

# The Dave Godin Column

## How deep is deep?

WITHOUT wishing to appear to be unduly blowing my own trumpet, I have over the years contributed to the vocabulary of Soul music in this country, and mention it now simply to illustrate how terminology tends to get changed and altered from its original meaning.

When I juxtaposed the various **Motown** group labels and came up with **Tamla-Motown** for this country, it's "meaning" was dependent on whatever sounds the company were issuing at the time, and so there was little chance of that being distorted, but two other terms I coined, "Northern Soul" and "Deep Soul", have both undergone changes that have slightly altered what they originally were meant to convey.

I was particularly reminded of this when I watched a recent TV screening of the film "Rock Around The Clock" (was it really banned by several local councils! From the Slauson to Salo!), and this antique curiosity showed well how when **Alan Freed** coined the term "Rock & Roll", no way could it, by any stretch of the imagination, then have been used to encompass the sounds that now are generally termed "Rock".

So with "Deep Soul", we have seen how increasingly since the rise of the disco phenomena this has come to replace what formerly the plain term "Soul" covered, and there are so few records actually made in the proper Deep Soul idiom these days that I doubt if it totals more than a dozen titles that have been issued in this country so far this year. Even I sometimes use the term to describe the spirit rather than the actual letter of the Deep Soul laws, but the trouble with this constant watering down of phrases only means that we have to invent new ones to replace those which have been changed beyond recall.

What do we do when a Deep Soul revival takes place in the States (and let's face it, it's what happens there that counts so far as Soul music is concerned)? Will we have to describe it as "Double Deep Soul" as the original term has been so misapplied it can no longer adequately describe the real thing?

We saw how the term "Northern Soul" was distorted out of all proportion to its original meaning simply because people who should have known better (but unfortunately didn't) took the word "North" in a literal geographical sense and started to clap it onto any record (in many cases, not even Soul sides) that happened to have found favour in the North! It's original meaning was aesthetic, not geographical!

So, before the term "Deep Soul" is perverted beyond redemption,

can we just recapitulate on what constitutes a Deep Soul side?

*A Deep Soul side will always:*

Be delivered with super-charged intensity and emotion.

It will always prefer an organ to strings, but will often include both.

When included the strings will always be so arranged as to have an almost Wagnerian intensity about them.

The lyrics will be heavier than most, and will certainly include references to a troubled destiny and possibly personality inadequacies (seen from the viewpoint of "straight" and "normal" (i.e. conventional) society).

The pace will often be slow to mid-placed. Uptempo Deep Soul sides do exist, but these are rarities and are the exceptions that prove the general rules.

Lyrics in Deep Soul sides are more than usually important and will often be introspective and sometimes border on the actual

neurotic (again, I'm using straight society's terminology).

Deep Soul sides are seldom broadcast, and if they are they are the butt end of infantile quips from the DJ concerned. Exceptions to this rule exist of course (Andy Peebles, Robbie Vincent and a couple of others). Deep Soul records are often sides which Soul fans don't much enjoy, but which they rather feel they should. Hence some will sell out of duty on the part of the purchaser rather than actual like.

*A Deep Soul side is never:*

Zippy, uptempo-uptifting or frothy.

Likely to make the UK charts (although there are a few exceptions to this rule).

Likely to be suitable for disco-technique use.

Likely to be sung by anyone other than a black American.

Dependent upon the singers' personal looks, charm, breadbasket or bust-appeal. Deep Soul singers often have a talent that transcends these superficial demands and are often fat, thin, plain, ugly, and lacking in what conventional society deems "desirable qualities".

On the other hand, the actual quality of vocalising demanded will be that much higher than that expected on non-Deep Soul outings. Shallow, insincere or contrived (hence my rejection of Lorraine Ellison's "Stay With Me" as a Deep Soul "classic").

*In addition*, it is a bag that very few singers stay in permanently. Like any other style, it is subject to the hazards of taste and vogue, being currently out of style in the States, and never having been in any state in Britain other than highly regarded by a tiny minority, and a constant headache for label managers and those people who go through contracts with a fine tooth comb trying to see if there is any loophole which will enable them to decline to put it out over here.

Deep Soul sides very seldom sell more than 1,000 copies in Britain, although in the 60s they could go as high as 5,000 copies. Nowadays, 200 is about average!

So, please, can we keep the term DEEP SOUL in its original context? Not because I first coined it, but because, for a minority of Soul fans, it has a special and irreplaceable meaning in the overall vocabulary of Soul.

## Run-out groove

EVERYTHING sure happens at once on this scene. I would think that the Wigan Casino Fourth Anniversary would be enough for one weekend, but in addition to attending that I have to go to Liverpool to guest on *Phil Easton's Tamla-Motown Special* on the Friday

before, and hopefully, I shall be on *Andy Peebles' Soul-Train* on the Sunday afterwards!

*Phil's* show sounds particularly interesting, being a four-hour retrospective tracing the history and development of *Motown* in words and music, and I'm always happy for any excuse to visit Liverpool and go to the incomparable Vines.

Those of you who are of the opinion that records today just don't somehow have the magic and intangible "something or other" that they once had, might be interested in the results of a recent research programme that puts the blame directly on the "permissive society". It reasoned that since all artistic creativity is based upon the sublimation of the sexual impulse, permissiveness therefore bring a decline of artistic end product.

Seldom did I ever think (as I listen to the umpteenth piece of 12" disco drivel) that we might have to thank the nation's straight-laced puritans for the sublimated musical horniness that was such a delight in the pre-permissive 60s!

Although reported in the trade press that "TK not anxious to renew RCA", for my money (which, of course, is nowhere near the reported 360,000 dollar advance *TK* are allegedly seeking from the hapless UK company that takes them on), *RCA* have done a splendid job in handling them. After all too, the *TK* track record of hits pro rata to number of sides released in the States isn't THAT spectacular.

*MCPS* stepping up their war against importers who avoid paying their royalties. One recent summons is against a company that imported 70,000 US deletions at one go, and didn't pay a penny on them!

When one considers how much in cash terms this diverts from sales of UK manufactured product, it's small wonder the industry is often in the doldrums regarding sales!

Great to see *The Emotions* with their first UK hit, but what a pity that "Flowers" was abandoned so quickly just as it seemed on the point of breaking through! Still, it's one of the best things that's happened to our music this year.

The collective amnesia that is such a part of the Soul scene these days however, seems to have overlooked completely the fact that *The Emotions'* first ever UK release was on *Deep Soul* which was a gem, and these girls have been stringing together gems ever since!

The American Post Office has issued a commemorative postage stamp for the 100 Years Of Recorded Sound celebrations which, so far as the UK is concerned, has been somewhat over-shadowed by the Jubilee.

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



Lorraine Ellison:

not a classic?