

# The Dave Godin Column

## So much love, so much talent...

EVERY Soul music fan there is must, so far as this country's concerned at least, have a whole list of sides in their minds which knocked them sideways on first hearing, and which just didn't get any air-play, and as a result, didn't get many sales either.

It riles and rangles, and if I sometimes strike you as a rather angry person, then this is in truth the sole source of my anger (at least where Soul music's concerned).

But, one sometimes wonders if there is simply too much talent around Soul America, and can even the Soul market manage to buy more than about a tenth of the records it would otherwise like to have?

I realise that I am in a very lucky and fortunate position inasmuch as I get 80% of my records free, and almost 100% of all the Soul (and near-Soul) material that gets issued in this country, and yet, despite that, I still know exactly what records cost, and how strained everybody's budget is in these present economic times where the lowest paid suffer most.

Bearing all this in mind then, I am more than ever aware that in commending records, it is the purchaser one has to consider first, and not write simply to repay a free lunch or some other favour that the record companies sometimes throw your way.

Increasingly of late my post bag brought letters asking for really good value records to the spotlighted as people find they have less and less spare cash to spend on them. With this in mind, I repeat that this always has been my policy, and any record that gets a mention in my column, is there simply on its own merits, and for no other reason whatsoever.

So, here are a few more items that you really should be thinking about.

After the cosmic brilliance of **Stairsteps'** "2nd Resurrection" LP, I approached **Kenni Burke's** solo debut LP "Kenni Burke" (*Dark Horse 3022*) with slight apprehension.

Miracles (even in the Soul world) don't happen THAT often! However, although it is not so astounding as "2nd Resurrection", it's still one of this year's class albums.

**Kenni's** natural and handsome good looks aren't going to harm his chances as he reaches for solo stardom either, and although most of the lead vocals on **Stairsteps'** records were taken by **Clarence Burke**, **Kenni's** light tenor has a

charm all of its own and is certainly fascinating enough to win him a whole lot of fans.

The opening track, "Keep On Singing", certainly DOES reach the heights of the "Resurrection" LP, and is a Latin tinged number that has an undercurrent of urgency about it that I find most appealing. It's fragmented structure may jar on some people's ears, but if you stick with it and give it the benefit of a few spins, I think you'll soon find it all neatly falling into place. It's hypnotic dynamite!

A sight Hawaiian sinuosity sensuality often creeps into **Stairsteps'** records, and here it crops up again as flavouring for "It's The Last Time", another pretty complex number that is laden and drenched with atmosphere and feeling.

"Something New" has shifting rhythmic patterns and the addition of a flute gives it a definite Lighthouse - Californian - beach mood. Yet again, **Kenni** and his backing group achieve some remarkable harmonic effects, but then, hasn't this always been the case with **Stairsteps'?**

The album closes with an instrumental version of "From Us To You", here retitled "From Me To You", which is delivered with incredible verve and determination, almost pounding its way through any barriers of reservation or resistance you might have in your subconscious. It demands your attention! A very fresh re-reading though, with more than just a hint of **Roy Ayers' Ubiquity** about the piano working; the pace and punch leave you quite breathless.

That **Burke** family sure is talented, and if he were so determined, I reckon **Kenni** could easily become another **Marvin Gaye**. I wholeheartedly recommend this LP, and sincerely hope **Warners** will see their way clear to releasing it over here.

Another superstar just hovering on the outside of the spotlight of fame and fortune is **Teddy Pendergrass**, the owner of one of the finest Soul voices around right now. His latest single "Somebody Told Me" (*Philadelphia International 5684*) has wisely been culled from his LP "Teddy Pendergrass" (*Philadelphia International 81756*), and if you can't stretch the budget to include the latter, please don't miss this sterling single.

A great song, with superb arrangement and production, it is so entirely professional that it seems just shameful to me that there are not sufficient radio producers and DJs who have enough know-how to detect this terrific talent.

In ten years time, It'll be records like this one that we'll look back to for memories of this present period in time.

It would seem that the **Bang** label is destined to be ignored over here, because yet another great outing from them, "Dusic" by **Brick** (*Bang 012*), seems to be consigned to oblivion so far as this country's concerned, and yet has been an enormous hit in the States.

I always pay attention to what's happening in the States. I know they're not infallible, but they know their music, and very few bummers can fool the hit cookies that make up the American record buying and juke box playing public.

I know some hip discos are playing this, and the three DJs that I regard as radio's finest in Britain have given it a hand, but it needs more still, or otherwise it'll merely become an in-demand of tomorrow. Some disco records are ace, and this is one such.

**Dennis Lambert** and **Brian Potter** were the two guys who wrote such a marvellous string of hits and plums for **Tavares**, and who also once operated their own label, **Haven** Records. Now transferred from **Haven** to **RSO**, **Player** stay with **Dennis** and **Brian** as producers on "Baby Come Back" (*RSO 2090 254*), and the formula has produced dark magic.

Again, only Soul fans are likely to surrender up to its subtle and nebulous charm, and its pace also means that only those who still like good ballads will dig it deeply. A most worthwhile release though, and I hope that by way of thanks, we can ensure **RSO** at least break even on it.

Oldies fans and nostalgia-maniacs will be delighted with "Echoes Of The 60s" (*Phil Spector 2307 013*) which contain 20 of the classic sides that **Phil** was responsible for.

The sleeve notes informed me (for the first time, incidentally) that **Ike & Tina Turner's** "River Deep Mountain High" cost over £10,000 to make (in 1966, you could cut a whole album for that much!) and it has always puzzled me just why this record wasn't a hit in the States. However, for once the tables were turned, and their loss was our gain, and it must have been some compensation to him that this record did so well in Europe.

**The Ronettes**, **The Crystals**, **The Righteous Brothers**, **Bob B. Sox & the Bluejeans** and **Darlene Love**, are also included here with their now-classic outings. And, for added bonus, there's a groovy picture of **Phil** on the back cover peering out from his fortified residence. Great value for money, and a superlative collection to keep.

Finally, briefer mentions of three other worthy sets. **Eddie Henderson** might have been psychological medicine's loss, but he sure was Soul's gain, and his new LP "Comin' Through" (*Capitol 11671*) fulfills all the promise shown on his galactic single "Say You Will".

Aided by the ultra-talented **Patrice Rushen**, the whole set is of the highest possible standard, and is unlikely to disappoint any modern Soul fan.

**Nona Hendryx** on the other hand has, in my view at least, been rather unfairly manhandled by critics for her self-titled LP (*Epic 82120*), and although I deplore the violence of the front picture on its sleeve, the musical content I found most satisfying. Nicely declamatory at times, **Nona** sings with a fair amount of passion, and, as I say, I seem to think more highly of it than most. Try it and see what you think.

**Freddie King** was one of those artists who could truly be termed the epitome of R&B since he smoothly combined basic blues with the emergent jump sounds of the 50s, and thus carved his own little niche in Soul history. His death last year was a sudden and unexpected sadness, but **RSO** have issued a memorial LP "Freddie King (1934-1976)" (*RSO 2394 192*) on which **Eric Clapton** tells us how indebted he was to **Freddie** for "teaching me just about everything I needed to know.."

It's a pity that guys like **Clapton** don't own up a bit more when guys like **King** are still alive and around, and in a position to perhaps benefit from that which they have so generously and freely given to those who have got further because they're prettier, sexier, or just lighter skinned.

Sadly, the LP is unlikely to be of any appeal to today's record buyers, but it's nice to see a record company doing the right thing by a deceased artist. And, with an evident bit of sincerity too.

Are there then too many records coming out? Or, worse, too many GOOD ones? So many good records get ignored by the media (a fact that is compounded by the not too-widely-publicised fact that many who write or talk about Soul in the media often have no real love or understanding for it!), and currently, Soul is hard put to it compete with the lurid and sensational details of Punk and New Wave gimmickry.

But it goes deeper than just these superficial matters too, and I can prove it.

Of all the column inches written on the subject of the Punk, I've yet to see any praise for the one punk release of the year which, by any standards, is a piece of brilliant artistry. "Criminal World" by **Metro** (*Transatlantic BIG 560*) proves, in its total failure to grab any media attention, that it is IMAGES that the media leeches off, and not MUSIC.

"Criminal World" is probably the only minor masterpiece that the Punk phenomena has yet thrown up; full of genuine subversive suggestion and sexual innuendo, and surely it has got to be the dirtiest record of all time. And yet,

it illustrates a vast chasm that exists in the media, when only I can appreciate it and rave about it because I'm into MUSIC and not IMAGES.

It's a good art, and the sooner media people realise that this is supposed to be the name of their game, then Punk music fans won't have to look to the Dave Godin Column to get clued in on what's brilliant in their particular field too!

If Punk and Soul ever form a liason, then "Criminal World" gives a hint of what it might be like.

## Run-out groove

IN AN effort to try and ascertain if there is in fact a real demand for Funk All-Nighter (as writers to B&S have often claimed there is), Terry Samson of the Northern Soul Scene Club informs me that he has launched such an event at the Abbeydale Road Ballroom in Sheffield.

Admission is £1.50 (no membership required), and DJs will include well known modernists such as Colin Curtis, Neil Rushton, Paul Schofield and Steve Norman.

It was almost bound to happen now that the Emotions have hit the UK Top Ten, but personally I welcome the news that the newly re-activated *Stax* label will be re-issuing some of their earlier material that they had issued on *Volt* in the States.

High Energy, *Motown* latest girl group sensation, sing on the soundtrack of a forthcoming movie "High School". In the meantime,

the buzz begins to build around their debut outing "You Can't Turn Me Off".

As much as I enjoyed reading David Nathan's recent compelling tribute to his beloved Aretha Franklin, I must admit personal disappointment over her latest single "Touch Me Up", which is not likely in my view to give her a much needed hit over here. Her last UK chart entry was in 1974, and it's going to need something much stronger than her latest to put her back where she should be — at the top!

Steve Cropper badly hurt by the bankruptcy of *Stax* in the States, and claims that he is still owed "nearly a million dollars" in back royalty payments.

He further revealed that *Fantasy* has a potential gold mine now that they've acquired all the tapes made prior to 1971, and they include re-takes, sessions never released and alternate versions by artists like Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, the Staple Singers and many others. So, from our point of view, if not from Steve's, things look very bright and exciting.

Finally, sincere congratulations to Adam White and Anne Heaney who recently tied the nuptial knot. Adam, who is currently deputy editor of the British trade journal "Music Week", is one of the most knowledgeable people in Britain when it comes to Soul matters,

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