

JOHNNY REMEMBER ME

GREAT BRITISH RECORD LABELS: TOP RANK



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CD1

CD1 - JOHN LEYTON • *Johnny Remember Me*
RICKY WAYNE & THE FABULOUS FLEE-RAKERS

• *Hot Chick A'Roo*

CRAIG DOUGLAS • *A Hundred Pounds Of Clay*

BERT WEEDON • *Guitar Boogie Shuffle*

TOMMY HAWKE • *Good Gravy*

VINCE EAGER • *(I Wanna) Love My Life Away*

DANNY RIVERS • *I Got*

GARY MILLS • *Hey Baby (You're Pretty)*

CHERRY WAINER • *I'll Walk The Line*

JOSH MACRAE • *Talking Army Blues*

JO SHELTON • *I Need Your Arms Around Me*

BERT WEEDON • *Sorry Robbie*

BROOK BROTHERS • *Please Help Me I'm Falling*

ROSE BRENNAN • *Johnny Let Me Go*

KENNY DAY • *Teenage Sonata*

KNIGHTSBRIDGE STRINGS • *Walkin' Shoes*

SHEILA BUXTON • *Sixteen Reasons*

CRAIG DOUGLAS • *Pretty Blue Eyes*

VINCE EAGER • *Why*

TONY CROMBIE • *Man From Interpol - Main Theme*

LORIE MANN • *Dream Lover*

PINEWOOD STUDIO Orch. ft. JOHNNY DANKWORTH • *Sapphire*

JANET RICHMOND • *Not One Minute More*

BERT WEEDON • *Ginchy*

JACKIE DENNIS • *Summer Snow*

RUSS SAINTY & THE NU-NOTES • *Standing Around*

TONY HATCH • *Rhoom Ba-Cha*

MIKE DESMOND • *Tua*

DES LANE (THE PENNY WHISTLE MAN) • *Moonbird*

ADAM FAITH • *Ah, Poor Little Baby*

BIG BARON • *Romance*

JOHN LEYTON • *Tell Laura I Love Her*

FABULOUS FLEE-RAKERS • *You Are My Sunshine*

GARY MILLS • *Look For A Star*

CD2

CRAIG DOUGLAS • *Time*

JOHN LEYTON • *Wild Wind*

DANNY RIVERS • *Hawk*

BERT WEEDON • *Nashville Boogie*

VINCE EAGER • *The World's Loneliest Man*

GARY MILLS • *Comin' Down With Love*

ADAM FAITH • *Runk Bunk*

KNIGHTSBRIDGE STRINGS • *The Executioner Theme*

JANET RICHMOND • *You Got What It Takes*

BROOK BROTHERS • *When Will I Be Loved*

BETTY MILLER • *(It Took) One Kiss*

BOB WALLIS & HIS STORYVILLE JAZZMEN • *Captain Morgan*

RICKY WAYNE & THE FABULOUS FLEE-RAKERS

• *Don't Pick On Me*

KENNETH CONNOR • *Rail Road Rock*

BIG BARON • *Swinging Bells (Oberon Jump)*

VINCE EAGER • *Makin' Love*

RUSS SAINTY & THE NU-NOTES • *Happy-Go-Lucky Me*

TONY CROMBIE & HIS MEN • *Drum Boogie Shuffle*

CRAIG DOUGLAS • *Only Sixteen*

LORIE MANN • *So Many Ways*

TONY HATCH • *Stetson*

ROSE BRENNAN • *My Summer Diary*

JOHN LEYTON • *You Took My Love For Granted*

BERT WEEDON • *Big Beat Boogie*

SHEILA BUXTON • *Shakedown*

MIKE DESMOND • *If I Were The Sky*

JO SHELTON • *Tread Softly (You're Stepping On My Heart)*

ANNE HEYWOOD • *Love Is*

HARRY ROBINSON "STRING SOUND" • *The Skirl*

GARY MILLS • *Teen Angel*

JOSH MACRAE • *Talking Guitar Blues*

TONY HATCH • *Chick*

CRAIG DOUGLAS • *When My Little Girl Is Smiling*

FABULOUS FLEE-RAKERS • *Green Jeans*

2CD Set

RHGB 46

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In hindsight, the shortlived **TOP RANK** label would appear to have been a magnificent folly, perpetrated by the mighty Rank Organisation, seemingly for the sole delight of later generations of record collectors. Launched in 1959, the label lasted little more than three years, during the course of which it was owned by two entirely separate companies. Yet at their peak they were pumping out a vast amount of material, clocking up hits with both licensed-in US repertoire and UK artists, most notably our title track, legendary indie producer **Joe Meek's** eerily-atmospheric '**Johnny Remember Me**'.

The man whose initials prefixed the label's catalogue numbers was one **Joseph Arthur Rank**, a wealthy, Yorkshire-born industrialist whose family's lucrative flour-milling empire funded his subsequent business ventures. In the 1930s, as the driving force behind British National Films, Pinewood Film Studios and General Film Distributors, JAR led the nascent British film industry, and in 1937 he founded **The Rank Organisation** in order to consolidate his filmmaking interests. The company grew rapidly, largely via acquisitions, and by the late 40s was the largest British entertainment conglomerate, owning five major film studios, six-hundred-andfifty UK cinemas, and a string of dance venues. TRO group further expanded its areas of operation with the acquisition of Bush Radio, the founding of Rank Xerox, and their involvement in the media consortium which would become Southern Television. During 1958 Rank announced their intention to start a record label, to sell cut-price records in their chain of cinemas, ballrooms and dancehalls. But in those days, the UK record industry was an extremely formal, regulated affair, and cut-price product was frowned upon; moreover, Rank's initial pressing arrangement with Philips meant that they would have to comply with the UK's existing resale price maintenance framework and distribution protocols. They subsequently took over an established record wholesalers, Thompson, Diamond & Butcher, converted them into a slick sales and distribution operation, and proceeded to take liberties with many of the industry's unwritten "rules" (the first UK record company to issue mainstream Pop LPs at budget price, they would be rewarded with a No. 1 album in February 1960, *The Explosive Freddy Cannon*).

The experienced **Dick Rowe** had been poached from Decca to run the company, as head of A&R, assisted by a youthful **Tony Hatch** (then merely 19 years old) as trainee arranger/ musical director/producer. Between them, Rowe and Hatch were responsible for virtually all the label's early UK output, which was recorded mainly at either IBC or Lansdowne. Top Rank was finally unveiled in January 1959, clearly a little later than expected as their first release was a Christmas offering, 'Little Drummer Boy' by The Harry Simeone Choral, a US licence from 20th Century Fox. Late or not it made the UK Top 20, which got them off to a great start – although they found themselves faced with an unexpected logistical setback when the disc's very success created the demand for a 78rpm version. Rank had initially planned to press 45rpm singles only, but at that stage the UK recording public was still only gradually coming to terms with the new 7" format, and they found themselves obliged to comply - indeed, they ended up having to press 78rpm copies of their biggest sellers throughout 1959.

The picking of their early releases were US imports, licensed from Time, Swan, Fire/Fury, Vista, Laurie, Cameo/Parkway, Coed, Ace, Dolton, Laurie, Vee-Jay, Ember, End, etc. But they gradually assembled a parallel roster of British artists, initially MOR (e.g. **Lorie Mann**, with '**Dream Lover**'), light entertainment (Tony Hatch's '**Chick**') and movie soundtracks (**Pinewood Studio Orchestra**, ft. **Johnny Dankworth**, with '**Sapphire**'), before the UK's unlikely prototype guitar hero, the avuncular **Bert Weedon**, registered Top Rank's first significant UK-recorded hit with his nifty cover of '**Guitar Boogie Shuffle**', which breached the Top 10 in June. Bert would go on to enjoy many more twangular hits, including '**Nashville Boogie**' and '**Big Beat Boogie**'.

However, the most successful home-grown artist on the label was, by a long shot, **Craig Douglas**. The former Terry Perkins - aka 'the singing milkman' - had won a talent competition on the Isle Of Wight to appear on 6-5 Special, which led to a record contract with Decca. After a couple of unsuccessful releases he moved to Top Rank, following which he unleashed a run of hits, notably '**Only Sixteen**' (which topped the UK charts) and '**Pretty Blue Eyes**' (which reached No.4). Nonetheless, despite Craig and Bert's successes, in the short term Top Rank appeared to pin their hopes largely on the 'mums & dads' market, via artists like Jo Shelton (famously, Anne Shelton's younger sister), **The Knightsbridge Strings**, danceband singers **Betty Miller** and **Rose Brennan**, **Anne Heywood**, **Mike Desmond**, trumpeter **Bob Wallis**, drummer **Tony Crombie**, **Big Baron**, and novelty items from **Josh MacRae** (whose '**Talking Army Blues**' was a Top 20 hit), **Harry Robinson "String Sound"**, former 6-5 Special teenage sensation **Jackie Dennis**, comic actor **Kenneth Connor**, and penny whistler **Des Lane**. They even tried some of their regular MOR artists out on covers of US Pop/R&R hits, e.g. **Janet Richmond's** brave reading of '**You Got What It Takes**', **Sheila Buxton's** breathy '**Sixteen Reasons**', former Oh Boy! organist **Cherry Wainer's** '**I'll Walk The Line**', and **Kenny Day's** lachrymose '**Teenage Sonata**'.

FILE UNDER Various / Pop / 50s / 60s