

# The Dave Godin Column

## Constructive criticism

Commentators and critics can hardly avoid controversy if they are ever to retain credibility in the eyes of their readers, because it is in the very nature of the undertaking that opinions of taste will sometimes be at variance between the two parties, and so far as I'm concerned, so long as the person concerned explains just WHY they feel as they do, then that's OK with me. We are however rapidly approaching a point in time where people merely list records and say they think they're great, and this passes as critical comment. Of course in some respects, radio is also an ideal medium by which to discuss and analyse records because there is an element of spontaneity which tends to result in at least an honest appraisal, but, although criticism does include a person's opinion, that alone is not enough, and a good critic will always tell you why he has reached that viewpoint. To insult the creative effort that goes into making a record with a comment like "I think it's great" with no other analysis is not only a supreme ego trip, but an insult to the record in question. So, from time to time, I intend writing a critical survey of records which are currently around and which not only please me personally, but which I'll try and write about in such a way that you'll know why this is so! And thus demonstrating at the same time that when I say nobody has infallible taste, it applies as much to myself as anyone else!

One of the saddest things I think whenever I read the endless lists of records that are listed as favourites by many Northern jocks, is how OLD so many of them are, having been put down in the studio sometimes more than a decade ago. And of course, although oldies do have a place in one's memories (the more so of course if you actually were into them when they were new!), no scene ever can hope to flourish and prosper when its well springs are so far away in time. And when you look at actual sales figures when some of these Northern "classics" are reissued on the prompting of jocks and writers, the inevitability of eventual doom becomes even more certain and sure. I remember well how after the first wave of Rock & Roll had subsided in the UK, there was a sizeable minority of fans who were determined to keep it alive, and somehow thought that if they continued to slick their hair, dress in Teddy Boy suits, and somehow just THINK HARD that things weren't changing, then the hands of time might just be turned back. Probably this is nothing new, but just because a thing is desirable

doesn't always mean it's also possible. And on reflection, doesn't it now seem an incredible and mind-numbing fact that when sound was first introduced into cinema films, there actually were people who opposed it and thought it a bad thing!?

I mention all these points particularly because similarly in the recording field, there have been such vast improvements not only in recording techniques but in arrangements of productions over the last ten years, that to directly compare records from the past with those put out today will often put the oldie at a distinct disadvantage. But there again, I can remember how all my friends thought I was quite mad for buying 45s instead of 78s when they first came out as an alternative, and then as a total replacement for heavy, fragile, 10" shellac sides. But, if evidence were needed to show the almost alarming speed with which the general (as opposed to specialised) public is catching up in matters of musical taste, we have only to reflect on the fact that the Emotions' "Best Of My Love" is a top five UK hit! It is a perfect illustration too because it has everything a Soul record needs to merit that descriptive term, and no way could anyone call it a Pop record, even though it has become a popular success. When a goodly proportion of our discos never played this record once, and yet still maintain (in the face of all reason) that they "keep the faith", you can see a possible danger that modern Soul may well cross over to become the exclusive property of the pop market, while "Soul" fans are unable to rid themselves with their obsession with the past (and their own, now vanished, youth). A repeat performance in fact of what happened with Teds, Mods, and, one day, Punks.

The situation is perhaps further complicated by the fact that nowadays Soul music is no longer confined to one narrow frame reference, and has become as diversified as other musical strata, but I regard that as a very small price to pay for progress, and the truth is, really brilliant Soul has to be sought out and closely looked for as much as ever before. But, importantly, it's still there!

CBS as a company doesn't seem to get its fair proportion of press coverage in recognition for the quite brilliant volume and standard of output that they've issued this past couple of years or so. In my book they've certainly long since eclipsed such traditionally stalwart labels of Soul as *Motown*, *London* and *Atlantic* for sheer excitement of catalogue. Currently one of my

personal favourite albums so far this year is **Tyrone Davis'** "Let's Be Closer . . . Together!" set (CBS 82178). It's first impact is visual (as is the case with nearly all LPs when you think about it) with an excellent sleeve picture of Tyrone surrounded by what looks like friends, but is, in all probability, a group of American *Columbia/Epic* employees! Tyrone has been around quite some time now, never quite getting degree of recognition which I feel his unique voice deserves, but he's the sort of vocalist who you feel certain will eventually make the Big Time if only he can stick it out until it happens. The only other singer with whom any sort of comparison is tenable would be **Bobby Bland**. In addition, it is one of those rare LPs which can be whole heartedly recommended in toto.

The single, "This I Swear", whose US success lead to this LP, should have been a bigger hit here. With strutting rhythm and excellent background patterns it's definitely one of the classier sides to have been issued in Britain in 1977, but check out the incredible Soul purity of "All You Got" as well. Very pacey, very raunchy and so well sung and performed that it hits almost on a subliminal level! Many of the composer credits on this LP are **Leo Graham's**, who also produced the whole, and it would seem that there's a definite artistic affinity between him and Tyrone. Certainly there are influence of the *Dakar* house style, but then there's a certain type of *Rojac* sound in there too, so let's hope this LP doesn't suffer the same fate as that other *CBS* masterpiece which they got from *Rojac* "The Soul Of Big Maybelle" which was almost totally ignored when first issued only to become a sought-after treasure once it was impossible to buy. Tyrone Davis is one of Soul music's leading Luminaries and if he and *CBS* can maintain the high standards set on this LP then we have further treats to anticipate! A real joy and understanding album.

Over at *United Artists* they've been vault combing to produce a six (yes, six) volume tribute to **Fats Domino** sides (16 tracks per LP) which, though quite nicely packaged, probably won't sell much more than 200 copies apiece. It's no pleasure to be so brutal about it since in his time Fats was one of the true pioneer giants of R&B, but that was way back in the 50s and so it's likely that only people who were teenagers in the 50s will find this of any appeal. Since *UA* in a fit of meanness only sent me Volumes 5 and 6, the first four will have to remain a mystery to me (and hence you, gentle reader). (*United Artists* UAS 30117-8)

*Phonogram* haven't yet managed to get a big hit of their *Bang* label, but it's early days yet, and for my money they'll certainly have to go some to excell the beautiful "I Can Make It Better" by **Peabo Bryson** (*Bang* 010). A stylised ballad with Deep Soul overtones, **Peabo Bryson** might well be influenced by **Michael Henderson**, but although not as obvious in its impact, those with rarified tastes will find this an exquisite gem. Complex on melody, it's the sort of Soul side that doesn't stand an earthly of becoming a hit in this country, and only discos that have a dedicated smooch spot will be able to programme it with anything like the sort of response it deserves. There was a time when this type of Soul side seemed almost commonplace, but now things have changed to such a degree that it is like an oasis of tranquility in the midst of the uptempo disco throb. A truly sumptuous arrangement with strings, girl chorus, bell-lyre, sax and those stirring sort of musical vortex patterns that once so distinguished the sides of people like **Garnett Mimms**. Pure Soul for those who can take the no-punches-pulled type of stuff. And having now raved over it in print, I can ease my moral conscience and obligation towards *Phonogram* for issuing it in knowing that now at least it's probable that sales will break even on it. Thanks *Phonogram* for one of the year's true treasures.

The *GTO* label has been so commercially successful in Britain that their sides seem to be in the charts before people like me can catch our breath and write about them, but fans of Northern stompers might overlook one item they've just issued if only because it's an official B side. "Philadelphia Groover" by **Al Sharp** (*GTO* GT-108) which is very much a *Sound-Stage-7* sort of sound! Dated by today's musical standards, but covered-up it'd probably become a monster in the North although even with that support I can't in all honesty see it becoming a hit. Zippy drum work and a gravel-voiced lead with some plucky guitar and electric piano, it might be light on tune, but the stompers will stomp their full approval to it and that's for sure!

*Motown* is another label that is no longer what it used to be, but if ever there was a company that moved with and even, anticipated, the times, then they're it! No sitting on the laurels of yesterday's hits for them, and just as you think things are getting a bit stale they come up with new and exciting acts to delight again. **High Inergy** (a name destined to be the victim of many typing and printing errors) "You Can't Turn Me Off (In The Middle Of Turning Me On)" (*Motown*

Continued on page 32

# Dave Godin

---

*Continued from page 18*

---

*TMG 1087*) has much charm and just a little affinity in mood and atmosphere with **Betty Everett's** "I Gotta Tell Somebody", and High Energy sing faultlessly and with much personal magnetism. Could well be that in High Energy, *Motown* have found their replacement for **the Supremes**.

Another LP that can be totally recommended in my view is **Idris Muhammad's** "Turn This Mutha Out" (*Kudu 34*) which, apart from his two Soul circle hits, contains cuts of superb artistry not only in a funky vein, but, in the case of "Moon Hymn", in a highly lyrical one too. I can't understand why "Could Heaven" didn't go higher

in the UK charts after such an encouraging initial showing. Maybe imports did stop it dead in its tracks.

*RCA* continue to deliver many goodies, and the new **Hall & Oates** LP "Beauty On A Back Street" (*RCA PL-12300*) will garner a few sales from the Soul fraternity, although, brilliant as it is, I must register the fact that it is not so Soul influenced as their previous outings. **D.J. Rogers** on the other hand has a standout oh-so-soulful item on his otherwise average LP "Love, Music & Love" (*RCA PL-12218*), called "No Price". Not a million miles removed in message from "No Charge", but exquisitely arranged and executed, very reminiscent of the ethereal counterpoint film scores of **Alex North**.

---

*Continued on page 47*

*Continued from page 32*

## Run-out groove

Well, thanks to good timing and making sure I got some proper sleep, the hectic weekend of broadcasting and visiting the Casino's anniversary All-Nighter went off superbly. **Phil Easton's Motown Show** was four hours long, but the time went so quickly, and even with that much time at our disposal, it flashed by before we'd even skimmed the surface of it all. At the end we groaned about all the ace sides we'd not been able to include, but I think it went well. Nice to meet **Mark Joenz** too who popped into the studio and said hello. (After the way **Bob Killbourn** man-handled him in "Air-O-Soul" not so long ago, I'm surprised we were on speaking terms! Seriously though, Mark's the sort who can give stick as well as take it and, in these days of some examples of monumental conceit, it's refreshing to meet a guy who can laugh at himself so often.)

Wigan Casino actually found me there on time by way of a change, and **Doreen** said she could hardly believe it when I walked in at the time given on the invitation card. Nice to meet so many people who now seem like old friends on this ephemeral and fleeting scene, but special thanks must go to **Mike Walker, Gerry Marshall, Richard Searling** and **Russ Winstanley** for extending such a great welcome as usual. I've often said it, but I really do think Wigan Casino will go on undisturbed forever. Hope I'll always be regarded as a member as well as well-wisher.

Finally I hopped over to Manchester for **Andy Peebles'** show which was made even nicer than usual by our being joined by **Claire Preston** whom Andy had taken to Wigan the night before to introduce her to the Northern Soul phenomena. By the way, don't forget those greetings cards to **Jackie Wilson** via **Paul Cook** at Radio Pennine. I did a recorded interview with Paul at Wigan, and also did an appeal to listeners to rally round this worthy project, so I hope this most thoughtful gesture by Paul really does cheer Jackie. With your support, I'm sure it will. I promised Paul I'd go on his show soon too, so I hope to hear from readers in that area concerning any matters they'd like to raise concerning the Soul Scene. Andy Peebles gives me great hope for the future of the whole music scene in Britain because his enthusiasm, knowledge and very warm personality bring to broadcasting qualities which sometimes are so sadly lacking. That he devotes so much of his time, talent and energies to Soul is something which we, not to mention Soul music, should all be truly grateful for. He's honest in every sense of the word. Lucky Manchester!

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