

Resub



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in the National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Florence, Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) Recording Studios

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 603 Avalon Avenue

City or town: Muscle Shoals State: AL County: Colbert

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 x national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 x A x B C D

<u>Lee Anne Wofford</u> /Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer <u>10/16/16</u>	
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
Alabama Historical Commission _____	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	

Signature of commenting official:	Date

Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

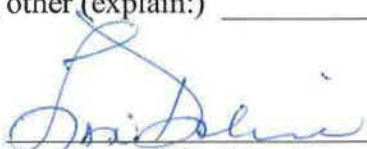
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)


Signature of the Keeper

11/29/16
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

RECREATION and CULTURE: Music Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

RECREATION and CULTURE: Music Facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

BRICK

METAL: Aluminum

CONCRETE

OTHER: Aggregate panels with a cementitious backing reinforced with a fiber mesh

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

FAME Recording Studios, located at 603 East Avalon Avenue in Muscle Shoals, is a two-story commercial structure. The entrance to the building faces south and there is parking to the east and west of the building. Originally constructed in 1962, the building has undergone two major renovations, the first in 1967 and the second in 1972. The exterior of the building has remained essentially unchanged since the 1972 renovation, though the area surrounding the building has changed dramatically. When Rick Hall built FAME in 1962, the building sat at the outskirts of Muscle Shoals on a semi-rural road. Today, the building sits in the midst of a busy commercial area on one of Muscle Shoals' main thoroughfares. As Muscle Shoals grew, Avalon Avenue was widened, and the front parking lot was lost. The building retains historical integrity both in its exterior and interior.

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Narrative Description

In 1962, Rick Hall, owner of FAME Recording Studios, commissioned Nashville music producer Owen Bradley to design a permanent home for FAME. The two-story building Bradley designed was twenty feet wide and seventy feet long.¹ Bradley modeled the studio after "cinderblock adobe shacks" he had seen in Nashville.² The building had a brick façade facing Avalon Avenue, with two small windows with awnings on the second story and two larger windows on the first story flanking the door. There was a suspended overhang over the door. On the interior, the building was one room wide and three rooms deep. One of these rooms, Studio A, is where many of the major hits of Rick Hall's music producing career were recorded (Photographs 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 34).³

Rick Hall in his autobiography, *The Man from Muscle Shoals: From Shame to Fame*, stated, "In 1962, I built FAME Recording Studio on that new lot at the whopping cost of \$10,000. The original building, which has been added onto twice, was built out of simple concrete blocks and designed to the exact specifications of Owen Bradley, my old friend and mentor from Nashville....Owen had built a number of studios in Music City, so he advised me on the size and specifications of the building and the construction materials I should use. We built the original studio building twenty feet wide and seventy feet long, with a twenty-foot-tall ceiling. The main room, Studio A, is forty-five feet long, twenty feet high, and twenty feet wide. The rest of the space was used for offices and a control room. Owen firmly believed that the key to building a great sounding room was a tall ceiling with no echo inside the main room; we took every precaution to make sure the room had absolutely no echo. This was done with acoustic tile, louvered walls, and baffles here and there. Owen also told me how to construct the echo chamber, which we still use. An 'echo chamber' is a room with no two walls parallel and with all corners rounded off. The room is made of hard, slick plaster. My echo chamber was, per Owen's specifications, approximately eight feet wide, ten feet long, and eight feet high. Owen once unlocked the padlock to his echo chamber and showed it to me. No one else ever did that. That was his trade secret!"

In 1967, a brick addition on the east side doubled the width of the original building. The addition to the eastern half of the 1962 structure created space for a lobby, additional offices, and a second recording studio, Studio B with a control room (Photographs 20, 21, 22, 23). The addition featured a flat roof and brick exterior siding. Additionally, a one-story flat-roofed porch was added along the southern façade.⁴ By 1967 Studio A was constantly in use, making the addition of Studio B essential to providing additional space for recording.

¹ Rick Hall, *HellBent for FAME*, 227.

² Steve Kurutz, "Rick Hall," All Music Online, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/rick-hall-mn0000362802/biography> (accessed October 27, 2014).

³ Sally Moore, "Fame Recording Studio," *Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage*, 1997

⁴ *Ibid*

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In 1972, the exterior of the building underwent another major renovation, which resulted in the building's current appearance. The first-story arcade-like vertical elements of a concrete and aggregate panels with a cementitious backing reinforced with a fiber mesh seem to support an aluminum-faced second story, which resembles a mansard-roof (Photographs 1-12).⁵ There is some damage to some of the aggregate panels but most remain intact (Photograph 7). With the exception of the addition of three recording booths in Studio A (Photographs 16, 17, 18, 35, 36) and two booths in Studio B (Photograph 22) in the early 1980s, little has changed on the exterior and interior since this renovation.

The entire structure is built on a concrete slab and features an interior wood frame structural system. The building's windows are aluminum (single paned, fixed) and are sporadically spaced on the first and second floors of the south, east, and west sides of the building. The rear (north) elevation is composed of a solid concrete block wall (Photograph 4). The entrance to the building, a single modern glass door, is located on the southern façade through the one-story flat-roofed porch (Photographs 29 & 30).⁶ (See Figure 1 for exterior photograph locations)

The interior of the building remains remarkably historically intact. There are a variety of interior wall treatments, including sheetrock, wood paneling, and wallpaper, the bulk of which date to the 1967 renovation. In the studios, the ceilings are made of acoustical tile. In the offices, the ceilings are made of blown acoustic materials. In both the studios and offices, the light fixtures are recessed fluorescent panels and the flooring is vinyl tile and carpet. Both recording studios are located at the rear of the building and are two stories in height. In the original studio, the control room remains intact despite technological upgrades (Photograph 15). Both studios also have multiple small recording booths added in the early 1980s. When it was constructed, Studio A contained four echo chambers, which were the secret behind the rich, deep "Muscle Shoals Sound." Technological innovations rendered these chambers obsolete and only one chamber, now used for storage, remains (Photograph 38, 39). The room features wavy and off-center walls, which created the echo effect. Today, the effect is produced electronically.⁷

First Floor (Figure 2)

A lobby/waiting area (Photographs 27, 30), record storage area (Photographs 59, 60), two offices (Photograph 32), and the staircase to the second floor (Photographs 24, 31) are located on south side of the first floor. A lounge room (Photographs 19, 33, 42) and two rest rooms (ladies appears in Photograph 41) are located between the two studios. Album covers, gold records, and photographs of artists and recording sessions in progress cover the wood paneled walls of the lobby and lounge area. In addition to the echo chamber on the west side of the building, there is a storage room (Photograph 40), a mic closet (Photograph 44), a lounge area (Photograph 43), and a back staircase to the second floor (Photograph 45). On the east side of the building there is a storage room/electrical closet located off Studio B (Photograph 61), a tool room, and a room used to store the masters of recordings made by FAME (Photographs 56, 57, 58).

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

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Second Floor (Figure 3)

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In the southeast corner of the second story of the building sits Rick Hall's office. Like much of the rest of FAME, the walls (which are wallpapered and paneled with a chair rail) are adorned with gold records and photographs. Built-in cupboards house equipment behind Hall's desk on the east wall. An antique barber's chair sits close to Hall's desk (Photographs 51, 52, 53). Attached to his office is a conference room (Photograph 25). The catalog room (Photographs 54, 55) and the studio manager's office (Photograph 50) are also located on the east side of the second floor. On the west side of the building there are three additional office/storage spaces (Photographs 46, 47, 48, 49, 62), and the office of Rodney Hall, which is currently suffering damage from a leak in the roof (Photograph 63, 64). Gold records and album covers line the two staircases and the second floor hallway (Photograph 26).

FAME retains historical integrity with regards to location, design, feeling, and association.

Location: While the setting of FAME has been compromised by development, the location does remain intact.

Design: The original design of FAME, dating from 1962, was altered through the 1967 and 1972 additions and renovations, however, since 1972 the building has remained unaltered.

Feeling: FAME retains a strong sense of feeling, conveying the important role the studio played during the 1960s and 70s, both on the exterior and on the interior.

Association: FAME retains its association with important events in United States musical, social, and cultural history of the 1960s and 70s.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Performing Arts

Period of Significance

1962-1977

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Hall, Roe Erister "Rick"

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bradley, Owen

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed in 1962, FAME Recording Studios is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its national significance under the theme of Performing Arts for the role it played in the development mid-twentieth century American popular music. As the first purpose-built studio building in the Muscle Shoals region of Alabama, FAME is significantly associated with the rise of the “Muscle Shoals Sound” and “Southern Soul” music in the mid-1960s to early 1970s. Studio musicians who first worked on genre-defining sessions at FAME would leave the studio in 1969 to establish the equally significant Muscle Shoals Sound Studio (NR 6/2/2006) in Sheffield, Alabama, and, in fact, chose the name Muscle Shoals Sound Studio as the name of their venture since it referenced the location, reputation, and sound, of the earlier FAME studio building. FAME Recording Studios is also eligible for listing under Criterion B, for its association with Roe Erister “Rick” Hall, who built the property in 1962, launched the studio’s music publishing arm, directed its most significant musical sessions and artists, and has been recognized as a nationally significant producer of American popular music. The period of significance, from 1962-1977, encompasses the most diverse and important historic period of recording at the studio. These same years coincide with the most significant period in the career of Rick Hall, as a songwriter, music producer, and studio head.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criteria A: Music Recording in Muscle Shoals, 1940-1958

Music and the recording industry have played a significant role in the formation of culture in the Muscle Shoals area of northwest Alabama. The Shoals consist of a geographic region along the Tennessee River that encompasses the separate but related towns of Florence, Sheffield, Tuscumbia, and Muscle Shoals. Two important recording studios are associated with the Muscle Shoals region: FAME studio (1962) and Muscle Shoals Sound Studio (1969).

Long before Rick Hall cut his first record at FAME, Shoals residents made important contributions to American music. W.C. Handy, born in Florence in 1873, is commonly known as the “Father of the Blues.” While Handy was just one of many musicians who played the distinctively American music known as the blues, Handy was the first musician to put the blues down on paper, transforming the blues from a regional music style with a limited audience into one of the major genres in American music. Sam Phillips, another famous Shoals musician, was a producer, radio DJ, label owner, and talent scout during the mid-twentieth century. Phillips created the Memphis Recording Service in 1950 and Sun Records in 1952 in Memphis, Tennessee. Phillips was responsible for “discovering” Howlin’ Wolf, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash. Phillips would also launch the career of Elvis Presley in 1954. The Phillips family still has a radio broadcasting company based in the Shoals today.⁸

While some Shoals artists and producers found great success outside of the Shoals area, others remained close to home, recording and producing music. In the late 1940s Sheffield bassist Dexter Johnson opened the first studio in the Shoals area in his garage.⁹ In 1956, songwriter James Joiner and guitarist Kelton “Kelso” Herston formed the first Alabama-based recording company, Tune Records, in Florence. The Tune Records label released Joiner’s song “A Fallen Star” in 1957, sung by popular local singer Bobby Denton. Jud Phillips, brother of Sam Phillips, formed the short-lived Judd label in Florence, releasing Arthur Alexander’s song “Sally Sue Brown” in 1958.¹⁰

Starting FAME, 1959-1962

Following in the path of these notable musicians and producers, in 1959, Billy Sherrill, Tom Stafford, and Rick Hall opened Florence, Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) Recording Studios. The partners started out with five hundred dollars and a studio stuck into the vacant second floor over Stafford’s father’s drug store, City Drug, in downtown Florence. FAME had

⁸ Fuqua, *Music Fell on Alabama*, 115. James L. Dickerson, *Mojo Triangle: Birthplace of Country, Blues, Jazz and Rock’n’Roll* (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 2005), 188-190.

⁹ Dick Cooper, “Johnson Family of Muscle Shoals” [Swampland.com](http://swampland.com/articles/view/title:_johnson_family_of_muscle_shoals) http://swampland.com/articles/view/title:_johnson_family_of_muscle_shoals (accessed January 16, 2015)

¹⁰ Peter B. Olson, “Muscle Shoals” *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (2011) <http://www.encyclopediaofappalachia.com/entry.php?rec=157> (accessed November 1, 2014).

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limited success with cuts on Roy Orbison, Brenda Lee, and Tommy Roe records. In 1960 Sherrill and Stafford dissolved the partnership, keeping the recording equipment, studio space, and songwriters, leaving Hall only with the rights to the studio name.¹¹ This spli

t, which Hall blamed on his workaholic nature, would be the first of many challenges that Hall would face during his career.¹² Sherrill (1936-2015) would be the first of the Shoals musicians/producers to leave Alabama for Nashville, where as head of the CBS Studio in the 1960s and 1970s he would produce such significant artists as Tammy Wynette, Charlie Rich, George Jones, Ray Charles and Elvis Costello. Sherrill was inducted in the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2010.

A few months after the end of the partnership with Sherrill, Hall chose a candy and tobacco warehouse (not extant) in Muscle Shoals as FAME's next home. For this second short-lived phase of FAME, Hall partnered with his future father-in-law, Hansel Cross, for whom he had done some work writing radio jingles.¹³ In the new studio space, Hall used "light meter cartons and put them on the wall for sound effects. He also did things with burlap for sound effects."¹⁴ Hall continued to write both jingles for business and songs, which were being cut by the likes of country music artists Brenda Lee, George Jones, and Roy Orbison.¹⁵

In 1961, shortly after setting up his new business, Tom Stafford, Hall's former partner, sent Arthur Alexander, who was at that time a bellhop at the Sheffield Hotel, in Sheffield, Alabama, Hall's way to record "You Better Move On." As Hall recounted in the documentary, Muscle Shoals, after playing the song for Hall, Alexander asked him "what do you think?" Hall replied with "I think it's a hit." Alexander then asked "what are we going to do about it?" Hall said "we are going to cut it tomorrow."¹⁶ Rick Hall brought in a group of young white musicians that would become FAME's first rhythm section, which included musicians Norbert Putnam, Terry Thompson, David Briggs, Earl "Peanut" Montgomery, and Jerry Carrigan, to cut the record. This group of talented musicians worked with Alexander and Hall and finally produced a finished record, after multiple studio takes, at the warehouse studio.

Hall and Alexander discovered, however, that neither R&B nor country music distributors had much interest since the record fell between the two genres. Hall eventually placed the single with Dot Records, located in Nashville, which utilized radio broadcasts from WLAC's nightly R&B radio show to push its product, sold through Randy's Record Mart in nearby Gallatin.¹⁷ Once launched on radio, the record became the first hit produced by Rick Hall and associated with the FAME Studio name. Arthur Alexander's "You Better Move On" reached the #24 slot on

¹¹ Fuqua, Music Fell on Alabama, 16-17.

¹² Hall, The Man from Muscle Shoals, 170.

¹³ Ibid., 173

¹⁴ Fuqua, Music Fell on Alabama, 17.

¹⁵ Hall, The Man from Muscle Shoals, 177

¹⁶ Rick Hall, in Muscle Shoals, directed by Greg 'Freddy' Camiler (Dallas, TX: Magnolia Pictures, 2013), Blu-Ray.

¹⁷ "WLAC," Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture, online edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003----).

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the Billboard Hot 100 chart in March of 1962.¹⁸ The song later gained even more attention in 1964 after the Rolling Stones covered it. Historian Charles Hughes sees that the Alexander hit proved to all concerned that popular soul music could emerge from the cauldron of the Shoals, as long as everyone understood what their roles were in the still-Jim Crow South. Hughes emphasizes:

Alexander and the white musicians at FAME—most notably producer and studio owner Rick Hall—understood that their success required them to literally perform a racial contradiction. They created a cross-racial blend of styles that reflected the many sounds they learned from years of listening and live performance, but they also understood that these genres—particularly country and soul—remained separated by the ‘musical color line’ that structured the South’s recording industry. Alexander and the FAME musicians made records that appealed to a diverse audience but marketed them in ways that affirmed the ideology of racial division.¹⁹

Hughes next calls into question the frequent observation that FAME was a neutral ground in the dense race relations of Alabama in the early 1960s. Arthur Alexander, for one, understood that FAME’s “spirit of friendship resulted from, and thus was limited by, the nature of musical collaboration.”²⁰ Hughes concludes that “Hall got rich while Alexander was left marginalized.”²¹

Hall took the money made from the Arthur Alexander hit and used it as a down payment on a loan and began approaching area banks for the rest of the funding for a purpose-built studio building. Initially he had difficulties finding a bank willing to take him seriously. As Linda Hall, Rick Hall’s second wife and daughter of his business partner, Hansel Cross, put it, “Back then the bankers were very reluctant to loan money to anybody in the music business.”²² The Federal Savings and Loan in Florence finally agreed to loan him the money to build the structure. Hall also secured another loan from the First National Bank in Tuscumbia to buy the new recording equipment.²³

Building an International Reputation, 1963-1972

The new facility was located on Avalon Avenue in Muscle Shoals. While a busy area of town today, when the studio was built in 1962, Avalon Avenue was on the outskirts of town at the time of construction. Nashville producer Owen Bradley, one of Hall’s mentors, designed the studio. The original FAME studio, a 20’x70’ rectangular building constructed of concrete blocks, cost \$10,000 to build. The building had one studio, now known as Studio A.²⁴

¹⁸ Joel Whitburn, *The Billboard Book of Top 40 Hits: Revised and Enlarged*, (New York: Billboard Books, 1992)

¹⁹ Charles L. Hughes, *Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15

²² Fuqua, *Music Fell on Alabama*, 22

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Hall, *HellBent for FAME*, 236.

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The first studio sessions took place in early 1963 and soon earned the new building its first hit, Jimmy Hughes' "Steal Away." Hughes was a young African American signer from Leighton, Alabama. He did not come to FAME out of wanting to follow in the steps of Arthur Alexander, who actually had bolted Muscle Shoals to record in Nashville. Hughes came because his patron, Bob Carl Bailey, an African American businessman who owned WZZA, the black radio station of Muscle Shoals, knew Hall. According to Hall, he respected Bailey because the radio station owner "appreciated the best of the blues and R&B and had an ear for exceptional talent."²⁵

Historians have recently pointed that FAME's success depended on African American "seizing the opportunity to achieve professional success." Charles Hughes points to the example of FAME session musician Dan Penn, who actively recruited black artists and who admitted that a good part of FAME's success came from "the black people walking into the studio wanting to record."²⁶

But Hall's new studio building, located on what was then the margins of town, created that opportunity. Furthermore, to meet success, there were steps beyond going to a studio and cutting a record. There was the business side of the music industry. To make "Steal Away" into a hit, Hall had to do more than build the studio and produce the session. He also had to promote and market the record. Thus he took to the road with a case of records, a case of vodka, and one of his good friends, Dan Penn. Hall and Penn traveled around distributing Hughes' record. The tour paid off and "Steal Away" was a hit on both the R&B and pop charts.²⁷

The success of "Steal Away" attracted the attention of influential Nashville-based but Alabama-native producer Buddy Killen, who brought Joe Tex to the studio to record in 1964. Killen had been trying to force Tex into the Nashville music mold, without success. But at FAME studio in 1964, Tex blended the sounds of the studio's white session musicians with his own band of African American musicians from the road—the result was the classic "Hold What You've Got," a top ten hit on pop and R&B charts, "further cementing Muscle Shoals' reputation as a site of cross-racial R&B."²⁸

Later that year, the original studio rhythm section of Norbert Putnam, Terry Thompson, David Briggs, Earl "Peanut" Montgomery, and Jerry Carrigan left FAME to pursue careers in the rapidly involving record industry in Nashville, in large part due to the musicians union there and the potential of a fatter paycheck, and few long sessions. Because Nashville paid union scale, sessions were short, focused, and a night's work could yield three to four finished songs. Hall did not work that way at FAME. There could be multiple takes until Hall decided that the song sounded like a hit. It was a different style of working between the two cities, and studio musicians took on the brunt of the workload. The move of the original FAME session band to Nashville soon benefited both places as southern recording centers. Norbert Putnam in particular would become a key connector between the sounds of Muscle Shoals and Music City, U.S. A.

²⁵ Hall, *The Man From Muscle Shoals*, 201.

²⁶ Hughes, 38.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 205-210.

²⁸ Hughes, 40.

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Music historian Bill Lloyd remarked that Putnam and the others “made an indelible impact on how records sounded coming out of Tennessee.”²⁹ Putnam later produced early influential rock sessions by Joan Baez, Neil Young, Linda Ronstadt, and Dan Fogelberg at his Quadrafonic Studio in Nashville.

The departure of Putnam and the others meant that Hall had to create a new rhythm section for the FAME recording sessions. Hall recruited a new group, who would become known as the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, better known as the Swampers: Jimmy Johnson on the guitar, Roger Hawkins on the drums, Barry Beckett on the keyboard, and David Hood on the bass. Spooner Oldham also joined the group on many tracks. These musicians soon gained an even greater reputation for “funkiness” than the original session musicians and are widely recognized as an important force themselves in the rise of southern soul music. The irony, naturally, is that the Swampers were all young white musicians. As critic Noah Berlatsky observed in *The Atlantic*, “the iconic soul sound of the ‘60s was created in no small part by a bunch of rural white dudes in the middle of nowhere Alabama. As one commenter drily notes, when you’re listening to Aretha’s greatest hits, you don’t necessarily think the backing is by a bunch of Caucasians.”³⁰

FAME gained a national reputation for the number of important black artists who recorded there from 1963 to 1969.³¹ FAME became known for the production of southern soul music, which some have claimed as a “triumphant example of black-white collaboration in the 1960s.”³² In the studio it was easy to forget that pitched battles over racial equality were taking place on the streets of Birmingham, Selma, Montgomery, and other places across Alabama and the South. As Clarence Carter put it, “in the studio no one saw color, you just worked together, you never thought about who was white and who was black. You thought about the common thing and it was the music.”³³ In the documentary *Muscle Shoals*, Rick Hall stated that “we were color blind; there was never any situation over color.”³⁴ Outside of the studio the realities of the segregated South still loomed large. Hall recalled the looks he would get when black and white musicians went out to dinner together. However, as Carter points out in *Muscle Shoals*, things began to slowly change and Carter says that “music played a big part in the South for changing people’s minds over race – it went along way to helping people understand we were just humans.”³⁵ However, harmony in the studio did not mean that artists recording at FAME did not face race-based musical divisions in the South. Southern soul bridged country music, associated with whiteness, and R&B, associated with blackness. Artists faced challenges in bridging the longstanding divide in southern music. Even as white and black musicians played together in the studio, the music they produced was targeted at one audience or another. Radio stations, juke boxes, and record stores often targeted audiences along racial lines.³⁶

²⁹ “Nashville Cats: Salute to Norbert Putnam,” countrymusicchalloffame.org, posted November 14, 2009.

³⁰ Noah Berlatsky, “The Racial Courage, and Questions, Surrounding Muscle Shoals’ Soul Songs,” *The Atlantic* (online edition), October 4, 2013.

³¹ Rick Hall, in *Muscle Shoals*.

³² Hughes, 14.

³³ Clarence Carter, in *Muscle Shoals*.

³⁴ Rick Hall, in *Muscle Shoals*.

³⁵ Hughes, 17.

³⁶ Hughes, 42.

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Historians such as Charles Hughes have recently questioned this dominant narrative. He points out that in the Muscle Shoals area the experiences of musicians in the studio “were defined by complex and sometimes uneasy interactions between black and white,” relationships that were “fundamentally unequal” and that “simultaneously created and restricted the possibility of interracial collaboration.”³⁷

The tensions did not obscure the significance of the music being produced in Muscle Shoals by the mid-1960s. Once Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records became aware of the sound coming out of Muscle Shoals, he brought a number of African-American artists to record at FAME. Wilson Pickett was one of the first artists Wexler brought to Alabama. Pickett was initially skeptical of Wexler’s idea, however, after the first night of recording, Pickett had changed his mind and was firmly convinced that FAME could be a recording home for him. He went on to record a number of hits at FAME, including “Land of a Thousand Dances” and “Mustang Sally.”³⁸ Atlantic Records released Pickett’s “Land of 1,000 Dances” in July 1966. The single spent eleven weeks in Billboard’s Hot 100 chart and peaked at #6.³⁹ In November 1966, Billboard Magazine featured a front page article entitled “Piney Woods Industry’s New R&B Hunting Ground.” The article highlights Atlantic Records move into southern-based recording studios and specifically names Rick Hall and his FAME Studio as one of their top sources. Jerry Wexler stated “When you want certain types of records and wish to capture the pristine R&B sound, you need to go South. Just as New York musicians are great in certain musical categories, so too are these Southern musicians.”⁴⁰ Billboard also featured Atlantic’s next Pickett single “Mustang Sally” in its “Spotlight Singles” section and noted both Jerry Wexler and Rick Hall as the track’s producers.⁴¹ On November 26, 1966, Wilson Pickett’s “Mustang Sally” entered the Billboard Hot 100 chart for a nine-week run, where it peaked at #23.⁴² The banner year of hits released by Atlantic Records and their affiliates led Billboard to note an almost 50% increase in sales for the label. A large reason for this financial success, Billboard noted, was Rick Hall and FAME Studios.⁴³

The success of the new Atlantic and FAME relationship led to several of Atlantic’s stalwart recording artists to head to Muscle Shoals in 1967. Otis Redding, signed to Stax /Volt Records in Memphis, recorded “You Left the Water Running,” which until recently went unreleased. Clyde McPhatter, one of Atlantic’s biggest stars and formerly of the Drifters, also cut a few sides at FAME. In March, Arthur Conley’s “Sweet Soul Music” began a fifteen week run on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and peaked at #2.⁴⁴ Wilson Pickett returned and recorded “Funky Broadway,” which entered the Billboard Hot 100 charts on August 5, 1967, for a twelve week-run and peaked at #8. The members of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences

³⁷ Hughes, 42

³⁸ Wilson Pickett” *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* <http://rockhall.com/indutees/wilson-pickett/bio/> (accessed January 26, 2015)

³⁹ Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (Music ID).

⁴⁰ Claude Hall, “Piney Woods Industry’s New R&B Happy Hunting Ground,” *Billboard* (Archive: 1963 – 2000) 78, no 46 (Nov. 12, 1966): 1-8.

⁴¹ “Spotlight Singles,” *Billboard* (Archive: 1963 - 2000) 78, no 46 (Nov. 12, 1966): 18.

⁴² Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (MusicID).

⁴³ “Atlantic Sales Up 50% in Biggest Year,” *Billboard* (Archive 1963-2000) 78, no. 53 (December 31, 1966), 6.

⁴⁴ Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (MusicID).

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nominated “Funky Broadway” for 1967 Grammy Award in the “Best R&B Solo Vocal Performance, Male” category.⁴⁵ Historian Peter Guralnick observed: “It was a time of rapid fire changes and breathtaking productivity, a period of almost uninterrupted success—for Rick, for the studio, for the studio musicians, and for the artists themselves, all of who were coming to believe that there was something magical about FAME and Muscle Shoals.”⁴⁶

Wexler also brought Aretha Franklin to record at FAME and what happened next is among the most discussed and debated incidents in southern music history. Franklin, a native of Memphis, had signed with John Hammond and Columbia Records in 1960, and while she had some success, it was not until she signed with Atlantic in 1966 that she would truly find her voice.⁴⁷

When Franklin came to the Shoals in January 1967, racial tensions were still high throughout the nation. Wexler had wanted Hall to ensure that some black musicians would be playing on the session. By different accounts, Hall either ignored the request, forgot about it, or could not find black session musicians that would join the studio crew that day. Franklin’s husband, Ted White, did not like the idea of his wife recording with the white musicians. The session was tense from the very beginning. After Franklin recorded one of her most successful songs ever, “I Never Loved a Man (the Way that I Loved You),” the session at FAME fell apart, and White and Wexler called the session over, took Franklin, and left. Wexler was furious—and told Hall that he would never record at FAME again. Charles Hughes points out that the incident shows that the integrated southern studio environment did not always sit race aside; the place could be shaped by the tensions of the time, and the dynamics of the individuals involved.⁴⁸ Atlantic later released the single, “I Never Loved a Man” and on March 4, 1967, it entered the Billboard Hot 100 charts for an eleven-week run, and peaked at #9.⁴⁹

Wexler tricked Hall into sending the FAME session musicians to New York City where the breakthrough Aretha Franklin sessions were finished. The Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section went to New York to finish the record, which included the hit “Respect,”⁵⁰ penned by Otis Redding. They went on to record many more hits with Franklin, including “Call Me,” “The Weight,” and “The Dark End of the Street.”⁵¹ Wexler was finished with Hall—and looked for an opportunity to take the prize session musicians for his own label’s benefit. For the next two years, the two power brokers had less and less contact with one another.

Wexler’s conflict with Hall and FAME was similar to the conflicts Wexler would have with Stax Records in Memphis. In both cases Wexler used his money and influence in the industry to

⁴⁵ Thomas O’Neil, *The Grammys*, (New York: Perigee Books, 1993), 131.

⁴⁶ Peter Guralnick, *Sweet Soul Music* (New York: Little Brown and Co., 1986), 219.

⁴⁷ “Aretha Franklin” Rock and Roll Hall of Fame <http://rockhall.com/inductees/aretha-franklin/bio/> (accessed January 26, 2015).

⁴⁸ Hughes, 78-79

⁴⁹ Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (MusicID). Hughes, 74-78.

⁵⁰ Matt Wake “David Hood, The Swampers Bassist, talks Muscle Shoals’ Film, Aretha, Stones, Lynyrd Skynyrd, more” AL.com (September 17, 2014)

⁵¹ Peter Olson, “Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section” *Encyclopedia of Alabama* (2007) <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1247> (accessed November 15, 2014) .

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marginalize the white-operated southern recording firms and to move the hit-making artists under his orbit at Atlantic Records.⁵²

Before Rick Hall's dispute with Atlantic Records, he started working with Chess Records of Chicago. Chess Records was the home of many pioneering and successful electric blues, R&B, and rock artists, including Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Bo Diddley, and Chuck Berry. Some of the Rick Hall-produced Chess recordings included sides with Bobby More & the Rhythm Aces "Searching for My Love" (which spent ten weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 charts, peaking at #27 in 1966 and also reached #7 on the R&B charts).⁵³ Other 1967 FAME recordings released on Chess included sides by Irma Thomas, Maurice & Mac, Laura Lee, The Sidewinder, Charles Chalmers, and more from Bobby More & the Rhythm Aces. In September 1967, Laura Lee's "Dirty Man" entered the Billboard Hot 100 charts for a seven week run, and peaked at #68. It also reached #13 on Billboard's R&B Charts.⁵⁴

Chess Records' biggest artist in the 1960s was Etta James, but her career languished as the decade wore on and Leonard Chess believed some Muscle Shoals magic might help revive it. According to James, "Rick Hall was the first white man I had ever seen that had soul that was a sound engineer."⁵⁵ James recorded "Tell Mama" and "I'd Rather Go Blind" at FAME. "Tell Mama," "a searing slice of upbeat Southern soul," became one of James' "all-time classics."⁵⁶ "Tell Mama" spent fourteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart peaking at #23 and reached the Top 10 on the Billboard R&B Charts.⁵⁷ The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences nominated "Tell Mama" for a Grammy in the "Best R&B Solo Vocal Performance, Female" category. Unfortunately, James' "Tell Mama" lost to Aretha Franklin's "Respect," which featured FAME's rhythm section, though the song was recorded in New York City.⁵⁸ "Tell Mama" later became a hit for the white blues singer Janis Joplin.

Another significant Southern soul artist was Clarence Carter, who recorded some of FAME's biggest hits. In 1967, Carter's "Tell Daddy" reached #35 on the Billboard R&B chart and inspired Etta James' answer record, "Tell Mama," which Carter wrote. At the end of 1967, Carter joined Atlantic Records. He then began a string of hits on both the R&B and pop charts, starting with "Slip Away" (no.2 R&B, no.6 pop), which has been described as "a superior cheating ballad spotlighting his anguished, massive baritone alongside the remarkably sinuous backing of FAME's exemplary backing band," and "Too Weak To Fight" (no.3 R&B, no.13 pop). By far Hall's favorite song recorded at FAME was Carter's hit record "Patches." Hall felt it was autobiographical and he identified with it greatly. Carter initially did not want to record the song,

⁵² Mark Ribowsky, *Dreams to Remember: Otis Redding, Stax Records, and the Transformation of Southern Soul* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2015); Hughes, 112.

⁵³ Tony Rounce, liner notes to *Reaching Out: Chess Records at FAME Studios, Kent Soul Records 436, CD, 2015, 3.*

⁵⁴ Rounce, 12.

⁵⁵ Etta James quoted in, *HellBent for FAME*, 322.

⁵⁶ Bill Dahl, "Etta James" in *All Music Guide to Soul: The Definitive Guide to R&B and Soul* ed. by Vladimir Bogdanov (Hal Leonard Corporation, 2003), 360.

⁵⁷ Rounce, 11.

⁵⁸ Jason Ankeny, "Clarence Carter Biography" Allmusic Online, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/clarence-carter-mn0000148477> (accessed October 24, 2014).

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but eventually recorded it, as Hall was persistent. "Patches" went on to become FAME's first number one pop song and an R&B smash hit.⁵⁹ It was also a certified platinum seller by the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences nominated "Patches" for a 1970 Grammy in both the "Best R&B Vocal Performance, Male" and the "Best R&B Song (Songwriter's Award)" categories. "Patches" won the Grammy Award in the "Best R&B Song" category.⁶⁰ The song, according to critic Noah Berlatsky, is a "moving example of this color-blindness" associated with FAME. But "it also raises some uncomfortable questions." The form of the song is recitative, a typical "country music weeper," but country radio never accepted it as one of its own. And this refusal to recognize Carter was an experience shared much earlier by Arthur Alexander. Berlatsky concludes: "The white performers at Muscle Shoals have made a huge, widely recognized contribution to R&B. The black performers could have become a massively important part of country-music tradition, but they didn't, and it's hard to see what stopped them except for their color."⁶¹

In addition to recording relationships with Atlantic and Chess, Hall began branching out to work with other labels. On November 11, 1967, Billboard announced Hall and Mercury Records agreed to a three-artist production deal to help bolster Mercury's drive into the R&B market.⁶² Other relationships developed with Jewel-Paula Records, and Bang and Shout Records during this time.

As the studio's reputation grew new, immensely talented musicians arrived in Muscle Shoals to join the recording effort, none more important than guitarist Duane Allman.⁶³ In September 1968, Allman went to visit Hall, with the hopes of joining FAME as a studio musician. Hall remembered that Allman "was a huge fan of the things I was doing – Jimmy Hughes, Arthur Alexander, Clarence Carter, Joe Tex. He knew about all the records I was cutting and was heavy into black music." However, at the time, Hall did not need another guitar player. Allman was not discouraged and stayed in the Shoals, camping in the parking lot of FAME, waiting for his chance. When Allman finally did get the chance to play for Rick Hall, he made a lasting first impression "One day we were doing a demo and he had his bottleneck," says Hall. "To be honest with you, I hadn't saw many bottleneck players. I don't know if I had seen any. I mean, I knew about 'em. I knew about Muddy Waters and the Mississippi Delta and the back porch blues and all that – but I hadn't really invested much time in it."⁶⁴

In November 1968, Hall hired Allman to play on an album with Wilson Pickett. Allman's work on that album, including Pickett's cover of "Hey Jude," got him hired as a full-time session musician at Muscle Shoals and brought him to the attention of a number of other musicians, such as Eric Clapton, who later said, "I remember hearing Wilson Pickett's 'Hey Jude' and just being astounded by the lead break at the end. I had to know who that was immediately—right now."⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Jason Ankeny, "Clarence Carter Biography" Allmusic Online, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/clarence-carter-mn0000148477> (accessed October 24, 2014).

⁶⁰ O'Neil, 169 - 170.

⁶¹ Berlatsky, "Racial Courage, and Questions."

⁶² "Mercury Ups R&B Drive," Billboard (Archive 1963-2000) 79, no. 45 (November 11, 1967): 3.

⁶³ Randy Poe, Skydog: The Duane Allman Story. (San Francisco, CA: Backbeat Books, 2006), 181.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 185.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 187-188.

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Allman's performance on "Hey Jude" blew away Wexler when Hall played it over the phone for him. Wexler immediately bought Allman's recording contract from Hall and wanted to use him on sessions with all sorts of Atlantic R&B artists. While in Muscle Shoals, Allman was featured on releases by a number of artists, including Doris Duke, Clarence Carter, King Curtis, Aretha Franklin, Laura Nyro, Wilson Pickett, Otis Rush, Percy Sledge, Johnny Jenkins, Boz Scaggs, Delaney & Bonnie, and jazz flautist Herbie Mann. In 1969, Allman left FAME to form his own band, with his brother, the Allman Brothers Band.⁶⁶

The year 1969 proved significant for FAME in many ways. Recording hits from R&B and Rock stars continued without missing a beat. Blues legend and Jewel recording artist Lowell Fulson recorded his album, *In a Heavy Bag*, at FAME in 1969. But that session was one of the last recordings to feature the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section before they left to start their own studio later in the year. The split between Hall and the studio musicians centered around money, naturally, but also relationships. Hall by 1969 was desperate for new monies to invest in his studio and also to branch out from his Alabama-based operations. Capitol Records became interested because its executives wanted to "harness the energy of Black Power" and the company was the first major label "to establish a black music division" for popular music.⁶⁷ Capitol Records believed that they were missing out of a potential bonanza in soul music—the label had never done much at all with R&B acts—and Hall's FAME operation was a ready-made hit machine. As Charles Hughes points out, "the racial irony was overwhelming: one of Capitol's first acts in its push to promote the black presence in the record industry was to go into business with one of the most prominent white men in soul music."⁶⁸

Jerry Wexler at Atlantic Records understood the threat that Capitol posed as it stepped into the FAME studio once dominated by Atlantic. He did not want the competition from Capitol—or any other major international label—in Alabama. As Hall neared closing the deal with Capitol, Atlantic Records made their own move—snatching the FAME studio band for itself and setting up these musicians in a new home, called the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio.

On April 12, 1969, *Billboard* ran a feature article announcing the new FAME and Capitol partnership. The article entitled "Black Jobs, Culture Gain Capitol Boost" outlined,

(Capitol's) joint financial venture with Muscle Shoals, AL, producer-engineer Rick Hall to distribute his FAME Records. Hall's label will be utilized by Capitol as the launching pad for the company's 'purposeful and meaningful' involvement in the rhythm and blues business. Hall's initial product on FAME will encompass Candy Stanton and George Jackson, two blues vocalists, who are slated for a mid-April release through independent distributors. Hall also operates FAME Studios, where Atlantic has been recording its disks with Aretha Franklin, and Capitol intends [on] sending a number of its acts there to record. A former country fiddler working in R&B for six years, Hall plans opening a studio in New Orleans and Miami. The tie-in with Hall is a key factor in solidifying [Thom] Yorke's belief that Capitol - as a major which has not previously enjoyed top success in the R&B field - must

⁶⁶ Ibid, 188

⁶⁷ Hughes, 105.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 106

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have consistent R&B product if the company is to ‘purposefully and meaningfully’ create opportunities for blacks. Hall will continue to fulfill his existing commitments as a producer-engineer for other labels, but he will now scout R&B acts for FAME, and even bring in other free-lance producers to work on FAME projects.⁶⁹

But Wexler and Atlantic undercut the value of the merger by taking away the prized session musicians. This talented group of studio musicians had reinforced and extended the already distinctive Muscle Shoals sound – a mixture of gritty Memphis R&B and Nashville country music that went on to be a prevailing aesthetic in rock music through the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁰ In 1969-1970 the term “Muscle Shoals Sound” became part of the American popular music vocabulary as well as the name of the studio created by the former FAME staff band. The studio’s launch was announced in *Billboard* on August 9, 1969.⁷¹

The first use of the term “Muscle Shoals Sound” in the recording industry literature comes in a *Billboard* article of May 17, 1969. In a story that announced the creation of an alliance between FAME and Capitol Records, Rick Hall explained that the “new” Muscle Shoals sound “is not really new” because he had been “working it out with top recording stars in the Muscle Shoals studios for over a decade of recordings that spawned seven gold singles platters and brought Capitol records’ proposal of merger with the rising Tennessee Valley rhythm and blues genre.”⁷² The *Billboard* correspondent concluded that “What might be called the new Shoals Soul sound is carving out its own hall of fame in the Nashville-Memphis area, and competing with the north’s Detroit soul sound. Hall can take credit for success as a musical Luther Burbank in cross-pollination.”⁷³

By the first of 1970 influential British music industry publication *Melody Maker* announced: “Muscle Shoals—It’s the Sound of the Year,” adding that “The Rolling Stones plan to record in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. So does Eric Clapton. And the Band. So now it’s the Muscle Shoals sound which matters—to talk about recording in Nashville or Detroit stamps you as one of yesterday’s people, man.”⁷⁴ The columnist quoted the head of Atlantic Records, Ahmet Ertegun: “It’s quiet and there are few distractions. . . Also there’s that good Alabama breeze. And when you’ve finished work you can get fine ribs, barbeque and mustard greens. Yes, there is a Muscle Shoals sound. Everybody wants to record there.”⁷⁵

Today, people in and out of the music industry often refer to the old “Muscle Shoals sound” in mystical terms, but they have a hard time explaining what made it so special. Linda Hall says it was “a funky sound, different.” Rick Hall described it to a *Newsweek* reporter in 1969 as “funky, hard, gutty, down to earth; it’s warm and heartfelt with a dance beat. No gimmicks or sound tricks.” The “Muscle Shoals Sound” became a draw for musicians around the world, whether at

⁶⁹ Eliot Tiegel, “Black Jobs, Culture Gain Capitol Boost,” *Billboard* (Archive 1963 - 2000) 81, no. 15 (April 12, 1969): 1, 4.

⁷⁰ Mick Brown, “Deep Soul: How Muscle Shoals became Music’s Most Unlikely Hit Factory” *The Telegraph* Online, <http://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/muscle-shoals/index.html> (accessed October 25, 2014).

⁷¹ Ed Ochs, “Soul Sauce,” *Billboard*, August 9, 1969, p. 40.

⁷² “Cap. Fete for Hall, Singer,” *Billboard*, May 17, 1969, p. 6.

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ “The Raver’s Weekly Tonic,” *Melody Maker*, January 17, 1970, p. 6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*. Also see, “Muscle Shoals Sound—Sort of a Commune,” *Billboard*, December 5, 1970, p. 46.

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the new Muscle Shoals Sound Studio or at FAME.⁷⁶ Hall didn't miss a beat despite the defection—like in 1964 he immediately started looking for other local musicians and found Junior Lowe on guitar, Jesse Boyce on bass, Freeman Brown on drums, and Clayton Ivey on keyboards. They became known as the “FAME Gang.” Over the years Hall would bring new musicians into the FAME Gang. Linda Hall states, “There was always a different set of musicians trying to get started, they weren't as good as the ones Rick used all the time, but he just called these guys in and developed his new rhythm section. He had done this at least four or five times. A studio musician has to be [a] very motivated, creative type person.”⁷⁷

A new era in Muscle Shoals recording history was underway as both studios, but especially FAME, continued to record soul music with African American artists as they also turned themselves “into a home for white artists, and its musicians played a crucial role in integrating soul's musical characteristics into other sectors of the pop mainstream.”⁷⁸ After the partnership between Capitol and FAME, Hall produced several Hot 100 hits in 1969, including Candi Staton's “I'd Rather Be an Old Man's Sweetheart” (eight weeks in the Hot 100, peaking at #46) and Bobbie Gentry's “Fancy,” which spent fourteen weeks in the Hot 100, peaking at #31. Gentry was another cross-genre performer associated with FAME as her recording of “Fancy,” reached pop, country, and R&B popularity. In recognition of that achievement, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences nominated Bobbie Gentry's “Fancy” for a 1970 Grammy Award in the “Best Contemporary Vocal Performance, Female” category.

The string of hits continued in 1970, including Candi Staton's “Stand By Your Man.” The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences nominated Staton's “Stand By Your Man” for a 1970 Grammy Award in the “Best R&B Vocal Performance, Female” category.⁷⁹ Also recording at FAME in 1970 were Little Richard, Lou Rawls, and Liza Minelli, who recorded a still unissued album. All three artists came to FAME in search of that elusive “big” hit that could reignite their recording careers. Only Little Richard succeeded, since his single “Greenwood, Mississippi” would be one of his last Hot 100 hits, while Rawls later gained fame by doing a jingle for a beer commercial and Minelli moved away from recording into acting after her critically acclaimed performance in *Cabaret* (1972).

Then in 1971 came an agreement that launched the studio's “most commercially successful period ever.”⁸⁰ Rick Hall was in Los Angeles, checking in at the headquarters of Capitol Records, when “Mike Curb approached him about producing some young kids that had been on the Andy Williams Show.”⁸¹ The Osmonds had been performing regularly on Williams's weekly TV show from December 1962 to 1967, but the five brothers, despite their TV following, did not have a hit record. Already in the 1960s the Jackson 5 had proven that a boy band, even if

⁷⁶ Fuqua, *Music Fell on Alabama*, 41-42. In 1969, however, the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Session would leave Hall and FAME studio to establish their own Muscle Shoals Sound Studio (NR 6/2/2006).

⁷⁷ Ibid, 44-45.

⁷⁸ Hughes, 107.

⁷⁹ O'Neill, *The Grammys*, 169.

⁸⁰ Brown, “Deep Soul.”

⁸¹ Fuqua, *Muscle Shoals*, 63.

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African American and groomed through the Barry Gordy's Motown hit machine, could reach mass audiences like few other pop acts. George Jackson, one of FAME's many writers, wrote a song that Hall felt certain could prove to be the Osmonds' ticket to stardom, allowing FAME to prove that the Muscle Shoals Sound was the equal of the Motown Sound when it came to pop records. That song was "One Bad Apple" (1971), which went to number one in six weeks and stayed there for five consecutive weeks. Southern soul and R&B hits recorded by white artists like the Osmonds' 1971 "One Bad Apple" provoked a great deal of criticism from black activists and artists, and many white music critics, who saw the song "as the latest example of white people stealing black music."⁸²

Despite the controversy over white/black covers of pop music songs, the success of "Old Bad Apple" allowed Hall to place FAME on a different platform. Hall went on to produce several other hits for the Osmonds and a solo Donny Osmond album. For the Osmonds, "Double Lovin'" (nine week in the Billboard Hot 100, peaking at #14), "Yo Yo" (thirteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, peaking at #3), and "Down by the Lazy River" (fourteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, peaking at #3) enjoyed sales and radio play success. Donny Osmond's Hall produced "Sweet and Innocent" (sixteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100, peaking at #7), "Go Away Little Girl" (fifteen week on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, reaching #1), "Hey Girl," and "I Knew You When" dominated the sales and radio charts.⁸³

In 1971, Billboard named Hall the "World's Producer of the Year," as his productions accounted for almost 2.5% of all record sales in the United States⁸⁴ and ran a biographical piece on him. This article discussed the change that occurred in Hall's studio band, but his new squad of musicians earned on average between \$25,000 and \$35,000 a year, a large improvement from the sum earned by the now departed original core.⁸⁵

In 1972, as a result of his success with the Osmonds and the recognition brought by the recognitions from Billboard, Rick Hall entered into a new "long-term" relationship with Mike Stewart and United Artists (UA) where "FAME was to deliver a minimum of four albums and sixteen singles annually. Hall planned to cut off all his personal production responsibilities outside of the FAME label, except for the Osmonds, Clarence Carter, and Mac Davis."⁸⁶ The first UA release was Candi Staton's version of "In the Ghetto," which later earned her a 1972 Grammy nomination in the "Best R&B Vocal Performance, Female" category.⁸⁷ The studio also underwent another renovation/expansion. The distinctive form of the building today dates from this 1972 renovation/expansion.

Also in 1972, Rick Hall reestablished his relationship with Mac Davis. Davis had recorded earlier at FAME and went on to become a major songwriter. Davis penned "In the Ghetto," "Friend, Lover, Woman, Wife," "Home," and "Memories." Many popular recording artists,

⁸² Hughes, 121-122.

⁸³ Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (MusicID).

⁸⁴ "Jobete, Rick Hall Top Midyear Chart," Billboard 83, no. 31 (July 31, 1971): 16. h

⁸⁵ Bill Williams, "Music in Muscle Shoals: People Come Here to Work," Billboard 82, no. 49 (December 5, 1970): 45.

⁸⁶ "General News: Rick Hall Contracts UA to Handle FAME Globally," Billboard 84, no. 22 (May 27, 1972): 3, 8.

⁸⁷ O'Neill, The Grammys, 196.

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including Elvis Presley and Nancy Sinatra, recorded songs written by Davis. Hall signed Mac Davis to FAME as one of the three exceptions in his deal with UA.⁸⁸ Together, they scored several Hot 100 hits between 1972 and 1974, many of which crossed over to the Adult Contemporary and Country charts. “Baby Don’t Get Hooked on Me” spent eighteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, reaching #1. The album of the same title spent twenty-five weeks on the Top 200 sales chart, peaking at #11, “One Hell of a Woman” spent twenty-eight weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, peaking at #28. “Stop and Smell the Roses”⁸⁹ spent fourteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, peaking at #9. The album of the same title spent twenty-two weeks on the Top 200 sales charts, peaking at #13. “Rock ’n Roll (I Gave You the Best Years of My Life)” resided on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for eleven weeks, peaking at #15.⁹⁰ The Academy of Country Music named Mac Davis the 1974 “Entertainer of the Year.” These successes helped Mac Davis land his own television show, The Mac Davis Show, and several lead roles in major motion pictures.

While he had not revived the career of Lou Rawls, Hall did find success with former pop star Paul Anka, who had enjoyed several top-selling singles as a recording artist in the 1950s and 1960s, including “Puppy Love” and “Diana.” Anka also composed the theme to Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show, “My Way” by Frank Sinatra, and “She’s a Lady” by Tom Jones. However, his career dipped as rock and R&B dominated the charts in the late 60s and early 70s. Anka signed with United Artists in 1974 and teamed up with Rick Hall and singer Odia Coates to mount an amazing comeback. Their first single “(You’re) Having My Baby” spent fifteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, including three weeks at #1. The single sold over three million copies. Subsequent follow up singles achieved similar results. “One Man Woman/One Woman Man” peaked at #7 after sixteen weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. “I Don’t Like to Sleep Alone” enjoyed a fifteen week Hot 100 run, peaking at #8. The last Anka, Coates, and Hall collaboration “I Believe There’s Nothing Stronger Than Our Love,” spent thirteen weeks in the Hot 100 chart and peaked at #15 in 1975.⁹¹

Rick Hall’s successes with Mac Davis, Paul Anka, and Clarence Carter earned him a Grammy nomination in the inaugural “Producer of the Year” category in 1975. In the first year of a Producer category, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences also nominated Hall’s former partner, Billy Sherrill, along with Lenny Waronker, Stevie Wonder, and the eventual winner, Thom Bell.⁹²

Despite the 1975 industry accolade, the years of national impact at FAME, and perhaps Muscle Shoals in general, were waning. As historian Richie Unterberger observed, “following the disintegration of down-home soul music in general after the mid-1970s, Muscle Shoals by necessity branched out into all-around music production, but in the process lost much of its

⁸⁸ Hall, The Man from Muscle Shoals, 338-340.

⁸⁹ Columbia Records producer, Gary Klein’s rerecording of “stop and Smell the Roses” was the version that ended up in the marketplace. However, it was an exact replica of Hall’s effort. Columbia President, Bruce Lundvall issued a public apology and properly compensated Hall for his efforts. Hall, The Man from Muscle Shoals, 343-346.

⁹⁰ Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (MusicID).

⁹¹ Billboard Chart data from Music Industry Data (MusicID).

⁹² O’Neill, The Grammys, 229

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regional identity.”⁹³ The boom in popularity in Disco music in the late 1970s further relegated the music from Muscle Shoals as out-of-step with popular music tastes. Unterberger’s judgment from 1999 still holds for most music historians who look upon the years of 1962 to 1977 as the studio’s most productive and significant period, until its recent revival in the last ten years with such Muscle Shoals-based artists as the Drive-By Truckers and Jason Isbell.

By 1977 the long hours caught up with Hall and he began to have health problems caused by stress and overwork. Rather than continue producing records half-heartedly to fulfill the term of his contract with United Artists, Hall asked Mike Stewart to release him from his production and distribution deal with UA. Hall and Stewart eventually reached a settlement and Hall left the music industry for over two years to work on building a family farm, while FAME Studios and Publishing remained opened. Hall came back, but it was not the same industry that he had left behind. Linda Hall states, “all of his friends who were in the pop field were no longer there, everything had changed.”⁹⁴

In 1978 the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio also closed its doors at the Jackson Avenue address, and with Hall away from FAME, an era in American popular music history was over. Mark Ribowsky, the biographer of Otis Redding, concluded that FAME studios was “the first of the two great soul shops in the backwoods of northeast Alabama, in the generally obscure town of Muscle Shoals, where more great soul may have been made, per capita, than in any other studio in the land.”⁹⁵ London critic Mick Brown agrees: “For a brief and exhilarating period Muscle Shoals rivaled New York, Los Angeles and London as one of the most important recording centres [sic] in popular music. You need only visit Muscle Shoals to realise [sic] quite how remarkable this was.”⁹⁶

The FAME Studio building is where the “Muscle Shoals Sound” developed. From 1962-1977, the music coming out of FAME largely fell into the Southern soul tradition. Artists including Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge, and Clarence Carter recorded at FAME during this period. The success of the Muscle Shoals Sound was identified by music industry leaders across the nation and in Britain. Thus, artists as diverse as The Osmonds, George Jones, Tammy Wynette and Paul Anka recorded significant albums there. In 1972, Hall entered into an agreement with Mike Stewart and United Artists, providing new funds to update the studio building and few changes have been made since. The building retains its key character defining features in the interior and the exterior.

Criterion B:

Central to the story of performing arts in Muscle Shoals and the creation of the FAME studio is Roe Erister “Rick” Hall, who is a significant individual strongly associated with the rise of Muscle Shoals as an American music mecca and central to the success and impact of FAME Studio. The FAME Studio building was both his production office and the center of his

⁹³ Richie Unterberger, *Music USA: The Rough Guide* (London: The Rough Guide, Ltd., 1999), 8.

⁹⁴ Fuqua, *Muscle Shoals*, 65.

⁹⁵ Ribowsky, 129.

⁹⁶ Brown, “Deep Soul.”

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songwriting publishing company. It best represents the most productive and significant parts of his career and its contribution to the performing arts history of Muscle Shoals.

Born in 1932, Hall grew up in the Freedom Hills, a very isolated part of Franklin County, Alabama. Hall's family was extremely poor and moved around the hills as his father looked for work.⁹⁷ His mother left the family when Hall was four years old after his younger brother died in a horrible accident. To make ends meet while raising Hall and his sister, Wenoka, Hall's father, Herman, worked in saw mills as a block setter, as a farmer, as a carpenter, and as a logger. Herman also occasionally made moonshine. Herman Hall's brother, Earl Hall, also helped raise the children when they were young.⁹⁸

Despite his family's poverty, from an early age, Hall's life was full of music. His father stayed up late into the night learning Southern gospel songs to teach in the ten-day singing schools that he directed for extra money. In *The Man from Muscle Shoals*, Hall recalled his father's love for music, stating "As far back as I can remember, Dad loved to strum the guitar and sing gospel and country songs. He loved singing in gospel quartets anytime he got the opportunity. He always sang high tenor in a quartet and could rattle the shingles in a church building when he hit those high notes."⁹⁹ Hall received his first instrument, a tater-bug mandolin, from his uncle Earl when he was just six years old.¹⁰⁰ Hall would go on to learn to play fiddle and guitar as a teenager, and would also learn to play bass. During WWII, when Hall was a teenager, his father moved to Cleveland, Ohio so he could take a job in war production. Hall and Wenoka stayed with family in Gravel Hill, in Franklin County, for the first year their father was working in Cleveland. Herman then brought Hall and Wenoka to Cleveland.¹⁰¹ In Cleveland, Hall's exposure to music reached new levels and his "understanding of music broadened from the simple sounds of the Grand Ole Opry toward bigger if not better sounds of a symphony orchestra."¹⁰² After a year in Cleveland, the family moved back to Alabama, where Hall continued to improve his fiddle and mandolin playing. He began attending fiddling conventions with one of his friends, Bud Cochran. Hall also began to play square dances with his musician friends. More formally he joined fellow students at Phil Campbell High School in forming a string band. Hall and the band competed at the Alabama String Band Contest and took home a third place their first year and a second place their second year.¹⁰³

Hall dropped out of high school before his senior year and he left Alabama for Rockford, Illinois, where he began playing with local bands. In 1952, Hall was drafted for military service in the Korean War. Hall declared himself a conscientious objector. As a result, he was assigned to the Army's honor guard. Shortly after being drafted, Hall wrecked his father's car, breaking his back. It took Hall a year to recover, and, when he reported back to duty, the Korean War was

⁹⁷ Christopher S. Fuqua, *Music Fell on Alabama* (Birmingham, Alabama: Crane Hill Publishers, 1991), 11.

⁹⁸ Rick Hall, *The Man from Muscle Shoals: From Shame to Fame*, as told to Terry Pace (Monterey, CA: Heritage Builders, 2015), 6-28.

⁹⁹ Hall, *The Man from Muscle Shoals*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, *The Man from Muscle Shoals*, 37.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 55, 83.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 103-105.

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over.¹⁰⁴ Hall's time in the Army exposed him to different genres of music, "from big bands and blues to jazz and rock and roll."¹⁰⁵ He also credits his time in the Army as helping him graduate "from being just a country shit-kicker and hoedown fiddle player to being a musician who was a little more smooth, savvy, and sophisticated."¹⁰⁶

Hall married Faye Marie Stegall after his discharge from the Army and worked at Reynolds Aluminum in Florence, Alabama. At this point Hall played with a band named the Country Pals. They had a daily radio program and played dances around northwest Alabama. After only eighteen months of marriage Hall's wife was killed in an automobile accident. Just two weeks later Hall's father died, killed by the tractor Hall had bought his father after he wrecked Herman's car.¹⁰⁷ Hall fell into a deep depression and took to traveling around, oftentimes living out of his car. The Country Pals took care of Hall, helping him to recover from the two tragic losses. It was during his time with the Country Pals that Hall befriended Billy Sherrill, a saxophone and piano player. The duo began writing songs together, including one, "Sweet and Innocent." Both Bobby Denton and Roy Orbison would go on to record the song.¹⁰⁸ James Joiner, the owner of Tune Records who helped Sherrill and Hall record the demo on "Sweet and Innocent," put Hall and Sherrill in touch with Tom Stafford and a partnership was born.¹⁰⁹

The partnership led to the initial creation of FAME but the trio, as detailed above, soon went in separate directions. In 1962 Hall turned to Nashville music industry leaders for guidance in building his own modern purpose-built studio building. From this point on, Hall's life and the story of FAME are so intertwined it is impossible to separate the two.

His peers, critics, and historians recognize Hall's significant contributions to the history of American popular music between 1962 and 1977. Writing in the London Daily Telegraph, critic Mick Brown discussed how Hall ranks among other key music industry figures of the era:

Rick Hall is a classic example of a type that no longer exists in the music industry: a musician, songwriter and businessman who could write, arrange, produce and engineer a song, release it on his own label, then persuade disc jockeys to play it and distributors to sell it. In short, a man from a time before music was an 'industry' at all.

In the 1950s and 60s there were any number of so-called 'record men' with some or all of these skills. Sam Philips at Sun, Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler at Atlantic and Berry Gordy at Motown were the best known - but few embraced all of these skills or went on to enjoy quite the same measure of success as Rick Hall.

Hall's early success – the foundation of what became known as the Muscle Shoals sound – was built on establishing a particular alignment of black singers and white musicians in a time

¹⁰⁴ Fuqua, Music Fell on Alabama, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, The Man from Muscle Shoals, 119.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 125-133

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 155-56.

¹⁰⁹ Fuqua, Music Fell on Alabama, 11-15.

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and place when race relations were dangerously strained. Many of the greatest R&B songs of the 1960s by artists such as Clarence Carter, Wilson Pickett and Etta James were recorded at Fame under Hall's supervision.¹¹⁰

Historian Charles Hughes asserts that "Rick Hall was unquestionably central to the development of R&B and soul in Muscle Shoals. He is a masterful producer, an underrated songwriter; and an exceptional judge of talent. But he was neither a civil rights pioneer nor a particularly passionate R&B fan."¹¹¹ His career speaks to that reality, in fact he successfully worked with a range of talent from Wilson Pickett to The Osmonds to George Jones. He was a passionate popular music man, from a decidedly Southern perspective.

In 1985, Hall's successful past and recent hits led to his induction in the inaugural class of the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in 1985. Fellow inductees in this first group also included Nat King Cole, Hank Williams, and Buddy Killen. Hall's induction biography described him as the "Father of Muscle Shoals music."

In 2014, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences awarded Rick Hall its prestigious Trustee Award, which recognizes "individuals who, during their careers in music, have made significant contributions, other than performance, to the field of recording." Past recipients include such legendary figures in the history of recorded sound as John Hammond, the Beatles, George and Ira Gershwin, Thomas Edison, Ahmet Ertegun, Steve Jobs, and Sam Phillips, to name a few.¹¹² Recording artist, Alicia Keys, who had recently recorded a track with Hall in the FAME studio, gave the award presentation speech. Keys observed:

The moment I stepped into Rick Hall's FAME Recording Studios, I felt a buzz! I was giddy like a little girl with excitement! The history, fellowship and talent of the artists who'd come before enveloped and [surrounded] me and it was powerful. I tasted it on my lips, it sank down to my heart. I wanted to absorb and revel in the ambiance where this beautiful music was created and has gone on to move generations.

It's hard not to feel overwhelmed by the legacy and the names that walked through FAME Recording Studios' doors and put Muscle Shoals, Ala., on the music map. As someone who has a real love and appreciation for music, I wish I could have spent just a few moments in the presence of the artists who made magic at FAME. I wish I could have sat in on those sessions with Etta James, Andy Williams, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, and Wilson Pickett, just to name a few, as they found there was something incredibly special bubbling alongside the rolling Tennessee River. It had Southern charm, deep soul, R&B, rock, pop, and just the right dose of funk. It was original and Rick Hall and the musicians he brought together were the very heartbeat of the sounds that came from the now-legendary town.

Hall built Muscle Shoals from the ground up with his determined spirit. Originally an artist and songwriter, Hall understood what it was like to want to share your music with the world.

¹¹⁰ Brown, "Deep Soul."

¹¹¹ Hughes, 38.

¹¹² <https://www.grammy.org/recording-academy/awards/trustee-awards>, (date accessed November 15, 2015).

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When doors were closed on him, he opened his own with his first small studio and soon after laid down roots as a music producer in Muscle Shoals. Thanks to Hall, the town of about 1,000 has since become home to countless musicians, with many getting their first start and a chance to be a part of something completely original.

While the civil rights movement shook the country, the musicians entering FAME Studios were colorblind. Side by side with Hall, they created some of the most unique sounds and lasting music of their generation. Maybe Hall didn't know it then, but he was truly bringing people together through the universal language of music. The name Hall was making for himself with FAME Studios had artists from all over the world heading down south for a chance to be a part of what could come out of that magical studio.

Anyone who creates music knows that any good song comes with [a] little magic, and I am proud to have been able to record at FAME Studios as part of the documentary Muscle Shoals. I was filled from being able to learn more about and experience a little bit of what Hall had created. He is a leader and visionary for our industry. His sheer diligence and determination are a lesson in themselves. And his desire to find the magic is the Soul of the Shoals. He is truly the father of Muscle Shoals music.¹¹³

Keys' Trustee Award speech summarizes the enormous influence of Rick Hall and FAME on the musical history of the Shoals, the state of Alabama, the United States, and across the globe. Hall launched the careers of dozens of artists and his body of work helped to bring the music of the South to the ears of millions of Americans. His commitment to recording African-American artists in the midst of an era of dramatic racism was exceptional. His attention to detail, dedication, and his willingness to take risks made FAME Studios and "the Muscle Shoals Sound" fundamental pieces of the 1960s and 1970s musical revolution. The national significance of FAME's place in American music history and culture cannot be understated.

FAME Today

FAME Recording Studio and Publishing are in the hands of Hall's sons Mark and Rodney. They continue FAME's rich heritage of writing, producing, and recording music in Muscle Shoals. FAME continues to recognize and support the talent developing in the Muscle Shoals area. In 2004, they recorded the Drive by Truckers album, Dirty South for New West Records, and signed Shoals native Jason Isbell to a publishing deal. Isbell eventually recorded his critically acclaimed debut album, Sirens of the Ditch, in 2007 for New West Records at FAME as well. Isbell also recorded Southeastern (2013) and Something More Than Free (2015) at FAME. Also in 2007, R&B legend, Bettye LaVette recorded her Grammy nominated album, Scene of the Crime, at FAME for Anti Records. Between 2000 and 2015, Phish, Alicia Keys, Jamey Johnson, Band of Horses, Matisyahu, Willie Nelson, Cyril Neville's Royal Southern Brotherhood, and LeAnn Womack recorded tracks and albums at FAME.

¹¹³ Alicia Keys, "NARAS Trustee Award, Rick Hall," grammy.com, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://www.grammy.com/news/trustees-award-rick-hall>.

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Justification of Criteria Consideration G

The FAME Studios building is an exceptionally significant property due to its associations with Rick Hall and the recording industry in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Between 1962, when Hall built the studio, and 1977 when He took a two-year break from running the studio, individuals associated with the studio laid the foundation for the development of southern soul, created the “Muscle Shoals Sound”, and also had an lasting impact on the genres of pop and country music. The period of significance for FAME Studio also extends to 1977 for more than its fifteen-year run of pop music success. The building was always more than a studio; it also was a major publishing house for American popular music in the second half of the 20th century. This date of 1977 reflects changes made to the studio from the time of its original construction. Outside of adding digital recording technology, little has changed at the studio since the 1970s.

The national significance of the musical developments that occurred at FAME Studios and the important influence Rick Hall had on the recording industry merit FAME Studios’ exception to Criteria Consideration G. During the first period of significance, artists such as Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Jimmy Hughes, Etta James, and Clarence Carter recorded many hit records in Studio A.. The development of southern soul and the “Muscle Shoals Sound” occurred. The careers of studio musicians, including Norbert Putnam, David Briggs, Spooner Oldham, and the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section (the Swampers) were also launched. The impact these musicians would have on American music and the American recording industry is exceptional. Hall next branched out into white pop ad country music and also had more success with artists such as the Osmonds, Mac Davis, Paul Anka and the duo of George Jones and Tammy Wynette at FAME Studios. These artists in turn were associated with such nationally and internationally recognized record labels as Atlantic, Stax, Chess, Columbia, and Capitol Again, the impact of these artists on American music is exceptional.

In his recent monograph, *Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South*, Historian Charles Hughes is critical of the myths that have developed around FAME and the Muscle Shoals Sound. But he admits that artists, producers, and musicians at FAME “witnessed and ultimately contributed to a series of changes in musical practice that forever altered the U.S. cultural landscape and provoked a vast expansion in the southern recording industry.”

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

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- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 0.4 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.745184 | Longitude: -87.666884 |
| 2. Latitude: 34.745173 | Longitude: -87.666365 |
| 3. Latitude: 34.744888 | Longitude: -87.666378 |
| 4. Latitude: 34.744900 | Longitude: -87.666922 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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Property sits on the north side of Avalon Avenue on Lots 52, 53, 54, and 55.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundaries selected are the boundaries of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Hannah Garmon, Charlie Dahan, Dr. Carolyn Barske, Dr. Carroll Van West
(Reviewed by Jennifer K. Bailey, AHC Architectural Historian & Collier Neeley, AHC
National Register Coordinator)

organization: University of North Alabama and Middle Tennessee State University Center
for Historic Preservation

street & number: (UNA) One Horizon Plaza

city or town: Florence state: AL zip code: 35632

e-mail: cbarske@una.edu

telephone: 256-765-4529

date: 1/28/2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: FAME Recording Studio

City or Vicinity: Muscle Shoals

County: Colbert State: AL

Photographer: Carolyn Barske; Dr. Carroll Van West

Date Photographed: 10/08/2014; 10/5/2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0001)

Second floor of FAME Recording Studio with metal siding, creating mansard look, camera facing northwest

Photo #2 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0002)

East façade of FAME showing flat-roof porch added in 1967 renovation, parking lot on east side of building, camera facing west

Photo #3 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0003)

East façade of FAME, parking lot on east side of building, camera facing west

Photo #4 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0004)

Rear façade of FAME, camera facing southwest

Photo #5 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0005)

West façade of FAME, parking lot on west side of building, camera facing east

Photo #6 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0006)

Close up, concrete and aggregate panels with a cementitious backing reinforced with a fiber mesh, camera facing south

Photo #7 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0007)

Close up, damaged concrete and aggregate panels, camera facing east

Photo #8 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0008)

Enclosed flat-roofed porch, camera facing southeast

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Photo #9 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0009)

Enclosed flat-roofed porch, landscaping at south façade entrance, camera facing east

Photo #10 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0010)

Brick covered with concrete and aggregate panels, camera facing south

Photo #11 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0011)

Original brick exterior, under flat-roofed porch, camera facing east

Photo #12 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0012)

Close up, concrete and aggregate panels with a cementitious backing reinforced with a fiber mesh

Photo #13 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0013)

Studio A, camera facing north

Photo #14 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0014)

Studio A, acoustic ceiling tiles, camera facing north

Photo #15 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0015)

Studio A, control room, camera facing southwest

Photo #16 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0016)

Studio A, sound booths, added 1979, camera facing south

Photo #17 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0017)

Studio A, sound booths, added 1979, camera facing south

Photo #18 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0018)

Studio A, camera facing south

Photo #19 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0019)

Lounge area between Studio A and Studio B, camera facing south

Photo #20 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0020)

Studio B, camera facing east

Photo #21 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0021)

Studio B, looking towards control room, camera facing southeast

Photo #22 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0022)

Studio B, sound booths, camera facing north

FAME Recording Studio

Name of Property

Colbert, AL
County and State

Photo #23 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0023)
Studio B, control room, camera facing northeast

Photo #24 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0024)
Stairs to second floor, camera facing north

Photo #25 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0025)
Conference room, second floor, camera facing northeast

Photo #26 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0026)
Landing, second floor, camera facing north

Photo #27 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0027)
Reception area and offices, first floor, camera facing southeast

Photo #28 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0028)
Exterior, under flat roof porch, camera facing west

Photo #29 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0029)
Exterior, under flat roof porch, camera facing east

Name of Property: FAME Recording Studio
City or Vicinity: Muscle Shoals
County: Colbert State: AL
Photographer: Carroll Van West
Date Photographed: 10/5/2015

Photo #30 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0030)
Interior, entrance from lobby to Studios A&B, first floor, camera facing north

Photo #31 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0031)
Interior, stairs from lobby to second floor, first floor, camera facing north

Photo #32 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0032)
Interior, photo taken from lobby looking into Linda Hall's office, first floor, camera facing east

Photo #33 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0033)
Interior, door leading into Studios A&B, first floor, camera facing north

Photo #34 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0034)
Interior, Studio A, details of acoustic panels and ceiling, first floor, camera facing east

Photo #35 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0035)
Interior, details of recording booth interior, Studio A, first floor, camera facing south

FAME Recording Studio

Name of Property

Colbert, AL

County and State

Photo #36 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0036)

Interior, details of recording booth, Studio A, first floor, camera facing south

Photo #37 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0037)

Interior, sound booth equipment, looking into Studio A, first floor, camera facing south

Photo #38 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0038)

Interior, original echo chamber, now used as a storage room, first floor, camera facing east

Photo #39 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0039)

Interior, original echo chamber ceiling details, first floor, camera facing southeast

Photo #40 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0040)

Interior, storage room, first floor, camera facing south

Photo #41 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0041)

Interior, women's restroom, first floor, camera facing east

Photo #42 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0042)

Interior, lounge area between Studios A&B, first floor, camera facing south

Photo #43 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0043)

Interior, lounge area by west staircase, camera facing south

Photo #44 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0044)

Interior, mic room, camera facing north

Photo #45 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0045)

Interior, stairs leading to second story on west side of building, camera facing south

Photo #46 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0046)

Interior, office on west side of building, second story, camera facing south

Photo #47 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0047)

Interior, doorway at top of west staircase, second story, camera facing north

Photo #48 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0048)

Interior, office on west side of building, second story, camera facing north

Photo #49 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0049)

Interior, office on west side of building, second story, camera facing south

Photo #50 (AL_ColbertFAME_0050)

Interior, studio manager's office on east side of building, second story, camera facing east

FAME Recording Studio
Name of Property

Colbert, AL
County and State

Photo #51 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0051)

Interior, Rick Hall's office on southeast corner of building, second story, camera facing east

Photo #52 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0052)

Interior, Rick Hall's office on southeast corner of building, second story, camera facing southeast

Photo #53 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0053)

Interior, Rick Hall's office, gold records, second story, camera facing north

Photo #54 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0054)

Interior, catalog room, second story, camera facing north

Photo #55 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0055)

Interior, catalog room, second story, camera facing east

Photo #56 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0056)

Interior, masters storage area on east side of building, first floor, camera facing west

Photo #57 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0057)

Interior, masters storage area on east side of building, first floor, camera facing west

Photo #58 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0058)

Interior, masters storage area on east side of building, first floor, camera facing west

Photo #59 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0059)

Interior, record storage area on west side of building, first floor, camera facing west

Photo #60 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0060)

Interior, records room on west side of building, first floor, camera facing west

Photo #61 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0061)

Interior, storage area off of Studio B, first floor, camera facing east

Photo #62 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0062)

Interior, office on south side of building, second floor, camera facing west

Photo #63 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0063)

Interior, water damage on ceiling in Rodney Hall's office, second floor

Photo #64 (AL_Colbert_FAME_0064)

Interior, Rodney Hall's office, west side of building, second floor, camera facing north

FAME Recording Studio
Name of Property

Colbert, AL
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

FAME

RECORDING
STUDIOS

WHERE
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STARTED



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FAME RECORDING STUDIOS

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GAME

*RECORDING
STUDIOS*

BEDFORD
Our Hard Working People





23
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MUSCLE SHOALS







Fame
Muscle Shoals Sound















*Through these
Musicians, Songs
and Producers*

RECORDING STUDIO
HOME OF THE
Muscle Shoals Sessions

RECORDING STUDIO
STUDIO A/B













*Through these doors walk the finest
Musicians, Songwriters, Artists,
and Producers in the World.*





*Through these
Musicians,
and Producers*

to fame



fame RECORDING STUDIOS
HOME OF THE
Muscle Shoals Sound

EMPLOYEES ONLY

STUDIOS A-B

NO SMOKING
PLEASE













ULINE
BUBBLE MAILERS

2-PRESS LEVER
AT BASE OF PLANK



Hiring
DRIVERS
Cash Everyday!
pizzahut.com

Early









Singing River
Water
\$2













Richard Todd















ULINE MULTI-FOLD TOWELS

30" x 40" (2012) 86.7-93

9-7127

WHITE

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SNO-CHIEF

APPLES

STEELE HOLLOW CREEK

SNO-CHIEF

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SECTION B





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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Florence, Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) Recording Studios

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALABAMA, Colbert

DATE RECEIVED: 10/14/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY:
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/29/16

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000397

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11/29/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

POS: 1962 - 1977
National level

Criterion A - AOS. Performing Arts
Criterion B - Roe Erister "Rick" Hall

RECOM./CRITERIA A & B

REVIEWER Lisa Brown

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 11/29/16

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
468 SOUTH PERRY STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-0900

RECEIVED 2280

MAY 13 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

May 11, 2016

LISA D. JONES
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

TEL: 334-242-3184
FAX: 334-240-3477

Ms. Stephanie Toothman
Keeper of the National Register
U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS
Cultural Resources
National Register, History & Education Programs
1201 "I" Street NW (2280)
Washington, D. C. 20005

Dear Ms. Toothman:

Enclosed please find the nomination and supporting documentation to be considered for listing the following Alabama resource in the National Register of Historic Places:

F.A.M.E. (Florence, Alabama Music Enterprise Recording Studios)
Muscle Shoals, Colbert County, Alabama

Your consideration of the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lee Anne Wofford
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

LAW/nw

Enclosures

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Florence, Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) Recording Studios

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALABAMA, Colbert

DATE RECEIVED: 5/13/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/02/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/17/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/28/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000397

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6/28/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER W. Delme

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 6/28/16

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Comments
Evaluation/Return Sheet**

Property Name: Florence Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME)
Recording Studios

Property Location: Muscle Shoals, Colbert Co. AL

Reference Number: 16000397

Date of Return: 7/7/16

Issues:

The nomination for FAME Recording Studios is being returned because issues concerning the stated levels of significance are not adequately addressed nor has exceptional significance been established for this property particularly from 1972 to 1989. The nomination claims national significance under Criterion A for performing arts, for the role the FAME Recording Studio played in developing the "Muscle Shoals Sound" and under Criterion B, for Roe Erister "Rick" Hall, who established FAME Studios and promoted what is defined in Rhythm and Blues (R&B) music as a "funky," "gritty," down-to-earth sound.

While the nomination mentions other recording studios and the artists' whose careers were launched, the nomination needs to be more definitive in arguing the significance of Rick Hall in establishing the "Muscle Shoals Sound," particularly in the early years. The nomination also needs to examine the significance of the music recorded at this studio within a national context of American music during the period of significance and provide a comparative analysis with other recording studios at this time. The 2013 documentary, *Muscle Shoals*, cited in the FAME bibliography, provides some excellent context as well as the National Register nomination for the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, listed in 2006. Contextual information from these two sources (and others listed in the bibliography) should be incorporated into presenting a more solid case under Criteria A & B at the national level of significance.

From 1972 to 1989, Rick Hall began recording more country music at FAME. A stronger argument under Criterion Consideration G needs to be made as to why this period is considered of exceptional significance. In Section 8, page 27, while it is interesting to note the many nationally and internationally-known artists recorded at this studio, instead of simply stating, "the impact of these artists on American music is exceptional," provide an explanation as to how and why this is important.

When citing other recording studios, please indicate what cities/states they are located in.

For additional guidance, please refer to the National Register Bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, pages 7-10. The *Muscle Shoals Sound Studio* nomination is available on the NPS/NR website and provides useful guidance on contextual development. It should also be referenced in the FAME nomination bibliography.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Lisa Deline, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
Lisa_Deline@nps.gov



ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900
334-242-3184 / Fax: 334-240-3477

Lisa D. Jones
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer



October 6, 2016

Ms. Stephanie Toothman
Keeper of the National Register
US Department of the Interior, NPS
Cultural Resources
National Register, History & Education Programs
1201 "I" Street NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Toothman:

Enclosed please find a revised nomination as requested by Lisa Deline for the:

Florence, Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) Recording Studios
Muscle Shoals, Colbert County, Alabama
Reference No.: 16000397

The original nomination for this historic district was sent to the National Park Service on May 11, 2016. It was returned to and received by our office on September 19, 2016 with a request for clarifications. We believe the nomination is now in order. Your consideration of this revised nomination is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lee Anne Wofford
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

LAW/nw

Enclosures