

Living together and working together...

TIME WAS, when I was younger, when hardly a summer went by without some distressing and disturbing news item coming out of America's deep South which showed that the world was still distressingly bedevilled by racism, and, being intimately bound up and dedicated to the case of Soul music, racism is not generally a subject we feel any need to discuss amongst ourselves because we take it as read that it plays no part in our thinking. And generally, this is a safe assumption to make.

The recording industry itself has a pretty good track record of integrated harmony, and gradually its worst excesses and abuses (to which both black and white performers were equally subjected anyway!) have been removed or lessened.

But in adopting a liberal attitude, there is always a danger of over-compensating; of seeing everything in terms of black and white (quite literally in this instance), and forgetting the simple fact that if we advocate integration and cross-fertilisation of cultures, we can not then still operate a rigid and inflexible colour line when it comes to Soul music.

Not only does this tend to suggest that there is something just a trifle hypocritical about our thinking, but it also plays straight into the hands of out-and-out racists by isolating a culture into a ghetto situation whereby it can be used as a propaganda vehicle to espouse their odious political views.

Intolerance grows apace every day. One has only to read one's daily newspaper to see this, and how, with monotonous regularity, oppressed people once given their freedom then go and do all the wrong things that their oppressors did before them, and how people tend, when they get in a blaming mood, to pick on anyone whom they can identify as "different".

This centuries-old flaw in the human psyche has probably been responsible for an unaccountable volume of suffering and misery, and it is something that all of us must fight, but only once we have eradicated it first from ourselves.

The point I am trying to make is that in my view the time has long-since arrived when, if we are truly dedicated to the cause of Soul music, we must no longer see it as an *exclusively* black phenomena (although I'd be prepared to listen to any counter criticism that argued that it still had to be American), because not only is mere race then a deciding factor, but if operative, ensures that we're likely to miss out on some good records because of our prejudices.

Up until fairly recently, the Soul media in Britain was dominated by what I term latent racists. White guys who were so burdened down with their own hang-ups that they

wandered (Lady Bountiful style) into R&B music as Great White Hopes who were going to earn the moist-eyed gratitude of black America by taking up their cause, (with the implicit suggestion that black America was unable to solve it single-handedly anyway), and by basing all "acceptable" records on race they not only made themselves look ridiculous as changes took place in the States, but also become an ever-increasing pain-in-the-neck to people who thought like myself.

It also proved a burden to objective critical assessment too. Bad records were discreetly ignored rather than exposed, and mediocre talent was excused because it was "not done" to actually say there are some black American singers who should never be allowed into a recording studio to begin with!

For instance, Lou Rawls, Walter Jackson (with one brilliant exception), Billy Paul and a few others not only bore the pants off me as artists, but in my opinion can't sing, and when they do, it's as flat as a pancake!

Surely even the most biased person would have to agree that Billy Paul's Top Of The Pops appearance singing "Let 'Em In" was, by any standards, quite inexcusably bad, and unless we say so, I think it invalidates the strength of what we say when we discover something on which to heap praise.

You will no doubt have noticed that as a magazine, B&S has over the past few years operated a very liberal and wide-ranging policy in deciding which records and artists we should cover, and, with monotonous regularity, we get a steady trickle of mail from a few readers who feel that "so and so" should have no place in a magazine like B&S. Well, it's a viewpoint I can't share myself, and leads ultimately to a situation where, to avoid the pages of "Melody Maker" becoming too cluttered with black acts, they hived them off into another ghetto ("specialised" being merely another politer word for "Ghetto") publication.

Of course we shall always continue to have differences as to what is acceptable by our own definition of Soul, and how record companies tend to bandy the word is of little importance either since sales is the name of their game, but more and more I think the onus of decision should pass onto the shoulders of the individual to decide for his or her own self what fits with what the word Soul means to them.

I suppose there will be those who will let race be the deciding factor to their dying day, but let's not kid ourselves that such thinking isn't racist just because it is apparently harmless.

And when white artists make records which are in a Soul groove



The Dave Godin Column

and fit it all together in ways that are acceptable to us, then let's proclaim them just as fiercely as we do first rate records by black singers — and demonstrate in the process that in fighting racism we too haven't become infected with the same bug we pretend to deplore when it operates in an opposite direction.

More and more black American radio stations are beginning to realise this factor too, but, believe me, it won't diminish Soul in any way, but will rather benefit and help it.

OPEN DOORS ONLY COME WHEN OPEN MINDS HOLD THE KEYS.

Dave's Raves

1 **Jerry Butler & Thelma Houston** "Only The Beginning" *Motown*.

Motown are past masters at the special magic of teaming people together on record, and this latest coupling of two normally solo acts continues the tradition and its high track record.

From the "Jerry & Thelma" LP, this could well happen as a single for them, and is a solid dance mover with some superb vocalising and a good, strong blend of two good, strong singers. Neither

overshadows the other, and the result is bound to delight lots and lots of people.

My only reservation about the side is my personal wish that they'd used a sax — especially in the mid-way break which does strike as rather thin in its present form, but it's a small quibble, and perhaps when they issue it as a single they'll dub a sax onto it. I hope so.

2 **Atlantis** "Who Loves You More" *Jay Boy*

Penned and produced by Stan Vincent (that master of dreamy and nebulous Soul sounds) fans of his early work with the **Five Stairsteps** will flip to hear this revival of that style, and although officially the B side, this is the one most readers of this column will go for.

Great stirring Soul for aficionados of the real, strong, neat stuff. In fact, I'd go so far as to say it's a faultless record even! Can't do better than that, can I?

3 **The Emotions** "Flowers" *CBS*

Still way, way up in my popularity stakes and a high certainty to find a placing in my Top 20 sides for 1977, the exquisite sound of the lead vocalist just makes me melt.

I'd love to see this break nationally and give the **Emotions** their first ever hit in the UK, but perhaps it is too good to do it. Being a bit of a nature boy myself, I find the lyrics most appealing.

Please, please don't fail to check this side out. It's an exquisite gem, and just writing these lines makes me want to get up and put it on again... think it over. What Soul music is all about.

4 **Peter Brown** "Do You Wanna Get Funky" *TK*

Solid mover which, if you liked "Hypertension" by **Calendar**, or "Hollywood Hot" by **Eleventh House**, will be very much to your taste. Girl chorus sounds very much as if they've already met someone who is actually in the process of getting funky with them, and the attractive lead voice carries the catchy melody with style and conviction.

Very well thought out (nice touch with the tambourine coming in mid-way), this could well become the nation's Number 1 disco smash in no time at all.

5 **Candi Station** "Nights On Broadway" *Warner Bros*

The **Bee Gees** have written (and, indeed, recorded well) some excellent Soul orientated repertoire these past few years, and pulled out as a 45, this number of theirs could very well put **Candi** back into the UK national charts.

At present only available on her superbly titled and superbly cover-designed "Music Speaks Louder Than Words" LP, **Candi Station** continues in her highly regarded tradition on this good song which is very well laid down by her and all concerned.

6 **Patti Austin** "More Today Than Yesterday" *CTI*

It would, I suppose, be sexist of me to state my view that **Patti Austin** is a stunning looking

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woman, but she is, as the cover and pictorial inner sleeve of her "End of the Rainbow" LP proves, and she can sing too, as the same LP (from which this track is taken) also proves.

Originally recorded by **Spiral Staircase** on American *Columbia*, "More Today" also used to be in **Doris Troy's** "live" performance repertoire, so it comes already with a sound pedigree. **Patti** takes it at a slower than accustomed pace, and, as an artist who probably has more UK fans than she or her record company realise, sales on this item might well be higher than expected.

She's a real Soul sister alright, and anything from her is always anticipated with pleasure. This will not disappoint.

7 Joe Tex "Hungry For Your Love" *Epic*

The B side of his latest single and on his "Bumps & Bruises" LP, this is very much the old **Joe Tex** in his slow, old-time, *Dial* bag.

Deep Soul fans must not miss out on this one because it is typical **Joe Tex** stuff and a very good song to boot. Set the table!

8 Richard Popcorn Wylie "Rosemary, What Happened" *Grapevine*

First release on the new *Grapevine* label, and first UK outing for this former Northern monster.

Still sounds groovy with its fascinating dilisly-drear gal chorus and cool organ working, perhaps it is just a shade too late to take off into the national charts, but its long

overdue UK appearance is most welcome, and is a fine choice with which to launch a new Soul label. Infectious and irresistible.

9 Facts Of Life "Love Is The Final Truth" *TK*

Real Deep Soul on the flipside of the so-so "Sometimes". Excellence of this order doesn't come that often, so get it while you can!

10 Deniece Williams "That's What Friends Are For" *CBS*

From her "This Is Niecey" LP and now culled as a single, this is more confirmation of **Deniece's** remarkable and accomplished vocal talent and high style.

Whether or not it'll hit pop is hard to predict, but she should certainly be able to count on the continued support of Soul fans with this one.

She's here to stay — make no mistake about it! Must dig out her old *Toddlin' Town* singles and give them an airing again.

Run-out groove

SO MORTIFIED are they apparently at the thought of a Punk Rock epidemic, it is rumoured that the BBC is even prepared to consider espousing the cause of Soul music rather than see Punk happen! . . .

Southern TV's new "Blast Off" programme sounds interesting and will be screened in pilot form on July 30th in the Southern TV area. Described as a cross between *Juke Box Jury* and *New Faces*, if successful it may well be networked nation-wide on ITV on early Saturday evenings. I wish it well

and every success.

Moves afoot to upset all you importers who don't pay your MCPS royalties! So many apparently escape the net that MCPS are hoping to work out a liaison with H.M. Customs so that when they've collected their dues, MCPS can follow up and collect their's! Summonses are already floating around, so be warned.

RCA continue to stagger the minds of UK Soul fans with the constant stream of Soul repertoire they put out now, and the situation is further set fair by the news that **Derek Everett** has now rejoined the *RCA* team. You may not know it, but **Derek** was formerly responsible for bringing *Okeh*, *Epic* and the best of *Stateside* and other *EMI* group goodies to us, so let's all wish him well in his new job!

Facts of Life 'who are currently making big noises for *TK* contains **Tyrone Davis's** sister **Jean**, and were formerly known as the **Gospel Truth**.

Over in France their equivalent of our "Which" magazine has been having some harsh (but truthful) things to say about the way records get selected for air-play, and are urging a thorough-going investigation into what it claims is "manipulation" of the record-buying public. As it rightly pointed out, "records are one of the few products that are actually consumed before being bought". If a record doesn't get a certain amount of air-play, then how CAN it sell in quantity?

Must admit to disappointment

with **Maxine Nightingale's** new single (and that's not because she didn't have the manners to thank me for the lovely write up I did on her some time back!) Ditto the **Bo Kirkland** and **Ruth Davis** outing. Surely the most over-rated record of the year?

Surely there can't be any truth in the rumour that the first three releases via *RCA* on the *Grapevine* label are also the last? I sincerely hope not.

Why, why, why wasn't **William Bell's** "Trying To Love Two" a HIT? It should have been. When a side like **Deniece Williams** "Free" is a big, big hit, people sometimes ask (not generally Soul Folk) why I wrote expressing anxiety that it might perhaps miss out without a mighty push, which, once it's there, I can understand. But WE know that quality is no guarantee for hit status — just witness the appalling flop of the aforementioned **William Bell** side!

The collectors market is going to be a real strong active one again in a couple of years time as a feverish scramble gets underway to get ll those smashing sides being issued now which are the certain in-demanders of tomorrow and which too many people are missing.

Is there perhaps some truth in astrology after all? I wonder since myself, **Sharon Davis**, **John Bollen**, **Ian Levine** and **John Green** all had birthdays within four days of one another . . . mind you, there are those who would say it'd come as no surprise to them to learn that I was born under the sign of the crab!