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"adding a personal touch to the entertainment industry"

PORT CHARLOTTE, FL • FT. MYERS, FL

Greetings:

Thank you for your interest in Celebrity Direct Entertainment's artists. We've enclosed a promotional packet on the selected artist(s), and we hope this proves beneficial to you.

Unlike most other "agencies," Celebrity Direct provides exclusive management for virtually all of our artists. Twelve months out of the year we work closely with our personell in regards to their promotion, bookings, and many in the recording studio.

Please feel free to contact us via phone, fax, postal mail, or e-mail should you have additional questions for us (we'd be more than happy to provide you with an audio or video sample, or other information as requested) or to close the deal to bring one of our artists to your venue. And make sure to point your internet browsers often to [www.CelebrityDirect.net](http://www.CelebrityDirect.net) for complete updates and additions that may help you down the road.

Through our personal relationship with our entertainment, we hope to pass on a "personal touch" to you, and from you to the ultimate buyer... the fans!

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you!

Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Cord G. Coslor in blue ink.

Cord G. Coslor

Handwritten signature of Jim Osburn in blue ink.

Jim Osburn

Handwritten signature of Ted Osburn in blue ink.

Ted Osburn



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**Entertainment**

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*Monroe Powell's*  
**Platters**  
REVUE

[www.MonroePowell.com](http://www.MonroePowell.com)





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*Monroe Powell's* **Platters REVUE**

**Celebrity DIRECT Entertainment**  
 proudly presents

*Monroe Powell's* **Platters REVUE**

**According to reports gathered from public opinion, this group is the best Platters-related act there is! The Legendary Monroe Powell was the last lead singer hired by Platters founder Buck Ram, and has been a staple with the group for 30 years! Schedule is filling fast, so book this group while you can!**

For over 40 years, the legendary Monroe Powell has been a recording and touring singer with internationally acclaimed groups. First with The Dominos (1950s) and The Ink Spots (1960s), Powell is best known as the lead singer of The Platters for most of the last 30 years. Originally hired by Platters founder and manager Buck Ram in 1970, Powell has continued the Platters legacy longer than any other former or current member of the Platters... and created a legacy of his own.

Powell has never claimed to be an original member of the Platters... but it cannot be denied that Powell has been a mainstay with them. Powell replaced former lead singer Sonny Turner, becoming the third lead singer in Platters history. Today, because of world-wide appearances with the Platters continually for the last 30 years, he may be the most well known "Platter."

It should be noted that *original* member Herb Reed also continues to perform with his Platters group. Please see The

Platters Information Site at the Archive News Network found at [www.PlattersInfoSite.com](http://www.PlattersInfoSite.com) for more information on a variety of different "fake" groups, and for information on the only two other 'legitimate' Platters members from the Buck Ram era currently performing today: Herb Reed & Sonny Turner.



Monroe Powell appearing on The Mike Douglas Show in 1974

Because of ongoing litigation in the courts between various factions of former and current 'Platters' management and members, Monroe Powell is currently using the name *Monroe Powell's Platters Revue*.

### Biographical Capsules:

[www.MonroePowell.com](http://www.MonroePowell.com)

**MONROE POWELL:** Before joining the Buck Ram-led Platters, replacing lead singer Sonny Turner in 1970, Monroe sang with The Dominoes and The Ink Spots. Born and raised in New York City, he is a highly trained singer and spent his youth in voice and opera training. He has a remarkable vocal range and his solo styling, characterized by swelling crescendos, plaintive whispers, and hushed pauses, varies only slightly from the group's original style. His early years with The Dominoes and The Ink Spots, and his long association with The Platters has earned him a place in music history. No other man or woman has continuously been with Buck Ram and The Platters as long as Monroe Powell. A soft spoken individual, Monroe never fails to delight his audience with his classy showmanship. He currently resides in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**KENN JOHNSON:** Kenn Johnson was born in Detroit, Michigan, so quite naturally he was a product of the early Motown scene. Raised in the same neighborhood as The Temptations, Johnson began his singing career in his early teens with The Romeos. In 1984, Kenn hit the national scene with his own band, "Shake, Rattle, n' Roll" and performed the classic sounds of the 1950s and 60s throughout the Western United States. In October, 1995, he left his successful experience with "Shake, Rattle, n' Roll" and joined The Platters. Charisma, charm, and style describe Kenn. He currently resides in New Port Beach, California.

**WILSON WILLIAMS:** Baritone Wilson Williams got his start in music singing gospel. He cut his first record in the early 1970s and played Rev. Jesse Jackson in Tommy Butler's production of the play, "Selma." In 1978, he signed with ABC Records and recorded the album "Up The Downstairs," the last album produced using Motown musicians and arrangers. In 1985, Wilson formed his own record label and released two singles, one of which hit number 13 on the English Charts. Before joining The Platters, Wilson traveled all over the United States and Canada with his own seven-piece show band, "Attraction." He resides in Punta Gorda, Florida.

**AL HOLLAND:** Allen Holland, a native of Detroit, started is career in classical music with his principal instrument being the Violincello. Allen has played in many orchestras including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, The Highland Park Chamber Orchestra, and The Windsor Symphony. Deciding to try something different, he chose the keyboards as his major instrument, which led him to join the show band, "Attraction" in 1970. Allen is The Platters' keyboard player and sings first tenor and baritone. He resides in Fort Myers, Florida.

**VERCEAL WHITAKER:** Verceal started her career in Chesapeake, Virginia as a member of the Dawson Singers. She sang with several recording artists before joining The Platters and traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada as a member of "Attraction." She is blessed with a beautiful voice and an extraordinary vocal range. Verceal graces The Platters as its first lady and is described as a true lady both on-stage and offstage. She resides in Port Charlotte, Florida.

#### Did you know:

- \* Monroe Powell is the last lead singer hired by Buck Ram?
- \* Monroe Powell was the third lead singer of The Platters... Tony Williams (1953-59) & Sonny Turner (1960-69) preceded Powell.
- \* That all the original Platters are deceased with the exception of Zola Taylor (no longer performing) and Herb Reed?
- \* prior to joining The Platters in 1970, Powell was with both The

Dominoes and The Ink Spots?

- \* Mr. Powell has often said his current group is the best he's ever worked with?
- \* There are over 50 groups using The Platters name in some form with no ties to the actual Platters?

**\* Did you know that Monroe Powell's Platters Revue has worked everything from small private events to the Super Bowl in recent years? Get them to your event!**

### HISTORY

The Platters began as an all male quartet in 1953. Members Tony Williams, David Lynch, Herb Reed and Alex Hodge called themselves “platters,” the name used in those days for records. In 1954 Tony brought the group to Buck Ram for management. Buck Ram then added a female, fifteen year old Zola Taylor, who was formerly with The Queens. In August, 1954 Alex Hodge left the group and was replaced by Paul Robi.

Buck Ram led The Platters to their first recording contract with Mercury Records, and in 1955 “Only You” became The Platters first gold hit record. Under Ram’s careful direction, management, and coaching The Platters garnered 16 gold records and attained international fame and immortality through the romantic ballads that continue to be played all over the world today.

Even from its early beginnings, The Platters experienced several changes in members, but there has only been three lead singers in its history: Tony Williams (1953-1960), Sonny Turner (1960-1970), and Monroe Powell (hired in 1970). Monroe, the last lead singer hired by Buck Ram, has certainly earned the respect and admiration of fans world-wide.

Of the first group of Platters, the following are deceased: Tony Williams, David Lynch, Paul Robi, and Buck Ram. Zola Taylor lives in Los Angeles and no longer performs. Herb Reed lives in Massachusetts.

Today, Monroe Powell and his Platters Revue continue to perform all over the world, bringing back memories of romance and simpler times with their delicately balanced harmonies. Audiences of all ages react enthusiastically to their performances, whether they are performing for an intimate group of 350 or tens of thousands, as they did during the closing ceremonies of the 1996 Olympics.

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL READING, LEGAL BRIEFINGS, ETC.,**

**PLEASE READ THE ATTACHED MAGAZINE ARTICLE IN THE BACK OF THIS PACKET**

REVIEWS, QUOTES, AND REFERENCES

**PERFORMANCE, The Weekly Talent Buying Guide, Dec. 25, 1972:**

"...But, the mantle of vocal royalty must in the end lie with Monroe Powell. In a tenor manner uncommon for its sheer strength and range, the New York City artist leads the quint through some of the 50s greatest works. A romantic "Twilight Time" mingles with the soft stage lights; an overpowering "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" chills the heart; a high-pitched "Only You" deepens the amazement of the audience at such an incredible voice; a dance floor stroll during "The Great Pretender" sets the record for the evening's spellbinder, Monroe's delivery of the four-million seller, "My Prayer." Tie that into thunderous, standing applause and you have just a sampling of the repertoire... what you hear is more than you ever expect to get."

**Bill Willard, Variety, Mar. 8, 1987:**

Under Buck Ram's eagle eye and diligent guidance for over 30 years... have remained one of pop music's staples. Other groups using the same name have been around, but this is the boss quintet performing to overflow crowds each show, six nights a week in the Four Queens French Quarter Lounge. Changes in personnel have taken place through the years, but the high tenor of Monroe Powell has sparked The Platters since 1970. His mannered style of the fave Ram tunes, "Only You," "The Great Pretender," and "Twilight Time," thrilling pulsating glissandos, has been the central focus of each and every set. Dwelling on past glories of disc hitdom is an important structural part of The Platters' vocalog, but the group also shows itself via soloistic capacities in other musical realms and periods..."

*...I am wondering if Monroe Powell will be appearing in Colorado any time soon? It has been many years since we've seen him perform and would love to see him again. Others have come through, but none compare to Monroe.*

Thanks,

Gloria Lovell  
Denver, Colorado

*Sunday night's two 70-minute performances not only raised about \$5,000 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and a San Pedro youth group, but drew several standing ovations. It also had several couples dancing to Sam Cook's "Twistin' the Night Away," Carolina Beach tunes like "With This Ring," and Platters' standards like "Only You," and "My Prayer."*

**Steve Wasserman, Miami, FL, Nov. 6, 1971:**

"I've seen them all - Tony Williams, Sonny Turner and the rest. I've heard the recordings of "Only You," etc., a thousand times. But last night I heard Monroe Powell on lead for the first time and those hits seemed brand new, Monroe is double dynamite! In addition, the group sounds terrific. I must hand it to you, Buck Ram, for organizing five people who are not only talented but extremely personable. I was thrilled, Monroe is unbelievable! And by the way, "Be My Love" is the finest record The Platters have ever recorded!"



OTHER PHOTOS



Monroe Powell with Buck Ram



Current group having fun in Japan



Powell in 1958 Dominoes publicity photo



On The Dinah Shore Show - 1978



Appearing on The Andy Williams Show - 1970



Japanese publicity photo from recent tour

## SAMPLE SET LIST

### *Intro*

1. I Wanna
2. Twilight Time
3. With This Ring
4. Smoke Gets In Your Eyes
5. Unchained Melody
6. Heaven On Earth
7. My Girl
8. Medley:  
Remember When  
You'll Never Know  
The Magic Touch
9. My Guy
10. I Love You 1,000 Times

11. Somewhere Over The Rainbow
12. Midnight Train To Georgia
13. For Your Love
14. Stand By Me
15. Twisting The Night Away
16. Medley:  
Harbour Lights  
Red Sails In The Sunset  
Ebb Tide
17. Only You
18. The Great Pretender
19. My Prayer

### *Playoff*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Monroe Powell's Platters Revue is sure to be a hit at virtually any venue. To make your buying experience a little easier, please note that in addition to their base fee, they require items as outlined in the contract rider. Some of these items include:

*airfare to and from the venue*  
*ground transportation*  
*all lodging and meals during stay*  
*sound and lights*

The group generally travels with 7 members total... as a self-contained unit, including their band. Other arrangements may be made regarding band.

----- FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS THE PLATTERS HAVE HAD THAT MAGIC TOUCH... AND MANY GREAT PRETENDERS -----

The Platters have recorded nearly 400 songs, have sold over 100 million copies of those songs, and have performed throughout the world, winning many awards and an induction into the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame along the way. The Platters, over the years, have appeared in 27 movies such as "Rock Around The Clock," "Girl's Town," "Europe By Night," and many more. Some of their most memorable and well-known songs include The Great Pretender, (You've Got) The Magic Touch, Only You (And You Alone), and Twilight Time. But who exactly are The Platters? After reading this article, you will discover there any many groups using the name "Platters" in some form or another. Some of these groups consist of original members of The Platters, but many or most do not. Some of these groups are related to the original Platters management, some are not. We believe it is important to be able to distinguish "real Platters" from the fakes and the frauds.... as a fan of The Platters or as a collector of Platters music memorabilia.

This article originally appeared in the December, 1999 issue of The Archive News magazine. This article has been reproduced here, in its entirety, with permission, and is for informational purposes only. Updates regarding some of the facts stated in the article are posted at the end.

Since the 1950s, The Platters have undergone a myriad of changes. Changes in which have, at times, made this group difficult to keep track of, understand personnel changes, and find accurate and truthful information on. This article is intended to tell the story of The Platters... a story of classic hits, world fame, and success. It will also present the unfortunate other side to the story: group division, legal battles, and ugly lawsuits. Most importantly, using personal testaments from many involved with the group such as management, and the members themselves, the author hopes to tell these stories in an honest and truthful manner! But, with each side telling their own version of the story, you will find many contradictory statements and supposed "fact" about The Platters history. The author is merely a liaison between actual performers and management from over the years, to you, the reader. The author makes no claim as to being a judge, nor a lawyer, and leaves the job of jury to the reader and fan. This is their story:

## BRIEF SYNOPSIS

In January of 1953, four men converged on Los Angeles to form a group for competing in local amateur shows, etc. This early group consisted of Cornell Gunther, Alex Hodge, Herb Reed, and Joe Jefferson. The Platters name was derived from the popular term used by DJs when referring to records, says Herb Reed. These were times of high school friends playing for their peers, a time of innocence. They didn't know about money, recording albums, or the problems that were yet to come in future years. Herb Reed said in a recent interview, "We were just kids still in school performing popular songs of the day... harmonizing. No thoughts of hit records, no thoughts of success." With both Reed and Gunther singing lead, the men won several amateur contests and appeared on The Ebony Showcase, a television program. Soon, David Lynch replaced Joe Jefferson, and the legendary Tony Williams joined the group while Cornell Gunther (later famous with The Flairs and The Coasters) departed. At this point, Ralph Bass of Federal Records signed the group to their first recording contract.

That same year, a songwriter from Chicago named Buck Ram signed a management contract with the group. The members at that time were Herb Reed, David Lynch, Tony Williams, and Alex Hodge. Early in 1954, the same time Ram decided a female would be a good addition to the group, Zola Taylor was at Alex Hodge's house rehearsing with Cornell Gunther's sister, Shirley Gunther. Both ladies were with the Queens at this time. Soon, Zola was taken onboard The Platters, and in the same year Paul Robi replaced Alex Hodge. Buck Ram and The Platters really got rolling when Ram was negotiating a deal with Mercury Records for another one of his groups, The Penguins. At this time, The Penguins' song, "Earth Angel" was at the top of the charts in the United States. Ram was negotiating a contract with Mercury for The Penguins, and decided to take The Platters with them in the deal. Mercury wanted The Penguins, not necessarily The Platters, but Buck Ram insisted they take both groups or none! The Platters signed a recording contract with Mercury Records in 1955. By 1956, Ram had incorporated The Platters forming "The Five Platters, Inc." giving each member stock in the corporation, with each member eventually signing away his or her right to the name, The Platters, to the corporation, owned by Ram. (In 1974, the California Superior Court found this original assignment of rights back to Five Platters, Inc., and this original stock issued, to be "illegal" and null) In 1960, Williams left The Platters to pursue his solo career with Reprise Records. He and his wife, Helen, would later have their own group of Platters. Sonny Turner, a Cleveland native, replaced Tony Williams as lead singer of The Platters. By 1966, The Platters consisted of David Lynch, Herb Reed, Sonny Turner, Nate Nelson, and Sandra Dawn. In 1969, the group parted ways with their management. Buck Ram signed Monroe Powell to replace Sonny Turner, an association which lasted for the next 25 years. On Jan. 2, 1981 David Lynch died at the age of 52. June 2, 1989 Paul Robi passed away at the age of 57, and on Aug. 7, 1992, Tony Williams died at the age of 64. This left only Herb Reed, who is still performing with his own group, and Zola Taylor as living members of the 'original' Platters. After leaving the group in the mid-1960s, California resident Zola Taylor eventually would have her own Platters group, and unfortunately suffered a severe stroke in recent years. 1990 brought the induction of the original Platters into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Buck Ram passed away in 1991.

With this quick synopsis of The Platters history comes a tangled web of information and materials which is very important to both Platters history and their current standing in the entertainment industry. It is said by many that there have been between 8 and 120 music groups using The Platters name! How could this be? One way in which this has happened is that after a legitimate group member has left The Platters, they have started their own groups. When members leave that 'new' group, they also might start their own. And so grows the deepening roots of controversy and confusion. Surely, members that actually were with Buck Ram and The Platters should be allowed to work... but can they reference themselves back to The Platters? The courts have tried to clarify this on numerous occasions, and naturally so have those currently performing. By outlining some of the most important individuals related to The Platters, and some of the most recognized "Platters" groups out there, we leave that question up to you. What is in black and white is the fact that each individual related to The Platters and their history is sincere in what they are doing, and truly believe in their rights. For memorabilia collectors and fans of The Platters, the large number of "Platters" visible to the public presents many opportunities to collect moments related to nearly 50 years of Platters history. All contact information for these individuals will follow at the conclusion of this article.

## PLATTERS PERSONALITIES

**Buck Ram**, composer, musical director, and pro-



ducer, was the driving force behind the success of The Platters. He originally persuaded Mercury Records to sign them to a record deal, and stuck with them until his death in 1991. He was a genius song-writer, and is considered the mastermind behind The Platters hits. Ram, who has been credited with writing nearly 1,000 songs, not only penned such hits as "Only You," "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," and "Twilight Time," for The Platters, but also wrote the hit "I'll Be Home For Christmas" for Bing Crosby. With over 200 personell changes in the Platters group over the years, it is evident that what draws people to The Platters is their music, much of it written by Ram, not necessarily the members of the group. In 1983, Ram told the Atlanta Journal newspaper, "We've had 200 personell changes, and people do ask about Tony (Williams) sometimes, but they never mention any of the other guys except Monroe Powell, who's been with us for 14 years."

Born in Chicago, IL, in 1909, Ram began his professional career as a lawyer, but was a saxophone player at heart. He played with the legendary Benny Goodman and Gene Krupa after he passed Illinois' State Bar Exam, and soon began writing music for many in the industry. He also is credited with discovering Ella Fitzgerald. The story says that Ram practically dragged Chick Webb, a drummer he was working with, into going to Harlem's Apollo Theater where the 15 year old Fitzgerald was performing. Eventually, the world would come to know her as the First Lady of Jazz.

He then was invited to Hollywood where he began writing music for motion pictures, but found the industry to be very challenging.... so much so he was forced to stop writing music altogether for 2 years. He chose to return to the industry, a move that blessed the public with a sensational sound, and a move that not only discovered, but in some ways, created The Three Suns in the 1940s, The Platters in the 1950s, and The Union Gap in the 1960s. Along the way, he garnered 16 Gold Records, and countless achievement awards.

**Jean Bennett** is considered by many to have been Buck Ram's "right hand woman." Originally entering the industry as an aspiring performer herself, Bennett soon became an employee of Ram. With Ram and The Platters virtually from the beginning, Bennett wrote and edited the first Personality Plugger in 1954. This publicity paper was first released to disk jockeys, agents, magazines, and record companies on February 15, 1954. By 1964, Bennett had moved to Las Vegas from Los Angeles and purchased Personality Productions from Ram. Ram continued to work very closely with Personality until his death in 1991. Sue Hackett, a current co-worker of Bennett's says, "She was the lady with The Platters. Took the title of secretary for society to accept her. She was the lady executive."

Today, Bennett maintains her right to the Platters name is still valid and has her own group, which is booked as The Buck Ram Platters, based out of Las Vegas. Current members of this group include Tyrone Sweet, Julie Harris, Paul Allen, III, Joel Gaines, and J. Michael Davis. While no original members are in this group, J. Michael Davis did perform with The Platters during the Ram era in the 1980s. Bennett says she and her company vigorously pursue groups which are illegally using the Platters name. "We don't feel it is right for people to take money out of her mouth, or anybody else's mouth," says Hackett. At the same time, Bennett has licensed two other groups to perform. A group located in Branson, MO using the name of The World Famous Platters (members include Lawrence Randell, Eddie Stoval, Walter White, and Dee Dee Hamilton) and a group managed by Larry Marshack of New York, which often performs at Las Vegas' Sahara Hotel & Casino, both perform with the approval of Bennett. "As a last resort, I finally did license 2 or 3 different groups... they were so popular and well liked." She also says that an agreement has been reached with original member Herb Reed which allows him to continue performing under the name, although Reed denied any agreement between the two in a recent interview. "We get along fine... but now he's trying to go back on the agreement he gave with me, because I settled with him out of court by giving him a license to perform as long as he was able," Bennett said. In 1990, Martha Robi (wife of Paul Robi), sued Bennett and Five Platters, Inc., and won a total of \$3,510,000. This court case also declared that three registered trademarks of "The Platters," which Five Platters, Inc. owned, be cancelled. Since that time, Bennett has continued to put on a very successful show with The Buck Ram Platters, and continues to discourage the use of the name. "That's something we're very, very adamant about." Bennett recently sued, and won a judgement against, Monroe Powell, who was performing with the name The Platters Featuring The Legendary Monroe Powell (as of 2001 - this lawsuit was overturned in Federal court). She says that Powell refused to sign a contract extension in the mid-1990s and left to perform with his own group. "I put in a lot of years with him and it really breaks my heart to have it turn into something like this." Monroe maintains that after the 1990 lawsuit between Robi and Bennett, Bennett sold the management company to Mary Fanning, where he continued his employment with the Platters. Bennett acknowledges that Powell's statement is indeed true, but that the company under Fanning's direction ended operations all together. Bennett maintains that her current Personality Productions company continues to own all rights to The Platters name. Recent court rulings have shown Bennett to have rights to the name, but several former Platters vehemently disagree with this idea. "Jean was there almost from the conception of them, but she was secretary and then a partner to Buck Ram. She feels she owns 'The Platters.' Just because you were in management, how do you own The Platters?", said Sonny Turner. Turner went on to say, "I don't know where she gets the power and authority to license anyone.... at least my contribution has been significant to the Platters." It is evident that Bennett has helped maintained a very successful and powerful company over the years, but controversy remains over her right to use the name. Along with Bennett, several others have also won 'rights' via the judicial system. What is very clear, is that Bennett was ahead of her time in the music industry. Some sources close to The Platters say Bennett was simply a secretary, but the facts show she indeed purchased the management company in the mid-1960s from Buck Ram. Sue Hackett says she, "Pioneered, really, for me and other people a positive business world for women.... we are where we are because of people like Jean Bennet." Hackett said, "No, its not the original Platters, but where would they have been without Buck Ram's music... without people like Jean Bennett?" The Buck Ram Platters are planning the release of a new album in 2000.

**Herb Reed** is recognized as the founder of the original group, in both namesake and in organization. (Bennett says Reed actually was not there from 'day one,' and says she has testimony from others to back her up. Most accounts show that Reed was indeed the originator of the group.) Simply put, he said, "I'm the guy who formed the Platters." With Tony Williams, David Lynch, Paul Robi, Zola Taylor, and himself, the Platters recorded hit after hit record. With all the personell changes over the years, Herb Reed remained the constant. The Platters started to walk on shaky ground after he left The Platters in August of 1969, "The thing was, I got tired of every two or three months...they were hiring someone new. I left to maintain the quality and standards of the original group." Once he left the group, he formed his own, which has continuously performed as Herb

Reed of The Original Platters and His Group, a derivative of the name. This group currently features Reed, Billy Cox, William Newton, Wayne Miller, and Valerie McIntosh, and can often be seen and heard performing on cruise ships as well as other venues throughout the world. In 1998, the US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals (San Francisco, CA), upheld a court decision giving Herb Reed the right to use the service mark "The Platters" to the exclusion of one Martha Robi. Robi was the wife of former Platters member Paul Robi, who had sued Reed for rights to the name. This court case also reaffirmed that Five Platters, Inc., had not been reassigned the rights to use The Platters name in 1956. Bennett says that after Reed left The Platters in 1969, he began performing in his own group, using The Platters name, and Personality Productions sued, and won, in Florida court to stop him from illegally performing. Reed says that other groups performing with the Platters name, "Have done tremendous damage to the name and to me... if it doesn't say Herb Reed, they're all phonies." When asked how he felt about Jean Bennett's Buck Ram Platters, Reed said, "Believe me when I tell you, Jean Bennett was nothing more than my ex-manager's secretary. That's all she was to us, and that's all she'll ever be to me and the other original members. Nothing to do with the success of The Platters." Sonny Turner said, "Herb Reed is the originator of The Platters and I think he has validity to The Platters name... Jean does use 'Buck Ram's Platters,' which is good." Wilson Williams, a member of Monroe Powell's current group said, "We've all got to respect Herb. He's had to perform as 'formerly of...' for a long time... and he created the name!" Reed and his group are very accommodating to fans, according to Herb, "I'll definitely autograph any photo that anyone sends." For more information on Herb Reed and his group, check out [www.theplatters.com](http://www.theplatters.com)

**Sonny Turner** replaced Tony Williams as the lead singer of The Platters in 1960. From 1960 to 1964 the group lineup consisted of Sonny Turner, Herb Reed, Paul Robi, David Lynch, and Zola Taylor. As a teenager growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, Turner performed with some friends of his in a group called the Metrotones. Underage at the time, Turner used the name Sonny Dinkes, and along with Melvin Smith, James Frierson, Leuvenia Eaton, and Leonard Veal, The Metrotones signed their first recording contract in late 1958 for Henry George's Reserve record label. In 1960, Sonny was appearing in Cleveland, and at the same time a Los Angeles radio DJ, Bill Crane, was helping Buck Ram recruit a replacement for Tony Williams, who was leaving to pursue a solo career. Crane spotted Turner performing at Cleveland's Music Box, and liked what he heard. After recording a demo tape the next day, and with Ram's approval, Crane and Turner caught a night sleeper train to Wisconsin where the Platters were performing, for an in-person audition with the group. Eventually, out of over 100 prospects, 19 year old Sonny Turner stepped into the lead role. He soon would become world famous for his leads on "I Love You 1000 Times," "With This Ring," and "Washed Ashore," with The Platters. Herb Reed said, "Sonny Turner was extremely instrumental in helping me keep The Platters together. He and I were very good friends." In 1965, Paul Robi left the group for good.... never to perform again. After Herb Reed left The Platters in 1969, Turner, too, decided he would leave the group for a shot at a solo career. Today, Turner performs both his Sonny Turner Show, as well as with Sonny Turner's Platters, featuring Turner, James Austin (who has also performed with Herb Reed), Morris Williams, Herb McQuay, and Bernadette Miller. "I felt compelled to take my own legacy to get the truth out." Performing in Las Vegas lounges and throughout Japan and the world, Turner puts on an excellent show, mixing in a blend of Motown and Platters music. He also has several recordings under his own label, including Reflections of Sonny Turner, and Sonny Turner By Request. "Reflections" includes a Stand By Me medley, a Platters medley, and Turner's original music. "By Request" is an excellent CD full of Turner's original works, a couple Platters hits, aother. Also look for a "Sonny Turner's Platters Live in Japan" CD release in 2000. All of Turner's albums are available through mail order (via So-Turner, Inc.) and at [repeat.com](http://repeat.com) Turner is very active in monitoring groups using the Platters name, and is involved with petitioning Congress for bills (see page 7) which protect the rights of performers. "I still don't like the idea that these supposedly licensed groups can make a living on Platters music. I know people are hungry and have to feed their families one way or the other, but let them create their own legacy... they shouldn't be taking credit for other performers' work." Sonny gladly accepts fan mail at the address provided, and both he and the rest of his group enjoy signing autographs for their fans.

**Monroe Powell** joined the Platters in 1970, after performing with such groups as The Ink Spots and The Dominoes. A Personality press release states that it took at least a year of cajoling him to join. A New York native, Powell is highly trained in voice and opera singing. Upon the departure of lead singer Sonny Turner, Powell was hired by Buck Ram to step into the role of lead singer with The Platters. His employment with Personality Productions continued until approximately 1995. Powell's career with The Platters is a story book in itself, as the longest standing member to date. The current Las Vegas resident, while not an original Platter, has been a mainstay for nearly 30 years. He was featured in national television commercials for such companies as Schlitz Beer and Red Lobster. With the Platters, he also appeared on the television programs The Dinah Shore Show, The Mike Douglas Show, and others. The singer says that his career and relationship with Buck Ram and Personality Productions was generally very good, and remained so until Ram passed away. Soon after Ram's death, and after a court verdict that awarded Martha Robi a large sum of money from Jean Bennett and Personality Productions, Powell maintains that Bennett actually sold Personality Productions to Mary Fanning, who had been associated with the group for nearly 10 years. Powell says he didn't ever leave Jean Bennett or the group, but was in fact "only performing with what she (Jean Bennett) had originally set up" for him. The dispute, that has culminated in a lawsuit against Powell, began when Powell refused a contract from Jean Bennett to leave the group, and join her again. Says Bennett, "Monroe Powell refused to sign his contract in 1995 or 1996. Been with me for 25 years, and he refused to sign it." Soon, Powell's group broke up with the departure of the management team, and several group members. Kenn Johnson, who stuck by Powell, had been in correspondence with Wilson Williams, and Powell recruited Wilson, Al Holland, and Verceal Whitaker, all of the Top 40 show band, 'Attraction,' to round out the lineup. Today Powell's group, until recently, performing under the name 'The Platters Featuring The Legendary Monroe Powell', features a very talented and energetic roster of performers, who Powell says, "This is the best group I've been with." Williams recorded "Up The Downstairs" for ABC Records in 1978, before starting his own record label in 1985. Detroit native Al Holland has experience playing with many orchestras and symphonies, and today plays keyboard and sings first tenor and baritone for Powell. Verceal Whitaker, prior to singing with Powell and 'Attraction' sang with the Dawson Singers in Virginia and with several recording artists.

A court document dated October 12, 1999, shows that because of continued use of The Platters name by Jean Bennett and Personality Productions/Five Platters, Inc., Monroe Powell is no longer allowed to perform using a reference to The Platters in promotion of concert dates or selling of merchandise. Powell and RoeWil Entertainment, co-defendants in the lawsuit, maintain that Bennett has not had continuous use of the name, as Bennett sold the businesses after the Robi lawsuit, and are appealing the verdict. Powell reiterates that he has never tried to take money out of the hands of others, and acknowledges Herb Reed and Sonny Turner as legitimate former members who should be allowed to perform, in addition to himself. "Jean lost rights to the name when she lost that case to Martha Robi, and

maybe never had them. Now she's writing our venues and they're beginning to be scared of us." In his own humble and quiet way, Powell says, "All those years I was loyal to them... I could have left. I just want to work, to continue on, that's all I've ever done." Both Wilson and Powell say they really don't care if legitimate former members are performing, they just feel they have a right to continue in their profession, "We'd gladly use 'Formerly of' or something similar, just waiting to see what the courts will allow us to do." Former member Lolita Fonza-McCallister, Platters member from 1971 to 1978, says of Monroe, "At first he was hard to get to know, very private. But after I had been with the group for awhile I found him to be very personable. As a professional, there was none better than him when it came to singing! He had then, and probably has now, charisma. I thought he would always be with Jeanie!" For the record, while Fonza had several differences with Jean Bennett, Buck Ram, and a particular member of the group at the time which led to her leaving The Platters, she says, "My time with The Platters was very enjoyable. I was young, single, and it was very fun!" Sonny Turner also had positive words to say about Powell, "I think Monroe should be working, and I think he's a very talented guy and also a nice man. I get along with him pretty well, and I'd like to see him make a living." Wilson Williams said in a recent interview, "This is all a mess. It certainly isn't what meets the eye when talking to one individual. The truth needs to come out. If there's something not so favorable about our group... so be it! Put it in print." For collectors, each member of this group will gladly autograph any items you send to them. Powell says, "Many people remember me as a Platter because I signed so many autographs. It's very important to do things like that for your fans." Until recently, they also sold autographed copies of their recordings and low-cost signed photos... though the courts have said they must now stop that practice. Once their new name has been finalized, look for a new selection of autographed merchandise which complies to the court's request.

## THE STORY CONTINUES

While court battles and a diversity of Platters groups have plagued the name in the United States, it is fact that Herb Reed, Sonny Turner, and Monroe Powell all have a legitimate history with The Platters. Recent courts have found Jean Bennett and Personality Productions to have rights to The Platters name. At the same time, virtually all parties involved have sued one another and various times, and have won "rights" along the way. In addition to those outlined above, other Platters groups are still performing. For example, Bernard Purdie (not the famous drummer) currently has a "Bernard Purdie Salutes The Platters" show. It is said that Purdie was originally hired by Buck Ram, but not to perform with The Platters, although that was his personal ambition. He ended up being an MC for the shows, before becoming disenchanted and leaving. Purdie, formerly with the recording group The Avalons, then started his own Platters group and eventually was sued by Ram to discontinue performing using the name. Today, Purdie, along with Billy Lee Hughes, George Cox, and Laurie Anderson (wife of Gary Anderson of Gary U.S. Bonds) perform their "salute" throughout the United States and Canada, as they have since 1985. Jean Bennett told us, "Bernard Purdie was originally hired to start a Flairs group.... he never was a Platter."

Former Platter Ella Woods also tours with a group of 'Platters' overseas. No matter who's "side you're on," Sonny Turner summed up some of the unscrupulous actions by rival groups with these words, "It's about money, not about integrity." He reiterated that the legitimate former performers just need to be careful and use a name such as "Formerly of," or "Salutes" The Platters. "Let's face it, there are no more Platters. Everyone's either passed away or parted in their own direction. Why not pay tribute to wonderful music in a dignified way?"

## SUMMARY

While the Platters have divided over the years and members have come and gone, the one thing that remains constant is the beauty of their music, still performed today by the legendary Monroe Powell, Sonny Turner, Herb Reed, and others...albeit using different groups. For over 45 years, The Platters music has brought joy to the millions of us that have heard it. Hearing of lawsuits over the right to the name, and of the right to perform between the actual members themselves and former management, is a sound that isn't so sweet. Is it even possible to imagine an all-star lineup consisting of Reed, Turner, and Powell . . . maybe even managed and promoted by Bennett?! Probably not, but one would hope an agreement could be reached that would satisfy the interests of all parties involved. Regardless, many groups currently are performing that have no ties to The Platters in any way. As a fan, don't let smoke get in your eyes!! For updated information on all The Platters groups performing today, check out [www.PlattersInfoSite.com](http://www.PlattersInfoSite.com) . We will keep you updated on concert/tour information, court proceedings, merchandise that is available, and so much more! As there are far too many details and facts to outline in one magazine article on The Platters, we hope to continue following this case closely here. Also, keep on the lookout for a book to be released on The Platters in the coming year, from The Archive - [www.ArchiveNews.net](http://www.ArchiveNews.net)

The Archive News would like to thank Herb Reed, Sonny Turner, Monroe Powell, Jean Bennett, and others mentioned, for spending so much time with the author for this article. They all were very generous with documents, photos, and their personal stories of The Platters. Also thanks to the same for their ever important contribution to The Platters, and a lifetime of wonderful music.

## THIS ARTICLE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF BUCK RAM.

*Since the time of the article's publication, several changes have taken place. Just some of these include:*

- \* Monroe Powell is now using the name Monroe Powell's Platters Revue
- \* Lawsuit judgement with Jean Bennett has been overturned.
- \* Original Platters member Herb Reed has been granted trademark rights to Platters name by the USPTO
- \* Jean Bennett continues to win in court for usage of Platters rights
- \* We have received recent reports that Sonny Turner is no longer performing