King Records, founded by the late Syd Nathan in Cincinnati, Ohio, started in the independent record business in 1943. The original labels were Queen and King.

Several artists immediately became giants in the R/B category such as Wynonie Harris with his all-time great hits "Good Rocking Tonight" and "Bullmoose Jackson," followed closely thereafter with a string of hits that were award-winning. For example, "Sleep" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." "Your Eyes." "Sleep" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Tiny Bradshaw and his big band gave the label exciting beats in the form of such instrumentalists as "Soft," "Ping Pong" and others. Sonny Thompson, all-time top pianist, came to the label with his melody blues and also produced Lula Reed with her gospel stylings of R/B songs. Lulu first hit with "I'll Brown in My Own Time," which since has become associated with many other artists and is considered a blues standard. Bill Doggett came to King with a wild string of hits and racked up sales records with "Ram Dunk Shush," "Hold It," "Slow Walk," "Moon-dust" and "Ronky Tonk," which is now over five million in sales. Little Willie John spent his entire short-lived career on the label and is a legend for his "Talk to Me," "Let Them Talk," "Fever," "Sleep" and others.

It is unusual that part of the original staff that guided the company to these great successes are still with the label. Hal Neely, President; Jim Wilson, Vice President Sales; Henry Glover, Vice President Publishing; Louie Innis, Director of Creative Services; Johnny Miller, Vice President of Manufacturing; and Roy Emory, Chief of Sales Service.


Albert King got his start on the label in 1960 with "Don't Throw Your Love on Me So Strong." Freddy King and Earl Connelly King were on a King. The Bethlehem jazz series featured Eddie Vinson, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Nina Simone. Miss Simone first got her start with "I Love You Porgy." In 1965, Hal Neely once again took over direction of King and today the active roster includes James Brown, the Manhattans, Bobby Byrd, Vicki Anderson, Billy Danlies, Arthur Prysock, Redd Foxx, Marva Whitney, Marie "Queenie" Lyons, Pat Lundy, Dan Brantley and Earl Gaines. Most recent additions are Mickey Murray and James Duncan.

Long recognized as a trend-setter in R/B, King operates its own studios in Cincinnati, Nashville and Macon. The R & B production assignments are varied with James Brown producing himself as well as other artists for the label. Bobby Smith has continued to Grow

King continued to grow during the middle '50s and added another name to its line, Federal. Federal Records enjoyed the immediate success of many hits by Billy Ward & the Dominoes which included "Sixty Minute Man," "Have Mercy Baby," "Do Something for Me," etc.

James Brown's first releases were on Federal, including those that became hits for the market. The first thing recorded by Brown was "Please, Please, Please," closely followed by "Try Me, Think," "Prisoner of Love" and others. Of course, in today's market James Brown is the password and leader, so no mention is needed of his current hits.

Hit Big in '50s

Hank Ballard and the Midnighters hit big in the '50s with his Annie series, "Work With Me Annie," "Annie Had a Baby," "Twist," "Teardrops On Your Letter" and "Finger Popping Time." The Twist had its origin with Ballard who both wrote and recorded the original version. The early King roster included the late, great instrumentalist Earl Bostic who had hit after hit. To name a few, "Pingo-mingo," "Harlem Nocturne," "Sleep" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Tiny Bradshaw and his big band gave the label exciting beats in the form of such instrumentalists as "Soft," "Ping Pong" and others. Sonny Thompson, all-time top pianist, came to the label with his melody blues and also produced Lula Reed with her gospel stylings of R/B songs. Lulu first hit with "I'll Brown in My Own Time," which since has become associated with many other artists and is considered a blues standard. Bill Doggett came to King with a wild string of hits and racked up sales records with "Ram Dunk Shush," "Hold It," "Slow Walk," "Moon-dust" and "Ronky Tonk," which is now over five million in sales. Little Willie John spent his entire short-lived career on the label and is a legend for his "Talk to Me," "Let Them Talk," "Fever," "Sleep" and others.

It is unusual that part of the original staff that guided the company to these great successes are still with the label. Hal Neely, President; Jim Wilson, Vice President Sales; Henry Glover, Vice President Publishing; Louie Innis, Director of Creative Services; Johnny Miller, Vice President of Manufacturing; and Roy Emory, Chief of Sales Service.


Albert King got his start on the label in 1960 with "Don't Throw Your Love on Me So Strong." Freddy King and Earl Connelly King were on a King. The Bethlehem jazz series featured Eddie Vinson, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Nina Simone. Miss Simone first got her start with "I Love You Porgy." In 1965, Hal Neely once again took over direction of King and today the active roster includes James Brown, the Manhattans, Bobby Byrd, Vicki Anderson, Billy Danlies, Arthur Prysock, Redd Foxx, Marva Whitney, Marie "Queenie" Lyons, Pat Lundy, Dan Brantley and Earl Gaines. Most recent additions are Mickey Murray and James Duncan.

Long recognized as a trend-setter in R/B, King operates its own studios in Cincinnati, Nashville and Macon. The R & B production assignments are varied with James Brown producing himself as well as other artists for the label. Bobby Smith has...