

**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**

►The 1940's  
**COLUMBIA  
UNIVERSITY**

$$E=mc^2$$

A NATIVE OF NEW YORK CITY, Thomas J. Dowd was born, raised and educated in Man-



A young Dowd at the piano

hattan. His father, a concertmaster, and mother, an opera singer, encouraged his love for music and stressed self-discipline in his schooling. Graduating with a strong foundation in math

and science from Stuyevant High School in June of 1942, Tom, unlike most of the boys in his class, was too young for the military draft and thus able to continue his education.

He went on to attend City College at night and play professionally in the band at Columbia University (eventually becoming conductor), where he soon attained a position at the university's physics laboratory. Working for the Office of Scientific Research Development (OSRD), the teenager found himself under the guidance of such men as John R. Dunning, Bill Havens and future Nobel Prize winner James Rainwater.

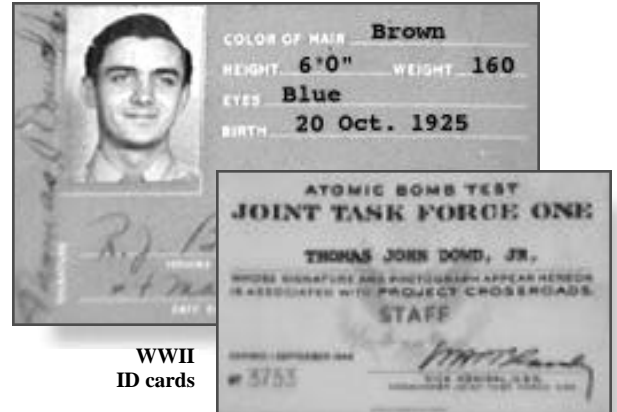
Upon turning 18 years old, Tom was drafted into the military and immediately commanded the rank of sergeant. His assignment remained the same, though, continuing the secretive work in the physics labs of Columbia



Dowd, the soldier, in the South Pacific

University. He operated a cyclotron, changed targets, performed density tests of different elements, and recorded statistics as part of the Neutron Beam Spectrography division.

As much of this early nucleonic research was done in New York, the code name for this clandestine work was derived from the Manhattan Engineer District, of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to which Tom was assigned. It was not until August of 1945, when an atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, that the rest of the world first heard about the "Manhattan Project."



WWII ID cards

With his knowledge of radiation exposure and detection devices, Tom was sent to monitor a pair of nuclear explosions in the Pacific before returning home to civilian life in 1946. Unable to get college credit for the highly 'classified' work at Columbia, the frustrated young man took a summer job at a classical music recording studio. As fate would have it, a musician's strike was looming, causing an onslaught of recording activity

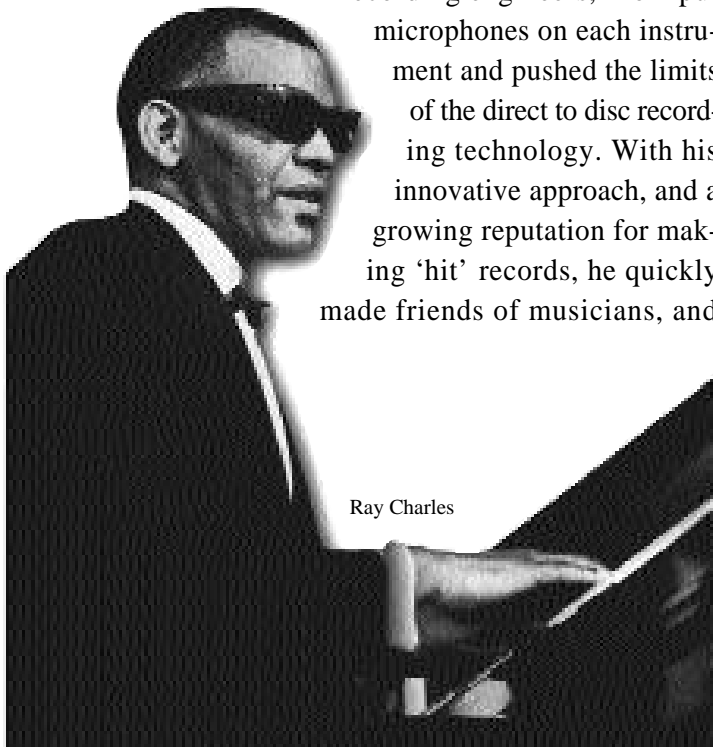
**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**

that initiated Tom into the recording industry.

In 1949, as he recalls, “The recording strike came and went and all of a sudden I received a call from National to do a new artist, **Eileen Barton**. We only recorded four sides, in one three-hour session, and I never saw the girl again. But, the first record they released was ‘If I Knew You Were Coming, I’d Have Baked A Cake’, which went on to be a monstrous hit.”



At the forefront of a new generation of recording engineers, Tom put microphones on each instrument and pushed the limits of the direct to disc recording technology. With his innovative approach, and a growing reputation for making ‘hit’ records, he quickly made friends of musicians, and



Ray Charles

began recording such greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Turner and the Ravens. The young man from Manhattan had a new career.

► The 1950's  
NEW YORK CITY



In 1949, "Drinkin' Wine Spo-dee-O-Dee" by **Stick McGhee**, a Tom Dowd engineered recording for Atlantic Records, became a hit. This solidified Tom's commercial credibility and began a relationship with Atlantic that would stretch over four decades.



Dizzy Gillespie

After an early 1950's stint with the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Voice of America, which included first-hand accounts of McCarthy-era investigations, Tom Dowd made recordings of Atlantic artists that would alter the sound of modern music. **The Clovers, Ruth Brown, Joe Turner, Clyde McPhatter, LaVern Baker, the Drifters, and Ray Charles** all recorded under the supervision of Dowd, who possessed the unique ability to turn out records that sold equally well on both sides of the racial line.

Atlantic felt the financial squeeze from ‘white’ cover versions of their most popular songs, more than other R&B companies, for

## TOM DOWD & THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC



The Drifters With Ben E. King

the very reason that their records were so tightly arranged, and therefore easy to

duplicate. In fact, before Dowd came to Atlantic as their full time engineer in 1954, he often found himself in the studio doing commercial cover versions of ‘race records’ he had recorded for Atlantic.

Atlantic, of course, was able to change with the times, and from 1956 to the early 1960’s they had major rock ‘n roll hits with such Dowd recorded artists as the **Coasters** (‘Yakety Yak’, ‘Charlie Brown’, ‘Poison Ivy’), **Bobby Darin** (‘Splish Splash’, ‘Mack the Knife’), and the re-formed **Drifters with Ben E. King** (‘Save the Last Dance For Me’). Tom Dowd’s musicality, technical expertise and his contagious enthusiasm won the confidence and trust of musicians, making him a favorite of artists and executives alike.

Ironically, Dowd often found himself recording rock ‘n roll and pop standards by day, and capturing jazz legends ‘on the fly’ later that same night. **Thelonius Monk**, **Ornette Coleman**, **Charles Mingus**, **Eric Dolphy**, **Lennie Tristano** and **Chris Connor** all trusted Tom to capture the magic of their recording sessions. Included in this impressive jazz resumé is one of modern music’s true immortals: **John Coltrane**. Dowd-recorded albums such as ‘Giant Steps’, ‘Central Park West’ and ‘My Favorite Things’ exposed Coltrane’s genius to the world, and furthered Dowd’s reputation as a cutting-edge engineer.

As Tom recalls, “When Atlantic Records

vacated the space that doubled as our office/recording studio, I expanded the ‘office’ space to make a larger recording chamber. I built Atlantic’s first stereo console so that we could record stereo and monophonically simultaneously. Because of the size of the room we were limited as to how large a group we could record comfortably. Among the groups that ‘fit’ the room perfectly was John Coltrane’s Quartet.”

“John would show up an hour early, take out his horn and start running scales. He would stand in a corner, facing the wall, play for a few minutes, stop, change reeds and start again. This is the same way classical musicians practice before a recital. After a while he would settle on the mouth piece and reed that felt most comfortable to him and now he would start to work on ‘runs’ that he wanted to use during the session. I would watch him play the same passage over and over again, changing his breathing, his fingering, experimenting with minute phrasing permutations. Once in a while he would go back to a mouth piece that he abandoned earlier. He never lost control, every step had a rea-



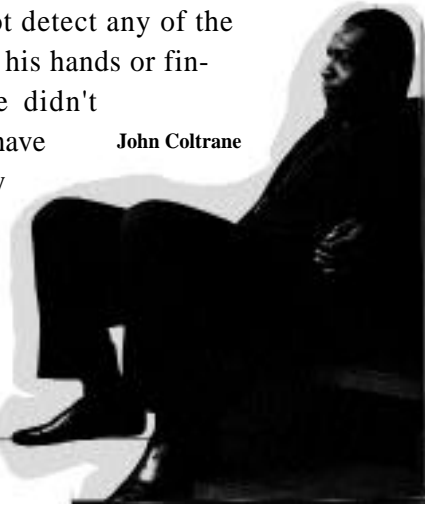
**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**

son and almost everything he played would be acceptable to everybody but him. Until he felt comfortable that he had exhausted all the possibilities he would continue to play the various permutations.”

“As I observed him playing I could not detect any of the joints of his hands or fingers. He didn't seem to have

any bones, he played with ‘feathers.’ His technique

involved complete confidence, control and composure. When a session was over, he was as much at ease as someone walking through the park, listening to the birds singing, the children playing. Stereo discs had not yet been introduced to the public but we would play the tape recording back that way to give ourselves a rush. John is gone, the rush is still there.”



John Coltrane

► The 1960's  
MEMPHIS &  
MUSCLE SHOALS

2+2=4

By 1960, Tom Dowd's reputation as a master producer/engineer was undeniable. That stature for excellence led to a decade of personal and professional experiences with individuals who shaped musical and social history.

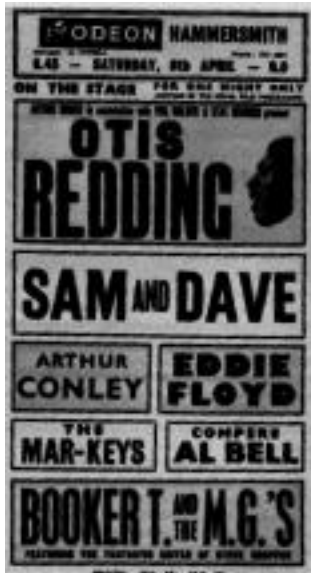
Along with recording producer friend Phil Ramone, Tom began mixing sound for special events at the White House. Starting with the Kennedy administration and continuing through the Johnson years, the pair were called upon to oversee the sound at State Dinners, White House social functions and even the Democratic National Convention. Other ‘freelance’ gigs included a nation-wide Broadway-type musical revue for Lee Iacocca and J.Walter Thompson advertising agency, to introduce Ford Motor Company's new car line, the "Mustang."

Also at this time, Atlantic Records arranged a distribution deal with Stax Records in Memphis, Tennessee. Gerry Wexler of Atlantic sent Tom to see what their ‘problem’ was with some consistently inconsistent equipment. The next day, Tom met Jim Stewart, president of Stax Records, and was introduced to life in the segregated South of the early 60's. Tom rebuilt the studio's mono Ampex 350 before the very eyes of their talented house rhythm section, and quickly earned the respect of the group which included Duck Dunn, Steve Cropper, Al Jackson and Booker T. Jones: **Booker T. and the MG's.**



Booker T. and the MG's

**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**



As Tom recalls, “The next morning, Sunday, I went by the studio to make sure all of my handiwork was up to snuff, when I walked Rufus Thomas. He was passing the studio on his way home from church, . . . and when he saw what was going on he asked if the band would record a little song he had just written, sort of a

test. I chucked a reel of tape on the machine and we made perhaps as many as three passes at the song. When I left Memphis I took along a copy of the Rufus “demo” to play for the people in New York to indicate that everything in Memphis was back in good running order. That song was released as a single and became popular under the title of ‘Walkin’ the Dog.’ This sequence of events seems to have endeared me in the hearts of everyone connected with Stax. As the years rolled by I was asked by Jim Stewart, Steve Cropper and some of the Stax artists to visit Memphis whenever they were recording.” This led to recordings with, **King Curtis** (‘Memphis Soul Stew’) and the immortal **Otis Redding** (‘Otis Blue’ album),

In 1967, during a European tour (see poster, above) including an all-star Memphis’ line-up featuring Otis Redding, Tom served as the group’s chosen ambassador. “Flying across the ocean was a major event in all of their lives. The chance that they might see the Beatles or meet Eric Clapton was a dream come true. Lit-

tle did they realize how much those people looked forward to seeing them! They were treated to a reception where, yes, they met the Beatles and many other English artists . . . and were in awe of the accolades being given them. Press conferences, parties, receptions, sightseeing, the works.”

Soon to follow were sessions in Muscle Shoals, Alabama with artists such as **Wilson Pickett** (‘Mustang Sally’), and a new Atlantic signee, **Aretha Franklin**. As Tom recalls, “Aretha always did her best renditions at the piano. Every time she tried to record a song standing up, it never worked. So when I produced her I always had to do live performances and capture her vocals while she was singing and playing.” It obviously worked, because during her induction speech at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 25 years after their first of many hits together, Aretha thanked her old friend Tommy Dowd for his important contribution in the creation of the



Aretha Franklin and Dowd

classic ‘Aretha’ sound.

Throughout the ‘60’s, Tom Dowd utilized his experience and flexibility to craft sessions for some of the biggest names in show busi-

**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**



Cream

ness. He cranked out #1 gold records for **The Rascals** ('Good Lovin', 'Mustang Sally'), classic albums for **Cream** ('Disraeli Gears', 'Wheels Of Fire'), and era-defining songs with **Dusty Springfield** ('Son Of A preacher Man') and **Jerry Jeff Walker** ('Mr. Bojangles'). A decade's worth of hit records, politics and road shows behind him, Tom entered the 1970's in search of new challenges. He would find them amongst completely new surroundings.

► The 1970's  
MIAMI

H<sub>2</sub>O

IN EARLY 1970, Tom oversaw the design and construction of rooms at Criteria Recording Studios in Miami. He relocated to Florida, and soon brought in a Memphis rhythm section, the Dixie Flyers, to work as the house band. 'Atlantic Records South' was born.

One of the first projects Tom undertook in Miami was with a Florida-born guitarist he had met and recorded in Muscle Shoals. Now playing with his brother Gregg, Duane Allman and The Allman Brothers Band came south. Because of conflicting dates the previous year, Tom had been unable to record 'The Allman Broth-

ers Band' (engineered by Tom's assistant, Adrian Barber), the group's first album. Soon though, he had recorded the band's second album, 'Idlewild South,' in the Criteria studio, and then in 1971 produced the perennial favorite, 'The Allman Brothers Band at Fillmore East.' Thus began a collaboration with the ABB that has covered 25 successful years filled with moments of great joy and pain, periods of frustration, moments of re-birth, wall's filled with Gold albums, and ultimately the acceptance of The Allman Brothers as one of the legendary groups in rock history.

It was during their initial 'Idlewild South' collaboration that a phone call led to one of the great albums of rock history. In an unusual move for him, Tom took a call during recording. Tom remembers, "The band finished playing and I was still on the phone. Duane came in and waited until I had finished. I apologized and described that I had to take that call because it was from Eric Clapton's manager. Duane then ran titles and songs and sang some of Eric's solos to me. I then went on to tell him that Eric had a group that he wanted to record and was coming to Miami for that purpose in late August. Duane asked if he could come by the sessions, as he and the Brothers were

doing a concert somewhere on Miami Beach around the same time. Normally, knowing how shy Eric was (having recorded Cream), I would have said no, but then Duane was such a soft human being, I knew



The Allman Brothers Band at Fillmore East

**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**



he would adjust to whatever the circumstances were. ‘Sure’ I said, ‘give us a call when you get in town’.”

Upon the arrival of Eric and his band, Carl Radle, Jim Gordon and Bobby Whitlock, Tom recalls, “I couldn’t believe my eyes when the equipment came into the studio. The bass amp was an Ampeg piggy back with a single 15" speaker and the guitar amp was a Fender Champ! The alternate guitar amplifier was a Fender Princeton. The last time I had recorded Eric he and Jack Bruce were employing double stacks of Marshall’s!”

“The next day, Duane called, the Brothers were going to play in town that night. Now I told Eric about the phone call and The Allman Brothers Band and Duane's wanting to drop by. Eric’s eyes lit up and he looked at me and said, ‘you mean the chap who played on the end of Hey Jude?’ the Wilson Pickett record for which Duane had played a sensational solo. ‘Matter of fact, yes.’ Eric wanted to see this man play and meet him! I arranged for a limo to take us to the show and I notified one of the crew that we'd try to sneak in. They were waiting for us as we rolled up and they guided us around the side of the stage and we crawled into the space between the stage and the audience where the photographers usually stand. Duane was playing a solo when he spotted us. He stopped playing and Dickey Betts looked up to see what the problem was and promptly started playing his own solo. Nobody else in the band knew what was going on, but they went on to do a great show. After the show, we all exchanged greet-

ings backstage, and then The Allman Brothers Band and Derek and the Dominoes decided to go back to the studio and jam. What a free for all.”

“The rest of the Allman Brothers left, but Duane stayed on for a few days as he and Eric were deeply moved by each others' style of playing. With each being soft spoken and in awe of the other's abilities, ego's were on permanent vacation. And so started ten days of



Duane Allman with Derek and the Dominoes

recording and overdubbing, with Duane going and then coming back, that captured about 99% of the now famous ‘Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs’ album.”

The rest of the '70's proved to be a very busy time for the veteran producer. He got divorced and then remarried. Cheryl, his second wife, gave birth to his first daughter. Having managed to retain the friendship of most of the people he worked with, he was able to call on unusual combinations of artists and musicians to make many records. Along with this, he had the ability to coerce musicians and/or artists to unique performances. It was easy for him to help the new generation of artists and musicians make better recordings, faster.

Thus began a string of recordings with the likes of **Eric Clapton** (‘461 Ocean Blvd.’), **Rod Stewart** (‘Atlantic Crossing’, ‘ANight On the Town’, ‘Foot Loose & Fancy Free’,

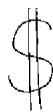
**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**



Dowd and Rod Stewart

'Blondes Have More Fun'), re-mixes for **Willie Nelson** ('Shotgun Willie & Phases and Stages') and enormously successful albums with **Lynyrd Skynyrd** ('Gimme Back My Bullets', 'Street Survivors' and 'One More For/From the Road'). Another decade came to an end with Tom Dowd utilizing his engineering skills and musical expertise to further his impressive career. Would the time ever come to settle down?

► The 1980's  
**LONDON CALLING**



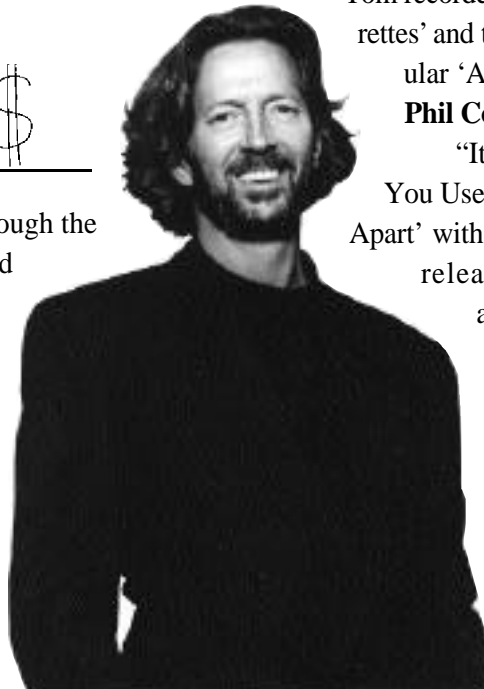
Seemingly fast-forwarded through the 1950's, '60's and '70's, Tom Dowd found himself at the turn of the decade a busy man, but with a changing clientele. The post-disco era's popular new wave and punk scenes didn't consistently offer him the kind of artists and projects he was used to enjoying. Being a husband and recent father Tom continued working hard throughout the

decade, responding to calls to 'pull rabbits out of some hats.'

Thus began a string of albums beginning in 1979, continuing throughout the 1980's. These include a **Kenny Loggins** hit record ('Keep the Fire' with the single 'This Is It'), the first album for **Michael Bolton** (a.k.a. Bolton), '**Chicago XIV**' for Columbia/Epic, **Pablo Cruise** and **Rita Coolidge** for A&M, **Taxxi** on MCA, **Robin Gibb** on Polydor, **Diana Ross** on RCA, **Collin James** on Virgin, **New Model Army** on EMI, **Eddie Money** ('No Control' and 'Where's the Party'), **Rod Stewart** ('Body Wishes'), **Meatloaf** ('Midnight At the Lost and Found') and a rather forgetful album with **Dexy's Midnight Runners**, serving as a reminder that even a legendary producer is not immune to the occasional flop.

The '80's also saw Tom and **Eric Clapton** continue their collaboration into a third decade.

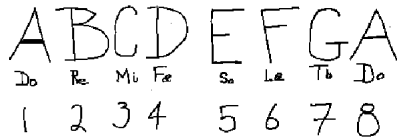
Tom recorded 'Money and Cigarettes' and then the hugely popular 'August' in 1986 with **Phil Collins**. This included "It's In the Way That You Use It" and 'Tearing Us Apart' with **Tina Turner**. This release served to announce both Eric and Tom still had the magic to make records that could achieve both commercial and critical success on a grand scale.



Eric Clapton

**TOM DOWD & THE  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**

► The 1990's  
**THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC**



THE SUMMER OF 1996 marked 50 years in the recording industry for Thomas Dowd. Still going strong, Tom was nominated for a Grammy this year for his collaboration on the John Coltrane box set, and produced a live recording that won the Allman Brothers Band a Grammy award for Best Acoustic Rock Performance.

This latest award was the culmination of a strong comeback in the '90's for **The Allman Brothers Band**. Starting with the successful album 'Seven Turns' in 1990, Tom and the ABB produced 'Shades Of Two Worlds' in 1991, a fine live recording on 'An Evening With the Allman Brothers' in '92, and the marvelous 1994 release of 'Where It All Begins.' The Allman Brothers Band, crafted by long-time friend Tom Dowd, continue to carry their free-flowing blend of rock, blues and jazz to an ever-expanding audience.



Crafting talent in the '90s

Still busy with other artists in the studio, Tom's credits in the '90's include acts as diverse as **Primal Scream** ('Give Out But Don't Give Up'), **Popa Chubby** ('Booty and the Beast'), **Tinsley Ellis** and many more. Tom's ability to mold the recording sessions of today's up-and-comer's and veteran's alike, is testament to a man whose talents are equal to those of the great artists he records.



Gregg Allman and Dowd prepare to record

Having played a vital role in the creation and implementation of the technique and technology, the "Language" if you will, used to capture sound over the last half-century, Mr. Dowd is, quite literally, a walking history book and technical manual. An energetic, gracious man, he is intent on sharing his knowledge with as many people as possible. Currently working on his autobiography, this documentary project complements his current writings.

With Mr. Dowd's enthusiastic support throughout the production, After Hours Productions has captured on film some of the world's most respected personalities in the world of music. With a warmth rarely seen in a documentary film, these artists, musicians and record executives, relate a memorable portrayal of a man whose work has influenced the sounds of music for over half a century.