

who provided original recordings for the Roots label, along with another young collector from New York, Nick Perls. By this time, Johnny was also assisting in the production of albums for the British based Saydisc Matchbox label. The Roots label finally came to an end in 1970. Johnny and Evelyn divorced. Evelyn went on to form her own successful record company which she continues to run today. Johnny went back to art and in particular painting.

It would be another twelve years before Johnny would return to record production. In 1982 as if to make up for the lost time he began to produce records at a prolific rate and for the next ten years he would be working on fifteen different labels. Many were owned by other individuals or companies. Some were his own creation such as Eden and Limited Edition. All of those he worked on had the distinctive mark of Johnny about them and he used these projects, in addition to Roots and the other earlier labels that he and Evelyn had worked on, to amass a huge collection which he began to reassemble into chronological order. These recordings would later be the new Document label.

Inspired by the Black & White Jazz re-issue label, Johnny began to think of creating a label which would make available to music fans and researchers alike the complete recordings of a artists from the pre-1943 period, excluding the few artists which had been given similar attention by other labels. This was potentially a huge undertaking. Not only would the project include Blues music but, using Godrich & Dixon's 'Blues And Gospel Records 1890-1943' discography as a guide, it would also encompass African-American gospel, spirituals, ballads, work songs and much more which had originally been commercially recorded or recorded during field trips by such institutions as the Library of Congress. Where possible the complete recordings of each artist would be presented in chronological order. Because of the lack of his own funds, Johnny took this unique idea to other record companies but was unable find anyone prepared to take on such a monumental task. He was told by the founder of RST records, Rudi Staeger, of a pressing plant in Budapest, Hungary which would press low quantities, as few as one hundred LPs, economically an in addition, the company would produce free metal masters. This facility turned Johnny's thinking towards another possibility. If no one else was prepared to undertake the project then he would do it himself.

He went ahead and set up Document Records in 1990 establishing the label with what has become the mighty 5000 series. The critics immediately embraced the project and the early reviews gave Johnny a reassuring signal that his thinking had been correct. Document's output was prolific, at times producing as many as one album every three days. Soon became obvious that the project was to be taken seriously and would gather in strength over the forthcoming years. An early contributor to the project, Ken Romanowski, remembers "It was unbelievable. Each time that another album came out there was a great sense of excitement amongst all of those who were closely involved. There would be a wonderful feeling ofb achievement every time an artist's full work had been covered". Since then, the main task of releasing every blues, gospel, and spiritual recording made between the late 19th century, when the first recordings of African-Americans were made, to the early forties, has been very nearly accomplished and Document no eagerly moves into a new era of its own reissuing the wealth of recordings made beyond 1943.

Document continues to achieve what the reissue labels set out to do over half a century ago - to preserve and make available some wonderful recordings, many which would have been otherwise lost or at the very least would have remained the possession of a privileged few.

Over the years the major recording companies have come under some heavy criticism More recently they have proved themselves capable of turning the once obscure Delta blues ace, Robert Johnson, into a million album selling recording star yet they remain relatively ineffectual in this area in comparison to the efforts of the independent reissue companies.

In defence of the majors, it would only be fair to say that as far as their own interests were concerned they were probably right all along. From very early on these companies have become huge, overhead-eating giants with shareholders not entirely sympathetic to the desires of musical taste to satisfy. Recently EMI Virgin, once the owner of HMV, and all of the wonderful vintage blues recordings made by RCA, Victor and Bluebird, paid singer Mariah Carey, a reputed twenty-eight million dollars to get her off their books because her sales had dropped dramatically. If asked, they would be right in saying that such a move would not be quickly compensated for by reissuing the