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Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes

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Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49539)

by **Kyles Beguiles** » Tue Mar 01, 2011 4:41 am

What exactly was lost besides the Jeff Barry sessions and the studio recording of "To Love Somebody"?

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49608)

by **Corinna** » Tue Mar 01, 2011 7:44 pm

I'm trying to locate info about this, Kyles. I've been browsing the bible but could find nothing, maybe I was looking in the wrong places...

Meanwhile, this is the story, terrible to think of what was lost, really...

One of the most devastating vault losses in modern industry history occurred in February, 1978 in a fire in a non-air-conditioned Atlantic Records storage facility in Long Branch, N.J.

The warehouse fire destroyed virtually all of Atlantic's unreleased masters, alternate takes and sessions tapes by artists who had recorded for the label and its offshoots throughout its classic 1948-1969 first golden era.

Thousands of performances by nearly a hundred of America's most acclaimed r&b, soul, pop and jazz artists were lost in the fire. According to several sources, between 5,000 to 6,000 reels of tape were destroyed or damaged. Just a handful of the artists names reads like a short-form Who's Who in Mid-Century American Music.

To compound the dimension of the losses, most of the material - all but the first few years - had been recorded in stereo. Atlantic was an industry leader in recording in the new mode as early as 1952.

Several former senior executives and staffers at Atlantic told Billboard that news of the fire was kept quiet. "It was very hush-hush; I'd ask for tapes and they'd just say 'they're not there,'" remembered one producer. "I didn't find out until a year later."

In a few instances, reissue producers and archivists have discovered a few of the lost tapes, reels that had been removed years before from the warehouse and not returned or perhaps consciously squirreled away.

"When we were doing the (Rhino-Atlantic) John Coltrane box set," said industry veteran and former

Atlantic producer Joel Dorn, who now runs 32 Records, "they told us all the session reels and outtakes were gone, supposedly destroyed in the fire. I'd heard the stories. But I came over to the old warehouse to look anyway. Eventually, some young man who'd been watching me grumble said, 'You know, I think I might have seen something in that area over there,' pointing to high shelf. Up on the shelf were reels piled up, semi-alphabetical.

"So I searched through all these boxes and finally found what I was hoping for--supposedly destroyed alternate takes from (the seminal 1959 Coltrane album) 'Giant Steps.'

"Now, by all rights, they should have been stored in that warehouse," Dorn said. "I found other amazing things, like Bobby Darin's first Atco demo of 'Dream Lover' (circa 1957), with Fred Neil playing guitar."

Some of the other recovered lost treasures since recovered by Atlantic archivists include unreleased masters, alternate takes and rehearsals by Ray Charles, tunes by R&B Foundation awardee Van "Piano Man" Walls, and outtakes by jazz legends Ornette Coleman, Lenny Tristano and Lee Konitz.

Luckily, Atlantic had stored its master tapes in New York at the time of the '76 fire.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49639)

by **Kyles Beguiles** » Wed Mar 02, 2011 4:45 am

Many thanks for all this great information, Cor - and to think Long Branch, NJ is the place of my birth! Too bad I wasn't born a few years earlier or perhaps I could have run to the rescue with some fire extinguisher and salvaged the Dusty reels 😞

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49640)

by **jeffery** » Wed Mar 02, 2011 5:36 am

😱 WOW ! 😱 I'd only heard rumors of said fire. Those details made my stomach flip.

Thank goodness some things survived.

We still hold out hope for those "lost" Dusty recordings. Thanks to KB n' Cor.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49685)

by **Kyles Beguiles** » Wed Mar 02, 2011 4:18 pm

I recall reading an online post (I forget where, but it was not on this forum) where the poster said the Atlantic Fire of 1978 was overblown and although a great deal of material was lost it was mostly duplicate reels and alternate takes. I found it to be an insensitive post because even if the masters to released albums were safe, as we the fans know every little take or bside or unreleased track or even a television performance is a GEM waiting to be shared! Also, I heard that Jerry Wexler himself was devastated over the loss of so many reels, including an Aretha Franklin project of which he was very proud to have made and deeply upset over its loss.

What a shame more producers were not dedicated and wise like Jeff Barry, taking the extra measure of keeping stereo reference copies of his work and keeping them safe over time. Although I wouldn't have known the difference, my life would have been at such a loss without hearing Dusty

tracks like "You've Got A Friend," "Love Shine Down," "Live Here With You," "Natchez Trace," or "I Found My Way." I still wonder what it would be like to hear her studio take of "To Love Somebody," but I am grateful that we at least have been able to enjoy what rarities have been recovered and released.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49718)

by **Corinna** » Wed Mar 02, 2011 9:06 pm

Kyles, our moderator Carole G has asked Paul Howes about it. He says he isn't totally sure either, but he'll keep looking for more information.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49736)

by **daydreamer** » Wed Mar 02, 2011 10:40 pm

Paul did know the answer, I just needed to have it in writing so that I didn't mis-quote him 😊 He says...

The multis for Memphis, Jeff Barry and To Love Somebody were destroyed. Also I imagine the multis for the other two post-Memphis Wexler/Mardin/Dowd tracks. The multis for ABNM and subsequent Philly tracks, as well as the Ellie Greenwich track, still exist.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p49748)

by **Kyles Beguiles** » Thu Mar 03, 2011 4:47 am

Many thanks to everyone for the research efforts!

It is nice to know that some classic Dusty reels from the Atlantic era still exist in their fullest form 😊

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p51501)

by **MissDustyFanatic** » Fri Mar 18, 2011 7:36 pm

Kyle, I've just seen this and I do wonder....have you heard her live recording of 'To Love Somebody'?

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p51607)

by **Kyles Beguiles** » Sat Mar 19, 2011 11:43 pm

MDF, thanks for your question - I have heard it on both of the BBC Sessions CDs and enjoy it very much! I can only imagine what the studio version may have sounded like.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p51717)

by **SweMaria** » Mon Mar 21, 2011 1:58 pm

Oh, I love her live recording of "To Love Somebody" too! 🍷
I just have to post it here.. 😊

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V98ypfSJz5o>[/youtube]

I wish She had made a studio version of this song... 🎵 🙏 😊

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p190289)

by **mikeh69** » Sun Oct 07, 2018 3:17 pm

The strange thing for me was the fire happened 15 minutes ... from where I live lol There's a couple of old articles I think I kept but I don't know where they are on the net. But it was in Long Branch New Jersey USA. It was kept a very very stupid idea. The Atlantic guys knew some furniture guy in Long Branch who for yearssssssss had a abandoned furniture store. And kept their huge vault in a old building that caught fire and everything in there the multitrack tapes mostly and maybe master tapes were kept in there all turned to nothing. The UK artists were smart they kept their tapes. It was mostly American artists that got the poor storage by Ahmet Ertugen who ran Atlantic then. I think they had a deal with the guy in Long Branch. I need to brush up on the story. All the details exist. There's even a article on the fire but doesn't mention the 1000 of tapes.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p190292)

by **DustyDanny** » Sun Oct 07, 2018 10:45 pm

Such a shame so much was lost - had no idea the Dusty in Memphis multitrack masters were one of the casualties. If this was the case, where did the engineers acquire the tracks from when they mastered the album to CD in the early 90s?

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p190297)

by **edjames** » Mon Oct 08, 2018 2:31 pm

What exactly was lost besides the Jeff Barry sessions and the studio recording of "To Love Somebody"?

The Jeff Barry sessions were never lost. Yes, To Love Somebody hasn't surfaced...yet! Fingers crossed.

However the album Faithful, encompasses the Jeff Barry produced tracks.

In 1971, Atlantic Records released a pair of Dusty Springfield singles produced by the legendary songwriter/producer Jeff Barry (one-time songwriting and romantic partner of Ellie Greenwich, and author of too many hits to name): "Haunted"/"Nothing Is Forever" and "I Believe In You"/"Someone Who Cares." A restless Dusty, freshly relocating to America from her native England, then departed the label and left an additional 9 songs recorded with Barry in the can, where they stayed until Rhino issued one track, "Faithful" (in mono), as a bonus track on the 1990s CD release of Dusty's 1970 Atlantic album A Brand New Me. The other tracks didn't surface until a subsequent deluxe reissue of Dusty's landmark 1969 album Dusty in Memphis included them as bonus cuts. Now, reissue producer Jim Pierson—who tracked down the missing masters after being lost for over two decades—has assembled all of Dusty's Barry-produced masters and put them together in a single package for the first time to create the third Dusty Springfield Atlantic Records album as planned in 1971. Real Gone Music's release of Faithful presents these historic Barry-Springfield collaborations exactly as they were originally intended to be heard, with the 12 tracks intended for the album release followed by 1 one intended for single-only release. All tracks are in stereo, while the liner notes,

penned by The Second Disc's Joe Marchese, feature a number of rarely-seen photos of the legendary singer. These stunning pop, soul and gospel flavored selections showcase the iconic singer at the height of her vocal magic, and finally set right a missing/jumbled part of Dusty's august recorded legacy.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p190302)

by **mikeh69** » Tue Oct 09, 2018 1:16 am

What I want to know is all the multi track tapes all the 8 tracks of A Brand New Me SURVIVED. Real Gone Music somehow and I want to so bad hear the story where these tapes were found. And the remix engineer was from England who was chosen to remix the multi tracks and they sound beautiful. When I heard them with my headphones I went into shock. For a minute I really thought the advertisement of the fact that the whole CD was remixed from the 8 track couldn't be true. I figure they vanished in the fire with everything else. So first had mixed feelings before I heard a note. It's true and the mixes are new and it's amazing how it was mixed especially with today's technology. You can hear everything in all these different placements around the stereo mix. And clear as a bell very very different from the original 1969 mix. So now the question did In Memphis and Faithful multi tracks survive also. If not they're probably gone or missing. Cause neither recording has been remixed yet.

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Re: Atlantic Records fire of February 1978 - the lost tapes (#p192721)

by **mikeh69** » Fri Aug 02, 2019 12:25 pm

And now the Universal Tapes crushed. Two Fires. 500,000 tapes... Corporation lied. Fire started by a whole bunch of Blowtorches by fireman to fix Asphalt shingles where the tapes were held. The building had to be 70 + years old. I think.

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