

He so entirely personifies the times in which his songs were written that I must confess that listening to this set at times had me almost choking with nostalgia! What a pity that more of his sides weren't better appreciated by the UK media when they were brand new. I'd not blame him if he felt bitter about it, because I do!

Tavares continue to consolidate their following in Britain, and news reaches me that Alan Cartwright has now formed a UK fan club for them. I wish him every success in this worthy venture, and if you too want to support him the address to write to is The Tavares Fan Club, 2 Gisburn Road, Hessle, East Yorks. Enclose an sae in these inflationary times and don't procrastinate . . . it only takes a minute!

Louise Hollyoak's letter in the last B&S drawing readers' attention to the Soul shows on AFN radio, reminded me that I've been meaning to tell readers for some time that they also broadcast a superlative Gospel show on Sunday mornings at 5am to 6am (which, by the time you've read this will probably be 6am to 7am due to British Summer Time changes), but believe me it is worth getting up early for!

As I have said repeatedly before, Gospel music is the solid bedrock foundation upon which all today's Soul music is built, and it is a perpetual and natural reminder of what the real nitty-gritty is all about and where it's at. Not all the records played are by obscure groups either, and sides by people like the Main Ingredient pop up from time to time.

Forget your preconceived notion about Gospel too if you've not heard any for several years, because this is Gospel 1977, and you'll be amazed at how smoothly and easily it's moved with the times. The power is there and it just chills your spine.

The TV presentation of the concert given for President Jimmy Carter's inauguration was worth watching if only for the breathtaking performance given by Aretha Franklin. What an artist she is! A true great of the first order, and a Soul star to her very fingertips!

No great looker (although she certainly makes the most of what she's got), but singing with a qua-

lity and a skill that comes as close as possible to the actual miraculous. No doubt about it, she's the Queen of 'em all, and it is an unending joy just to watch her use her voice in such a way that one's own soul is lifted to the very skies. Genius. Pure genius!

At long last TK are to get their own label in Britain under the agreement signed with their new UK licencees RCA. Am deeply honoured to be asked along to the reception they're having to celebrate the occasion, and I feel certain that those hits will keep on coming just as regularly as in the past.

Certainly Benny Lattimore's latest is a stunner, and RCA have got so involved with Soul over the last six month's or so that I don't think we'll have any complaints about how they handle their Soul repertoire here in future.

A fantastic cascade of singles, LPs and quality material has come from RCA over the past 6 so don't miss any of it just because in the past it's not been a logo that you associate with Soul. That's all changed now, and they're involved, and we're the lucky ones for it!

The B&S Poll results were more than usually interesting to read this year, and naturally I was very pleased to see some of my own personal picks for last year making good ratings in the fray. Particularly I was overjoyed to see Jean Plum's "Look At The Boy" weigh in at No 22 since I spent nearly a whole year mentioning it, and too, my Top LP pick "Second Resurrection" by Stairsteps coming in at 13 in Top albums.

You know some kind soul wrote me a letter saying he'd bought the Stairsteps LP "blind" simply on the strength of my enthusiasm for it, and he agreed entirely with my verdict and said he couldn't thank me enough for drawing it to his attention since otherwise he'd never have bothered about it. You know one letter like that can redeem 12 months of all the other side of the business, and personally it is so gratifying that you do feel humbled and privileged to be in the lucky position of being able to write about this endlessly fascinating thing called Soul music.

It's only a matter of time now

before pirate pressings are mopped up again in the UK (see also this edition's 'Pen & Paper'), so let's hope that this will be one subject I won't have to waste space exposing again in future. (The pirates only revenge themselves by putting me as "Least liked feature" in the readership questionnaire!)

Perhaps when they've been hit by hefty fines they'll then imagine how sick the artists who the recorders of the product they stole must feel when they hear of their performances being ripped off and sold for high prices.

Noticed too how other publications have tended to soft-peddle this issue? Soon we may know why!

Finally an invitation comes from John Wilkinson to "fool around to the 60s sound" at the Brit Club in Nottingham of April 1st. I hope that I might be able to get along myself, but if you're interested, phone Nottingham 607834 in advance as it's a private promotion.

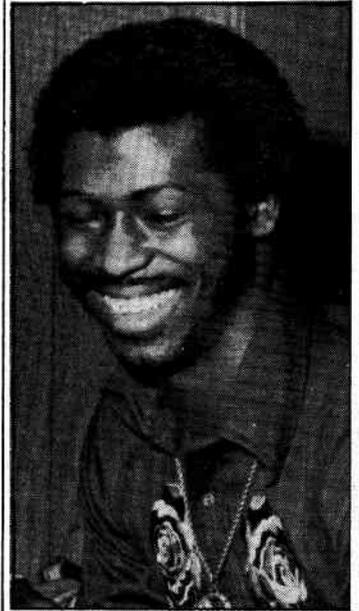
Soul is still very much alive and well in Nottingham and I recently bumped into long-time devotees Ron Ward and his mate Phil over there, so let's hope hundreds of ex-Wheelites and the like turn out on April 1st for a really successful and nostalgic stint.

• Until next time then. Keep the faith — right on now!

Soul quote:

"You can get some feeling out of good music. The only thing you can get out of disco is smelly underarms."

—Teddy Pendergrass, during recent interview in Newsweek.



This is Teddy, he's so hip, ever ready with a quip . . .

APRIL EVENTS 1977

"BEACON" ALLNIGHTER
SECOND ANNIVERSARY

SAT/SUN 16/17 APRIL
9pm-9am
(12 hours non-stop)

Refreshments Bar

THE BATHS, YATE
Nr. Bristol

"BEACON" ALLNIGHTERS
THIRD SAT/SUN

SUNDAY CLUB
MANCHESTER

7pm-12
in the super luxury of
ROMANOFFS
Oxford Street

EVERY SUNDAY

SATURDAYS
NORTHAMPTON

8-12 at
LINGS CENTRE
APRIL 9th and 23rd
2ND AND 4TH SAT

OXFORD ALLDAYER
EASTER MONDAY
11th APRIL at
COWLEY SOCIAL CLUB
Betweentowns Rd, Cowley

1pm-1am
Refreshments Bars

OXFORD HOLIDAY
MONDAY ALLDAYERS

OTHER DATES
APRIL

Sat. 2nd — CIRENCESTER
Thurs. 14th — WEYMOUTH
Thurs. 21st — WORTHING

MAY

Sat. 7th — SHAFTESBURY
(provisional)
Thurs. 12th — SOUTHSEA
Fri. 27th — WORTHING

SUMMER SEASON!

For full details of events, how to get there, membership details, badge list and full summer calendar, send sae to:

INTER CITY SOUL CLUB (UK)
P.O. BOX 28. SHREWSBURY [0903-47679]

PENPALS WANTED

1. Paul Godridge, aged 18, lives at 49 Lichfield Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, Staffs, WS3 3LT. He's a part-time deejay likes Northern and Motown and would like to write to a female Soul fan aged 16-19.
2. Andrew Porter lives at 12 Pershore Close, Mossley Est, Bloxwich, Walsall, Staffs, WS3 2UQ. He's 14 years of age learning to be a deejay and is into Northern Soul. He also would like a female penfriend aged 14-16.
3. Pat Jones is 18 and lives at 1 Westfield Avenue, Highfurlong, Blackpool. She works as a short-hand typist and would like to

hear from anyone who likes Soul but not oldies. She is a regular visitor to Blackpool Mecca.

4. Shirley Binns, aged 19, lives at 6 Highgate, Park Road, Crosshills, Keighley, Yorkshire. She practically lives for Soul music and would like to write to a male between 20-25 years who is as dedicated to Soul as she is. She would prefer someone living in her own area.

Anyone wanting a penpal write me, Frank Elson, "Penpals", Blues and Soul Magazine, 42 Hanway Street, London W1P 9DE. Send a piccy if you can!

What is Soul?

LAST TIME I concluded by saying that the two biggest burdens that Soul music labours under in the UK are the BBC and Soul music fans. It came as no surprise to me to read in the "Guardian" of March 14th confirmation of my long held suspicions in the revelation that a "code of conduct" book once existed at the Beeb, which was restricted in its circulation, but which categorically stated that music programmes were not to give undue emphasis to American recordings.

In my view, in the area of presenting popular music, the BBC's record is a disgrace, cluttered as it is by DJs who mistake buffoonery for wit, and who have consistently missed out on every significant shift in public taste that has ever been. It was only the existence of the pirate stations and then local commercial stations that dragged an unwilling Corporation into the 70s.

Radio Luxembourg once used to shine, but even they now limp along with an ultra-brite unconvincing optimism that might sell ads but seldom sells records, let alone trends, and only exceptional talents like Piccadilly's Andy Peebles and Radio London's Charlie Gillett can be cited as guys who are into good music, and who know how to convey enthusiasm and sound comment.

Sadly their audiences are restricted by the limited area their stations are allowed to cover, but were they to be given nation-wide coverage, I feel certain that the music they play would be favourably received, and their own personal popularity ratings go up proportionately.

But then they're exceptions, if only for the reason that that's precisely the order in which they themselves would like to see it happen.

And Soul music fans... well, I should qualify what I said by saying some Soul music fans, and I'll qualify that even further by saying that they're not really fans of the music anyway, but mere hangers-on who see it as a vehicle by which to grease themselves someplace... any place... so long as it's somewhere!!

Devoid of any real talent which they can turn to useful or gainful employment, they are lured by the myth that Soul "is going to be the next BIG THING!" (an assertion I've heard with monotonous regularity for the past 20 years). Corrupt to begin with, in the heady and corrupting world of records they think they're cool operators, but often are led like lambs to the slaughter, and then feel hurt when promised back-handers don't eventually materialise.

Their actual knowledge of Soul is often sparse and full of give-away howlers and chronic gaffs, but they manage to waffle along, blagging their way from one booze up to the next, and as the junkie is to the pusher, so these individuals are putty in the hands of promotional record men. Such is their vanity that they do sleeve notes for nothing (just to see their name actually on a real record!), and in their dealings with both fans and artists one can detect very visible give-away signs of acute unease!

Then there are those fans who seem to see in the Soul Ethic a sort of Noddy naivety that I, as a harsh realist and fierce critic of injustice, find bordering on the repellent. These are the softies who draw comfort from pretending that all is sweetness and light in the Soul world, and anyone (like myself) who presents unanswerable evidence to the contrary from time to time is a malevolent monster who is "rocking the boat" and being "political".

"Stick to the music" they squawk, and every pirate presser, back-hander receiver, drug peddler and other parasite on the body of Soul echoes "I'll drink to that".

Their attitude towards Soul is the most selfish that can be, because in their pursuit of a world that doesn't really exist, they're in fact saying that only their interests are of any importance or value.

I have always consistently championed the consumer's interests in the record business, but there's the rub - they then begrudge me looking out on behalf of Lynn Varnado and many others whose talents have been stolen and exploited.

Then there are those who desperately want to keep Soul all to themselves forgetting in many cases that if people like myself took a similar attitude then what knowledge they have about Soul would be even more sparse than it already is! Soul began the day they discovered it! Pretty soon they're forgetting the humble steps by which they did ascend, and if they ever get to any job above that of record store manager, soon they're referring in contemptuous tones to "the punters" (what an odious term that is!), forgetting that they themselves create NOTHING, and that these same "punters" as they call them, pay for their expenses, lunches and taxi rides.

So, you may ask, what has all this got to do with "Soul"? Well in my mind they are closely allied, and it is a combination of factors similar to those I've alluded to which continue to hamper Soul's



The Dave Godin Column

acceptance in Britain.

Contrast us with the harmonious and business-like attitude of Country & Western fans - but they actually WANT C&W to become popular in this country. Put another way, go to any auction sale of fine art or antiques, and you'll see amongst the bidders dozens of people who're not in the least bit into art as one might reasonably expect, but are simply in it for financial considerations.

When these people buy a vase, it's not for the sheer beauty of the object, but simply an investment for their money. So then with Soul we have all this superfluous motivation which has nothing to do with good music, but everything to do with ego-tripping, more simple control and power, and other assorted hang-ups which are purely psychological in origin.

From these ranks my few critics spring with their worn-out old cry of "Stick to the music". If they had any wits at all about them they'd see that all that I write in B&S is 100% concerned with the music, and if at times I appear to be uptight and cantankerous, surely this is overwhelming evidence of the passionate love that I have inside me for Soul.

If I didn't have this love and

passion then you'd read a different sort of column - bland, mild, daffy-down-dilly and ultimately wet! Well, I'm too far gone to turn around, and it worries me not a jot if I'm in a minority of one!

That's my inner-most being, and since the very word Soul means that too, Soul music will be that brand of American, generally black, music that speaks to your inner-most being and sparks off a response and recognition within.

Within the spectrum of the vast variety of music that falls within the definition of being generally American and generally black, then you are completely free to choose just where in that range is your particular bullseye, but then remember, above all, to stay loose and tolerant.

And see that confidence is not the same as authoritarian dogma, and though it grieves me to say it (particularly as I am widely read by Americans, generally black), there are those in this land who espouse the Soul cause but who really would be more true to their own souls espousing the cause of the National Front. Black is the only colour these crippled crows can ever see, and Soul is the music they so seldom hear.

What is Soul?

A kind of music. American and black in origin, diffused by free association in the 60s but still overwhelmingly dominated by black Americans, who have themselves further diffused it by increasing its range and variety through diminished necessity to play stereotyped roles.

Run-out groove

Muddy Waters (the veteran Blues and R&B singer whom the Rolling Stones mugged many years ago) has been fairly inactive since the demise of the *Chess/Checker* complex in Chicago, but it's great to see him spring back into action again via CBS' *Blue Sky* label with the unfortunately titled (in view of Muddy's advancing years) "Hard Again" LP.

Joined by blue-eyed Johnny Winter, and co-veteran James Cotton, Muddy has run through many of his former hits and come up with some stunning new takes of them including the seminal "Mannish Boy" (now all of 22 years old!) and "I Can't Be Satisfied". Side two consists of more modern material of his own or co-authorship, and if you are at all into the Blues or R&B ethic, this is an album you'll buy on sight. The sound will simply clinch it!

Chuck Berry has been around so long that maybe we tend to forget the overwhelming talents that he brought into the R&B scene of yesteryear, and *Philips* have recently put out on their *Chess* label a superlative 22 track collection of his original recordings under the title of "Motorvatin". Great value, and nearly all his well known favourites are there, and an apt reminder that Chuck Berry is one of the true legends of the American music scene.