musical wishes. And isn’t it nice to live in an age when all, or at least most of these answer records are a mere click away on You Tube?

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