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Muscle Shoals Sound Records was more or less the natural extension of what had become one of the most successful production organizations in the business. The four principals of the production company, Jimmy Johnson, Barry Beckett, David Hood and Roger Hawkins made up what became the legendary "Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section". Jimmy and Roger met while playing in local bands at school dances and clubs along the state line. They were later members of an early 60's group called the Delrays. At the same time David Hood was playing in a group called the Mystics.

Johnson was the first to move into studio work when he began working with producer Rick Hall as an engineer and their session guitarist. By 1964 Jimmy and Roger were working regularly at Fame Studios with the occasional assistance of David Hood, when Hood could get away from his father's tire store a block and a half away from the studio. In 1966 Hawkins and Johnson played on their first million seller, "When A Man Loves A Woman" by Percy Sledge. In 1967 Barry Beckett came to Muscle Shoals to cut "I'm Your Puppet" by James and Bobby Purify. It was about that time that Spooner Oldham, the Muscle Shoals keyboard player, decided to move to Memphis. Shortly thereafter, Barry Beckett and his family came to Muscle Shoals and the Rhythm Section was formed.

By the late 1960's there were 3 studios in Muscle Shoals and the Rhythm Section was working at all of them. Their reputation for cutting powerful tracks and cutting them efficiently even led the quartet to New York where they worked on such Aretha Franklin classics as "Respect" and "Chain Of Fools". Then in 1969 Roger was approached by Fred Bevis for the group to buy his studio on Jackson Highway. After a bit of discussion the four of them pooled what money they had and took a shot at it. The four track room was quickly upgraded to eight and by the early 70's, even with a leaky roof and one small room, the studio drew such artists as Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, and Wilson Pickett to name only a few. Apart from Roger and David's brief stint with Traffic in the early 70's, none of the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section have performed onstage since banding together to launch their studios, nor has the Section worked as a unit at any studio other than their own.

In 1979 the Muscle Shoals crew moved to its present recording facility at Alabama Avenue and also decided to establish its record company. A year prior to that, Michael Barnett was managing the Amazing Rhythm Aces, among other groups, and wanted Jimmy Johnson to produce them. After a few meetings Michael decided to help the Muscle Shoals operation in an effort to secure a production deal with a major label. The object was to have more control over their product in what Michael calls a "custom logo deal". It would allow the Muscle Shoals group the ability to find talent, sign them to a long term agreement and help guide the careers of the artists. Partially as a result of their mutual success with Bob Seger and Dr. Hook, the logo deal was made with Capitol Records in July of 1979. At this point the Rhythm Section offered Michael a full partnership in the label if he would move to Muscle Shoals as its president. Michael's management company, Barnett & Assocs., which was run by himself, William Rizz and Phyllis Barashick, was scaled down as they dropped management on Doug Kershaw and Bonnie Bramlet and moved from Colorado to Muscle Shoals. At this point they were handling only the Amazing Rhythm Aces and Will McFarlane.

The first acts signed to the label were Jackson Highway in September 1979 and then Lenny LeBlanc and Delbert McClinton. Their second release as a label was Delbert McClinton's album which included the smash single "Givin' It Up For Your Love". In 1981 Lenny LeBlanc's album was released with two charted singles and McClinton's second album was released. The label also signed Russell Smith in March, Levon Helm in April, Bonnie Bramlet in May and Frankie Miller in October with releases this year by all but Bonnie. It is worth noting that so far every album released on the Muscle Shoals label has either charted or been picked.

The MSS-Capitol distribution deal is now at an end, however all the acts that have been signed to MSS-Capitol and released by them will remain with Capitol. Any future acts signed to MSS will go to the production company under a separate agreement, including the as yet unreleased Bonnie Bramlet record. In Michael Barnett's words, "We have never been stronger or more in demand and now that we are independent, who knows what will happen. We're listening to all offers".

## WHO'S WHO AT MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND RECORDS

### MICHAEL BARNETT - President

Michael was born in Hartford, Conn. and grew up in New England. He began playing in bands at age 15 but, in his own words, "I was no good so they kicked me out and I started managing". He then attended Columbia School of Business while arranging acts and promoting concerts along the Hudson River in New York. Upon graduation, Barnett moved to San Diego and eventually began working as manager for Doug Kershaw. In 1975 Michael moved to Colorado to establish Barnett & Associates and incorporated in 1976 with Bonnie Bramlet and a group called Cowboy added to his management clientele along with a group called Slidin' Jake which was Doug Kershaw's back-up band. In 1977 Michael moved to L.A. and added the Amazing Rhythm Aces and a comic named Fats Johnson to his client list. In 1979 Barnett moved to Alabama and founded Muscle Shoals Sound Records. He also moved his management company. At present Michael is considering re-expansion of his management operation with the recent signing of Levon Helm adding to his client list of Russell Smith, Will McFarlane and James Hooker. There is also a possibility that he will be expanding his offices to either L.A., Atlanta or perhaps even back to Colorado.

### JIMMY JOHNSON - Vice President & Secretary

In his 20 years in the recording industry Jimmy Johnson has proven his talents, drive and expertise in many aspects of this business. Beginning back in 1962 at Fame Recording Studio, Jimmy did a variety of odd jobs and quickly worked himself into a position as engineer. His earliest successes came from engineering records like "When A Man Loves A Woman" and "Sweet Soul Music". By 1964 Jimmy had taken over the rhythm guitar chair for the studio's rhythm section. Through their successes with artists such as Aretha Franklin, Percy Sledge, Wilson Pickett and Clarence Carter, a new term was introduced into the recording world - the "Muscle Shoals Sound". The association of this name with the four members of the rhythm section was such that in 1969 when they broke with Fame to form their own studio they had no trouble naming their new enterprise - Muscle Shoals Sound Studios. Since its inception, Jimmy has served as the president and general coordinator of the studio's operations as well as president of the three publishing companies. Having a studio enabled Jimmy to begin work on productions of his own as well as continuing his playing an engineering. The Rolling Stones' "Brown Sugar", "Wild Horses", and "You've Got To Move" from Sticky Fingers were engineered by him. In his production role Jimmy worked with Lynyrd Skynyrd producing the appropriately titled "Gold And Platinum" as well as their "First And Last" LP. More gold and platinum was awarded when Jimmy teamed with the other members of the Rhythm Section in producing such artists as Paul Simon and Bob Seger. Other artists to employ his talents have been Blackfoot, Billy "Crash" Craddock, and the Amazing Rhythm Aces. Most recently albums on Billy Vera, Russell Smith, and Levon Hel, have been added to Jimmy's growing list of production credits. These last two artists are signed with MSS Records, a further expansion of the Muscle Shoals Sound facilities. Jimmy serves as Vice President of the record company. The Muscle Shoals Sound Music Association is another organization on whose board Jimmy serves, having been named president for the past three years. Jimmy Johnson's experience and its application in his various occupations as player, engineer, administrator and producer have established him in the recording community.

### BARRY BECKETT- Vice President

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Beckett's mother got him started early on the piano. While in high school, Barry played with several bands. "At one time", he says, "I was playing in a club on the weekends, playing for a dancing school in the afternoons for the ballet and tap dancing classes and going to high school at the same time". After finishing high school, Beckett formed a group and relocated with them to Pensacola, Florida. They based themselves out of a nightclub there, and also traveled on the road. "Then I met this disc jockey named Don Schroeder who was cutting some country records in Nashville. He took me to Muscle Shoals. At the time, Jimmy (Johnson) was running Rick Hall's publishing company and playing guitar, David (Hood) was playing trombone, Spooner Oldham was on piano and Junior Lowe was on guitar. I played organ, and we cut "I'm Your Puppet". That was the first big record I ever played on. It was a million seller and it freaked me out." Barry made two more trips to Muscle Shoals before he was asked in 1967 by Jimmy, David and Roger, who was now playing drums at the studio, to stay on as their keyboard player because Oldham had moved to Memphis. Two years later, in the Spring of 1969, he and the others invested in their own studio, Muscle Shoals Sound. With their own studio in operation, Barry and Roger got involved with a duo called Mel & Tim and co-produced a record called "Starting All Over Again" which went Top Ten. "That was our first time out as producers. We cut an album, and a second album, and about that time Stax folded." Barry next co-produced Mary MacGregor with Peter Yarrow and "Torn Between Two Lovers" was his first Number One record. After the Mary MacGregor hit, Jerry Wexler came to Barry with a project to co-produce with him a new group called Sanford & Townsend, whose "Smoke From A Distant Fire" became one of the biggest singles of 1977. Wexler and Beckett have teamed on several projects since and enjoy working together. Their success as a team received national recognition when Bob Dylan acknowledged their contribution to his 1979 Grammy for Male Vocalist of the Year in his acceptance speech. Barry Beckett's name is today known all over the world as one of the most successful musician/producers in the music industry.

## WHO'S WHO AT MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND RECORDS

### DAVID HOOD - Vice President

David Hood fell into the music business unintentionally. "I never planned to be in the music business," he says. "I just played for fun, and then started making more money in music than in what I should have been doing. My father had a chain of tire stores, and he wanted me to be the son that took over." Instead, Hood began playing recording sessions in Muscle Shoals, his hometown, in 1966, becoming the bass-playing quarter of the famed Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, with Barry Beckett, Jimmy Johnson, and Roger Hawkins, he started the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in 1969. "It was Jimmy's and Roger's idea to buy our own studio," says David. "They felt we did all the work while the other guys made all the money. I was happy just doing sessions but I felt I was enough of a gambler, so I said 'why not' and I went along with them." David began playing in bands as a teenager traveling all over Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia. He began working with Jimmy Johnson and Roger Hawkins in 1966 when he hit the studio circuit. Barry Beckett joined them in 1968. By 1969, they owned a studio. His first production was with a group called Smith Perkins Smith for Island Records, comprising record producers Tim Smith, Steve Smith (Robert Palmer and Bob Marley & The Wailers) and guitarist Wayne Perkins who was a runner-up for the position filled by Ron Wood in The Rolling Stones. In addition to playing and producing, Hood is also on the lookout for artists for the group's record label. "My first love is R&B music", he explains. "I'm always looking for somebody I like as an artist, someone young with new ideas."

### ROGER HAWKINS - Vice President

Roger Hawkins arrived in Muscle Shoals at the age of two from Mishawaka, Indiana. He never looked back. As the drummer in the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, he maintains the steady beat for partners Jimmy Johnson, Barry Beckett and David Hood, which has also earned him a place among Rolling Stone's list of top studio drummers. Roger started playing demo sessions when he was 18, "working at Rick Hall's Fame studio, trying to learn what to do, what style to play, how to play, getting used to the studio atmosphere and what's expected of you." Simultaneously, he played the club circuit along the Alabama-Tennessee state line to supplement his studio salary. By the time he was 20, he had played on his first big hit record "When A Man Loves A Woman" by Percy Sledge, which became the first in a string of major R&B hits for Atlantic Records. That first big hit got things moving for Roger and the rest of the Rhythm Section. "After that", remembers Roger, "things kind of picked up and Jerry Wexler (Atlantic's then star-producer and vice-president) came down, and was using us on sessions regularly." By 1969, the four of them were doing sessions regularly at Rick Hall's Fame, Quinvy and Bevis Studios, and the opportunity arose for them to go into business for themselves. "So along comes the guy who owned Bevis Recording Studios", remembers Roger, "and he kept saying 'why don't you buy the studio?' I got to thinking about it and I called Jimmy Johnson up one night and I said, 'let's buy the studio and start ourselves.' It took me 10 minutes to convince him that I was serious about it, and we had an eight-hour conversation on the phone about it. Then I talked to Fred Bevis who owned the studio and got David and Barry to make the move with us. Everyone gave us six months to be out of business". With Muscle Shoals Sound Studios in the midst of its thirteenth year of operation, Roger Hawkins is expanding more and more into the area of producing. In 1973, Roger co-produced a record with Barry Beckett called "Starting All Over Again" by Mel & Tim. Later he co-produced the first album by Orleans, Buzzy Linhart with Beckett, and co-produced with the Rhythm Section one-half of the quadruple platinum LP "Against The Wind" by Bob Seger.

Hawkins, Beckett, Hood and Johnson have been working together for what may seem like forever, and the future looks incredibly bright. The secret to their success is talent and a warm, mutual friendship and respect. "We just let each other do what we want to do", explains Roger.



MICHAEL BARNETT, JIMMY JOHNSON, DAVID HOOD, BARRY BECKETT, ROGER HAWKINS