

Craca 1.700 pages of R&B Nostalgia! 17 volumes © 2019-2022

**The Great R&B Files** – *The R&B Pioneers Series*



# The Great R&B-files

12 (+1 pt 2) volumes plus four "updates" volumes in the **R&B Pioneers Series**

In this "covers" volume you will find extra "hardbound" **PRINT-OUT-COVERS** in case you want to make your own printouts. Volumes 1-12 are modified up to July 2019 – all later updates are to be found in Volumes 13\_Updates, 13B\_Amendments, 13C\_Extra Special, and 13D\_Bonus volume.



In "Rock and Roll: An Unruly History", 1995, Robert Palmer defines "**Rhythm & Blues**" as a catchall rubric used to refer to any music that was made by and for black Americans. In "Blue Rhythms: Six Lives in Rhythm and Blues", 1996, Chip Deffaa notes it as popular music that arose in black communities after the swing era and before the arrival of the Beatles, roughly between 1945 and 1960. Arnold Shaw ("Honkers and Shouters", 1978) renders Pvt. Cecil Gant's ballad "I Wonder" as the start of Rhythm & Blues, originally recorded in 1944 – it hit the "The Harlem Hit Parade" charts that year and topped at #2 for two weeks on the new "Most Played Juke Box Race Records" chart introduced in February, 1945 (although Roosevelt Sykes stayed at #1 for a whole seven weeks with his cover). Gant's hit version was issued on the tiny label GiltEdge (he had already recorded it for another odd label – Bronze). The GiltEdge version spent a total of 28 weeks on the "black" charts. Shaw's choice had a strong connection to the fact it was recorded for an "independent" label. This was the "rule" for most of the great R&B records that hit the new market during the late 1940s and long into the 1950s. The major labels "stuck" to their established artists (Decca tried with Gant in the early '50s without success, and other majors tried the same formula if a newcomer became established).

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



Claus lives in Sweden and has been collecting rhythm & blues and blues records since late 1958. He has been involved in several reissue CD projects as consultant, co-producer and annotator. Information from his works on The Coasters and on John Lee Hooker have been widely used on the internet and in late "public domain" CD releases. This is the first of 12 books in the R&B Pioneers Series, titled The Great R&B Files, covering the history of Rhythm & Blues in its classic era (1940s, especially 1950s, and through to the 1960s).



## **Top Rhythm & Blues Records**

Hits from 30 classic years of R&B

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

with special thanks to Big Al Pavlow and Joel Whitburn

**John Lee Hooker** was born in Tutwiler, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi (not far from Clarksdale, Coahoma County) on August 22, 1912 (or possibly 1917 – most new findings point towards 1912). Johnnie also made Vance and Lambert (Quitman County), and probably also Glendora (all within a "stone's throw" distance in the heart of the Mississippi delta) his home during the 1920s. He left the Clarksdale area for the first time already as a teenager and went to Memphis, to Knoxville, and to Cincinnati in the 1930s. In 1943 he settled in Detroit, Michigan and started his career as a recording blues artist in the summer of 1948. He made a total of more than 1000 recordings (if you really "go" for it – including the many bootlegs of later years) up to his death on June 21, 2001. His legacy includes at least 100 original albums and as many (certainly even more) CD compilations (and countless, strange, reissue packages). Many regard him as the "World's Greatest Blues Singer" – well, I surely do (a great fan ever since his Travelin' LP). His "Classic Years" can be tagged 1948-1967 (although he continued his recording career at least up to 1998 in San Francisco).

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## **The John Lee Hooker Session Discography**

The World's Greatest Blues Singer

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

with special thanks to Les Fancourt



### **This is Part II of the John Lee Hooker Session Discography**

Hooker was born in Tutwiler, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi (not far from Clarksdale, Coahoma County) on August 22, 1912 (or possibly 1917 – most new findings point towards 1912). Johnnie also made Vance and Lambert (Quitman County), and probably also Glendora (all within a "stone's throw" distance in the heart of the Mississippi delta) his home during the 1920s. He left the Clarksdale area for the first time already as a teenager and went to Memphis, to Knoxville, and to Cincinnati in the 1930s. In 1943 he settled in Detroit, Michigan and started his career as a recording blues artist in the summer of 1948. He made a total of more than 1000 recordings (if you really "go" for it – including the many bootlegs of later years) up to his death on June 21, 2001. His legacy includes at least 100 original albums and as many (certainly even more) CD compilations (and countless, strange, reissue packages). Many regard him as the "World's Greatest Blues Singer" – well, I surely do (a great fan ever since his Travelin' LP). His "Classic Years" can be tagged 1948-1967 (although he continued his recording career up to at least 1998 in San Francisco).

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## **The World's Greatest Blues Singer**

Part II of the John Lee Hooker Session Discography

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

Supplement to Hooker's presentation in the R&B Pioneers Series

### **The Coasters – Those Hoodlum Friends**

According to Charlie Gillett: "The Sound of the City" (1971, 1983), the Coasters occupy the sixth position of rock'n'roll acts with most records in the U.S. Pop Top 10, 1955-59 (one hit record could muster two hit titles - but Gillett counts a double-sided hit as one hit record); only surpassed by Elvis Presley, Fats Domino, Rick Nelson, the Everly Brothers, and Pat Boone; and with Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, and Lloyd Price among the ten best scorers (note the difference between a hit record and a hit title). The Coasters are one of only six R&B acts, who during the '50s scored more than three Pop Top 10 hits (hit titles) - the other five are the Platters, Nat King Cole, Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, and Little Richard. I am proud to present the first volume of one of those giant legends, "Those Hoodlum Friends" - The Coasters, in detail, within this publication (written between 2007 and 2009, with some minor later updates). Notice that the next volume, titled "The Clown Princes of Rock and Roll", will feature more and later information, plus a great essay by Todd Baptista from 2008 (and 2011).

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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*claus.rohnisch@telia.com*

# THE COASTERS



## **Those Hoodlum Friends** The Coasters

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

with special thanks to Bill Millar, James Ritz, and Veta Gardner

## The Coasters (volume II)

"If rock 'n' roll had produced nothing but the Coasters and Leiber and Stoller, it would still have commanded attention as the sound embodiment of a time and generation. They reflected the world of the young with understanding, good humor, and social insight. This was rock 'n' roll at its best – embullient, energizing, entertaining, expressive, and danceable", Arnold Shaw wrote in his book "The Rockin' '50s" (1974). The Coasters are widely regarded as the pre-eminent vocal group of the original rock 'n' roll era. "There never was - nor will there ever be - another group quite like the Coasters. Although they worked within the standard conventions of vocal group harmony, their signal achievement was to create - or to have created for them - a variety of comedic roles that both celebrated and satirized the mores of contemporary American life without falling victim to racial stereotyping. It's impossible to gauge which was the luckier party, whether the Coasters were most fortunate to have Leiber and Stoller as their providers or the songwriters to have such capable vocalists to draw out the nuances and downright insinuations in their songs", Neil Slaven stated in a review of the four fine UK Sequel CDs in "Blues & Rhythm" magazine in late 1997.

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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# **The Coasters**

## **- the Clown Princes of Rock and Roll**

by Claus Röhnisch and Todd Baptista

with special thanks to Tony Burke and Veta Gardner

### Blues Giants

The artists presented here are - in the mind of the editor of this work - the definitive twelve most interesting and important Blues Giants of the 1950s (nine of them charter members of the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame; two inducted soon after - only Fulson had to wait for his induction). You will be able to read about four Texas (and Oklahoma / Kansas) rooted pioneers of early jump-oriented blues representing the Big Cities (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Kansas City, Dallas, New Orleans, Cincinnati, and New York City); about the now legendary Delta Southerners of Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana - who became the "Big Four" of Chess' Chicago Bar Blues; and about four Mississippi born singers, who via Memphis, Tennessee (and Gary, Indiana) turned into Blues Icons of different modern blues styles - Down Home Blues and Urban Blues (in Jackson-Mississippi, Louisiana, Memphis, Detroit, Chicago, Houston, California, and Harlem-NYC).

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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## **The Blues Giants of the 1950s**

Twelve Great Legends

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

T-Bone Walker, Big Joe Turner, Lowell Fulson, Roy Brown, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters,  
Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James, Little Walter, Jimmy Reed, and B.B. King

### Vocal Groups

Of all the countless (and mostly black) vocal groups, who gave us that exciting and wonderful harmony singing in the 1950s, I have selected ten outstanding pioneer R&B groups (plus a special Robins bonus - and more). Two of the groups represent the 1930s and 1940s "church" ballads and jazz roots, at least two gospel-influenced groups can be tagged fore-runners of "soul", two represent the later defined "doo-wop" style, two groups went top pop (well, actually three), and two can truly be called rock 'n' roll groups. A terrific introduction essay on the rise of vocal group harmony is written by Peter Grendysa for "The Drifters Box" (Rhino, 1996), and Bob Hyde compiled the (probably best) vocal group box set in 1993, "The Doo Wop Box" (Rhino 71463). The groups presented in "THE Top Ten" are - in the mind of the editor of this work - the definitive giants of quartet/quintet singing. You will (hopefully among many other surprises) find out that almost all of the groups multiplied (with constant judicial row) as soon as the hits dried out - a trend that had started already with the Ink Spots in 1952. The stories here concentrate on the original groups and their recordings.

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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**THE**  
**Top Ten Vocal Groups of the Golden `50s**  
Rhythm & Blues Harmony

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

with special thanks to Marv Goldberg, Bill Dahl, and James Austin

the Dominoes, the Clovers, the "5" Royales, the Midnighters, the Flamingos, the Moonglows,  
the Drifters, the Platters, the Cadillacs, and the Coasters – plus a special feature on the Robins

### Sepia Super Stars of Rock 'n' Roll

Let us start with the fact that the presentations herein are narrowed to Black Performers. Historians today go back to around 1947, but the general American population – including the blacks – did not “recognize” rock 'n' roll as a musical art until much later. The term was originally – and for several decades later – used as quite something else than dancing. It was by many understood as just a new-found name for the black Rhythm & Blues music crossing over to white teenage America in the early 1950s. In the black community rock 'n' roll was still Rhythm & Blues. Nick Toshes' interesting book “Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll” (1984, 1991), and James Miller's superb “Flowers in the Dustbin” (1999) are both truly readable insights to the birth of rock 'n' roll. The ten performers presented in this volume, are – in the mind of the editor of this work – the definitive black giants of the original rock 'n' roll era (all but two inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – and four of them into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame). You will read about “the big four” (from New Orleans to Chicago); about two great R&B thrushes (who never gave up); and about four early idols representing the three most important urban centers (“crying” in New York, “crooning & swinging” in Los Angeles, and “stomping” in New Orleans).

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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# **Ten Sepia Super Stars of Rock `n` Roll**

Idols Making Music History

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

Fats Domino, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Ruth Brown,  
LaVern Baker, Clyde McPhatter, Jesse Belvin, Bobby Day, and Lloyd Price

### Transitions from Rhythm to Soul

The performers in this volume of "The R&B Pioneers" have all in one way or another joined the school of Clyde McPhatter transforming early roots into new paths. They all contributed very heavy in shaping the gospel-influenced Soul Era of the 1960s, although they all debuted in the early 1950s. Four of the performers were the Super Stars (with roots in St. Augustine-Florida, Chicago, Detroit, and Augusta-Georgia), four represent different moods of early soul - the gospel roots, the ever popular crooning, the exciting sounds of the innovative West-Coast, and the jazz roots. And then there are the four Southerners (three of them from Memphis, recording for Sam Phillips - and one from Texas), who truly were the ones who guaranteed that the blues was injected into the new Soul Music. So here are the twelve probably most important performers of "Rhythm & Soul". Several of the performers in this volume had an itch for exploring new locations to record and practise their music - South and North, Midwest, East, and West. One thing these twelve had in common, beside the deep, thorough Blues engagement, and their skillful abilities to express the true Soul feeling, was (in a matter of speaking) - they all went Pop! (although Bland and Parker still sounded "too black" to fit into the white community's mainstream market).

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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## **Transitions from Rhythm to Soul**

Twelve Original Soul Icons

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, Little Willie John, Brook Benton, Etta James, Rufus Thomas,  
Bobby "Blue" Bland, Little Junior Parker, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, King Curtis, and James Brown

### True R&B Pioneers

Most music's uncountable analysts agree that "Rhythm & Blues" was born during the last year of World War II (or straight after the end of it), although the Sepia performers had sung and played bluesy rhythms ever since 1920. But the term "Rhythm and Blues" was not used to define the black popular music until Jerry Wexler (then a Billboard editor) coined it and the Billboard magazine started to publish weekly "Most Played Juke Box Rhythm & Blues Records" and "Best Selling Retail Rhythm & Blues Records" on the 25th of June in 1949 (with Charles Brown Trio topping both those charts with "Trouble Blues" for several weeks - it had already topped the "Race Records" charts preceding the "Rhythm & Blues" charts). It all started in October 1942, when Billboard introduced a "Harlem Hit Parade". In 1945 the "Harlem Hit Parade" had been transformed to two "Race Records" charts. Who then were the true R&B Pioneers? In this presentation I have tried to present to you some of the most interesting Sepia performers (the ones who started the "revolution" and who became some kind of legends). What the twelve artists presented here have in common is that they all started their careers before the R&B explosion and that they all were role models for the early 1950s R&B performers.

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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**The True R&B Pioneers**  
Twelve Hit-Makers from the Early Years

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

Lionel Hampton, Erskine Hawkins, Louis Jordan, Buddy & Ella Johnson, Eddie Vinson, Wynonie Harris,  
Charles Brown, Johnny Otis Orchestra, Amos Milburn, Ike Turner, Chuck Willis, and the Five Keys

### **Soul Explosion**

This volume covers twelve famous idols - super artists, who were exponents of the Soul Explosion in the 1960s (although several of them had started their careers already in the late 1950s). They are in the mind of the editor of this work, the most interesting predecessors of the Soul Explosion (following the trend-setters from the "transition" years). Half of these new favorites are solo super stars, the other half are the great vocal groups of the 1960s. The twelve exponents represent the Windy City's bluesy Northern Soul, the Big Soul of the Big Apple, the "whitened" mainstream Motown Sound of Hitsville, U.S.A., and the "down-home" Southern Soul of Soulsville, U.S.A. and Alabama. You may note that some of the very early R&B centers, especially Los Angeles and New Orleans, are missing. R&B had truly "moved".

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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## **Predecessors of the Soul Explosion in the 1960s**

Twelve Famous Favorites

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

Joe Tex, Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye,  
the Dells, the Isley Brothers, Four Tops, the Impressions, the Miracles, and the Temptations

### The Favorites

This supplement to "The R&B Pioneers Series" is the History of Rhythm & Blues - "From Roy Brown to James Brown" - presented through the editor's Top 30 Favorite Artists. It is a special photo feature with basic information on their ultimate CD compilations, their very first LPs, plus their life data. Also presented are some of their most classic singles with discographical details and session personnel.

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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**The Top 30 Favorites**  
R&B Pioneers Supplement

compiled by Claus Röhnisch

with special thanks to Bob Eagle and Eric S. LeBlanc

### The Original Soul Star

Although Clyde McPhatter is not featured as a solo act in "The R&B Pioneers Series Top 30 Favorites" special edition, he sure is to be recognized as one of the most important pioneers of all, and he was absolutely the first "Soul Star", paving the way for Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, Little Willie John, Nolan Strong, Dee Clark, Sammy Turner, Marv Johnson, Smokey Robinson, the second generation Drifters, and James Brown et al (with probably only Roy Brown as the forerunner). This presentation pays tribute to this great entertainer, who surely deserves his very own special essay in the series. He was the most successful lead of the pioneering Dominoes and later formed the outstanding Drifters (with Clyde waxing the definitely most classic of all of the Drifters' hits). Although without his own credit he led seven of the Dominoes' R&B Top 10 hits; he was lead (with his own name credited on the record labels) in seven of the Drifters' original R&B Top 10 hits. As a solo artist he had a further ten R&B Top 10 hits. Two of his classic recordings hit the Pop Top 10. Enjoy this nostalgic presentation of "The Original Soul Star". This edition also has an essay over the Ink Spots – "The Grandfathers of Doo-Wop". Their famous lead singer Bill Kenny was Clyde McPhatter's true idol and foremost inspiration. You will also find several other bonus features (covering my favorite interests).

- Claus Röhnisch, 2019 (The Great R&B-files)



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**Clyde McPhatter**  
The Original Soul Star

presented by Claus Röhnisch

An "R&B Pioneers Series" Special Feature  
- plus an Ink Spots presentation, and extra bonus views on the editor's favorite interests



#### Updates from August – October 2019

Herein you will find updates to the twelve "Great R&B Files" books in the R&B Pioneers Series (actually thirteen, since book #2 is published in two parts). Anything of significant interest which didn't make the July, 2019 publishing date of the books is included in this supplement. So if you have made printouts of the volumes as late as in July 2019 (or later) you can be sure of getting it all in your "private books" and get the rest here and in the next volume, Amendments, which covers later corrections and amendments. Good luck with your reading

- Claus Röhnisch



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## **Updates to the Great R&B Files**

August – October 2019  
to the R&B Pioneers Series

edited by Claus Röhnisch

with special thanks to Thomas Jarlvik



#### Amendments from November 2019

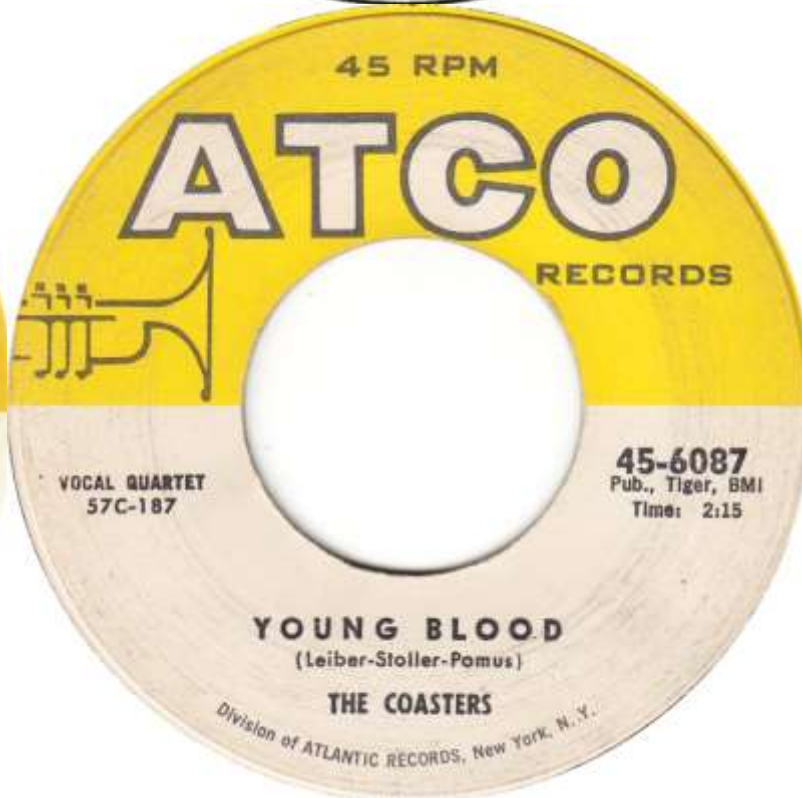
This volume contains updates and amendments created after the Updates volume of August - October 2019. It is in a way a volume II of the first updates volume (so you can make a print-out of the first one).

- Claus Röhnisch



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## Amendments to the Great R&B Files

The R&B Pioneers Series

edited by Claus Röhnisch





#### Extra Special Supplement

This is for you who has made printouts of all previous 15 "books" in the R&B Pioneers Series (**the Great R&B Files**) with new and extra information on the Pioneers presented (and with some new ones added). Lots of new information on the R&B Pioneers (with facts and figures)! - **Claus Röhnisch**



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**Extra Special Supplement**  
to the Great R&B Files  
2020  
The R&B Pioneers Series



edited by Claus Röhnisch



## The Great R&B Files The R&B Pioneers Series

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(Hits from 30 Classic Years of R&B)
- 02 The John Lee Hooker Session Discography
- 02B The World's Greatest Blues Singer  
(Part II of John Lee Hooker)
- 03 Those Hoodlum Friends – The Coasters
- 04 The Clown Princes of Rock and Roll  
(The Coasters – part II)
- 05 The Blues Giants of the 1950s  
(Twelve Great Legends)
- 06 THE Top Ten Vocal Groups of the Golden '50s  
(Rhythm & Blues Harmony)
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- 13D The "New" R&B Files 2021-22 bonus
- 14 Extra "Hardback Covers" for the Series

### New R&B Files !

This is a **bonus** volume for you, who has "collected" all books in the R&B Pioneers Series. You will discover more facts and learn things which did miss the original series and also find newly "researched" information. This is the last in the series.

- **Claus Röhnisch**    claus.rohnisch@telia.com



Claus lives in Sweden and has been collecting rhythm & blues and blues records since late 1958. He has sporadically written articles on R&B for different magazines in the 1960s, and served many "main" articles for the Jefferson Blues magazine for several years in the early days of that publication. He has been producing two albums featuring "not-on-LP recordings" (by the Clovers for Dr. Horse Records, and by the Coasters for Mr R&B Records) in the early 1980s, and been involved in several reissue CD projects as consultant, co-producer and annotator. Information from his works on the Coasters and on John Lee Hooker and others have been widely used on the internet and in late "public domain" CD releases. This is a "bonus" feature supplementing the earlier books in the R&B Pioneers Series, titled The Great R&B Files, covering the history of Rhythm & Blues in its classic era (1940s, especially 1950s, and through to the 1960s).



**THE "NEW" R&B FILES**  
2021-2022 Bonus in the R&B Pioneers Series

edited by Claus Röhnisch



