

## **BIOGRAPHY - WATTSTAX" EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AL BELL**

In the 1970's, two of the largest African-American owned businesses in America were Motown Records and Stax Records. Al Bell is the former owner of Stax Records.

During his years as head of Stax Records, Al Bell introduced marketing and promotional innovations, which changed the direction of the nation's music industry. Stax produced gold and platinum hits on such varied artists as Isaac Hayes, the Staple Singers, Johnny Taylor, Sam And Dave, Booker T and the MG's, the Bar Kays, Otis Redding, The Emotions, Carla Thomas, Rufus Thomas, Richard Pryor, Bill Cosby, Billy Eckstine, Albert King, The Dramatics and a host of others.

Stax Records worked with Melvin Van Peebles on the release of his revolutionary film "Sweetback" and with MGM Studios on the release of the film "Shaft," demonstrating marketing and promotional techniques that woke the film industry to the potential in the black marketplace and led to the black film renaissance of the 1970's.

Al Bell added to the roster of box office hits with the landmark 1973 film "Wattstax," a documentary based on a Stax Records concert that entertained 100,000 people, in the Los Angeles stadium, from Los Angeles and Watts. This was the largest musical event ever presented to Black America.

In the 1980's, Al Bell became head of the Motown Records Group and worked with Berry Gordy in the sale of Motown to the MCA/Boston Ventures Group. After Motown, he discovered the music group Tag Team and released "Whoomp! There It Is" which sold over 5,000,000 single units. This record was one of the biggest selling singles in the history of the music industry.

Al Bell was asked by "the artist" formerly known as Prince to release a single record for him, after his label Warner Brothers Records turned him down. Using his unique style of marketing and promotion, Al Bell released "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World" and gave Prince his biggest selling single ever.

In the recently published book by Rob Bowman chronicling the history of Stax Records titled "Soulsville USA: The Stax Records Story," Jesse Jackson is quoted saying that, "Stax was not just a record company. It was a sound. It was a piece of culture. It was a moment of conscience and experience of mankind. At the right time, it meant a lot to us. People still heavily borrow upon the tradition of Stax and the lineage laid down by the very special genius of Al Bell."

Over the years, Al Bell has received many honors and awards, including Executive of the Year, Bill Gavin Radio Program Conference, 1971; National Leadership Award from the National Business League in 1972 and 1973; NAACP Founder's Award, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1975; Inductee, America's Music and Entertainment of Fame, 1980; Gospel Music Award of the Year, Southeast Music Conference, 1993 and NARM INDIE Best Seller Award ("Whoomp! There It Is"), 1994. Last year, Al Bell received the W. C Handy Lifetime Achievement Award and was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame.