

The Dave Godin Column

THE six months of this year which have just passed, have shown a distinct trend so far as American records are concerned, and that is that Soul quality is tending to re-emerge as a dominant factor rather than the Disco element which previously ruled all other considerations in US recording studios.

For readers of this column at least, this is heartening news, and it will be very interesting to see how things develop during 1978. For well may it be a critical time in Soul music's history, and more and more Soul artists and producers may realise that they've come within an inch of selling out two hundred years of heritage and culture for a mess of disco potage!

But, although they tend to get overlooked by the media, the good Soul stuff is still being made, and hopefully, 1978 will find more and more of this vintage material making the US charts, and thus ridding it of the mediocre and phoney.

One company that has kept the faith to a remarkable degree this year has been CBS, and still they persist in putting out goodies that are irresistible and often of superlative aesthetic brilliance too. **Bill Withers** now joins the clan, and "Lovely Day" (CBS 5773) has a "Stand By Me" quality about it that will hearten his already sizeable following over here, and, given the spins, will recruit new devotees to his side.

Snug in an ultra-relaxed but never sloppy style, Bill is backed by a male chorus who repeat the title whilst he sustains some long drawn out notes. Strings are discreetly used, and the overall feel is so entirely innocent and charming that I can't imagine any Soul fan not liking it.

Hard to predict what chart chance such a side has, but hit or miss, it's a real winner in my book at least.

Of course, CBS have a natural eye for talent, and in no small measure their superlative track record this year has been blessed by the incredible material supplied to them via their deal with **Maurice White's Kalimba** outfit. Not only have they produced the great stuff that **Earth, Wind & Fire** are consistently giving us, but they did great things for **Deniece Williams** and the ever-loving **Emotions** too.

Now they have a single for **Pockets** called "Come Go With Me" (CBS 5780) which is not the old **Del Vikings** number (you can't copyright a song title), but an incredible mover that is full of sparkle, zip and secret passion. The lead singer has an outstanding voice — a nice light tenor that can do all that's required of it, and this is just the sort of record that would have been a monster in the North before it went silly. Maybe a few progressive locations will still be

Soul sneakin' back again?

able to respond to it.

Undoubtedly a standout side, and fans of the **Four Tops** will bind a certain nostalgic twinge in its overall feel and atmosphere. Don't miss it, it's a winner!

Anyone who ever had a side out on **Okeh** during its Golden Era seems assured of some sort of residual following in this country for ever more, and **Larry Williams** fans will be pleased to know that he's now recording for **Fantasy** the company who look set to have a hit with **Sylvester's** great "Over & Over". Larry debuts with a double header "Doing The Best I Can (With What I Got)" backed with "Gimme Some" (*Fantasy F-806*).

Top deck is certain to delight Deep Soul fans, being ultra staggered, with gospel counterpoint and ethereal girl chorus, and the whole performance is one of total sanctifying righteousness. Not likely to do a thing commercially so far as this country's concerned, but for us fans of the estoteric and meaningful, it's like corn in Egypt.

Flip deck is more disco angled, but is not merely a disco record if you follow me. Mid tempo and a sort of **James Brown** riff quality about it. I don't think it'll disappoint his fans and friends. Release in this country is undecided at the time of writing, so you'll have to see your friendly importer for it.

● Delight was unbounded when I got the latest **L.T.D.** album which is aptly named "Something To Love" (*A&M 64646*). Love, togetherness and devotion permeate the entire album, and naturally the current big one is their superlative single, which here is renamed "(Everytime I Turn Around) back In Love Again", but there are some veritable gems in this package.

"Age Of The Showdown" which opens the set is a groovy mover which again has the feel of some of the **Four Tops** earlier work. A trifle

more funky perhaps, but although dancers will naturally warm to it, it's got more than just disco appeal. The gospel training is very evident throughout all of L.T.D.'s renderings, which is a tremendous help on up-tempo numbers since so many singers get embarrassingly out of breath when they've not had such training, and on slower numbers too, its disciplined control is a tremendous asset.

"(Won'tcha) Stay With Me" is my other stand-out pick from this great album, being a slow, dreamy and yet rather intense ballad that is melodious and winning. Oh yes, things are looking up in Soul America with groups like L.T.D. around. Watch the tryers and poseurs getting their flat notes drowned out in 1978!

● **Patti Labelle** might have sold her heart to the junkman, but if her latest LP "Patti Labelle" (*Epic 82226*) is anything to go by, she never once mortgaged her Soul! The opening track "Joy To Have Your Love" really must be a future single for her, and seldom has this lady's ultra-soulful voice been in better form.

Truly, a revelation and a text-book reminder of what constitutes REAL Soul singing. "Funky Music" really IS, and as a surprise which reflects her own music awareness and versatility, she turns in a good rendering of **Bo Diddley's** "You Can't Judge A Book By The Cover" (food for thought there too!) and **Bob Dylan's** "Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I'll Go Mine)" which she has given a barrel-house New Orleans roll and which is entirely suitable and appealing. Dylan's songs are nearly always successful when given a Soul treatment — there must be a message in there — and their brash cynicism seems even more compellingly truthful when delivered with a black vocal style. I'm sure he'd agree!

A fantastic LP from a woman who is, incredibly, a veteran of the Soul music scene. She hardly looks a day over 25 on the cover of the LP — but I wish she'd trim those horrible long red nails she sports — but her peep-toe shoes at least relieved me by indicating that she's not extended the fad to her tootsies too! Don't overlook this LP, it's a revelation!

Another revelation and superb value for money is the **Isley Brothers** collection "Forever Gold" (*Epic 86040*). More than any other group, the Isley's secret for perennial success is shown in their wisdom in moving with the time, and it is this talent which has kept them a household name, in Soul circles at least, for nigh on 20 years.

Here are ten of their very best tracks made at **Epic** ranging from "Harvest For The World" to their exquisite rendering of **Todd Rundgren's** "Hello It's Me". Truly a golden set.

RCA have a group of immense potential in **Silk**, and their LP "Smooth As Silk" (*RCA 13039*) was produced by **David Porter**, and helped along by such creative talents as **Al Bell** and **Marvell Thomas**.

Standout tracks for you to sample are "I Know I Didn't Do You Wrong" which is a deftly wrought love ballad sung collectively with light vocals; "Give Yourself To Me" which is a snazzy uptempo uptown mover; and "Leaving Me", a mid-paced ballad which is melodious and sweet. Fans of sweet Soul and soft Soul sure should check this set out, and fans of old-style Northern Soul should pay particular attention to the track "Give Yourself To Me". A group of great promise for us all.

Ritchie Havens is perhaps an acquired taste, but he continues to do his thing in his own unique style, and personally I am always happy about it. "Mirage" (*A&M 64641*) is produced by **Christopher Bond**, who, as **Chris Bond**, has worked with **Daryl Hall & John Oates**. The affinity is not inappropriate.

"Billy John" is typical of **Ritchie Havens'** style being ever-so-slightly flat, deadpan and dry, but although this is perhaps an esoteric prescription, it's one that works wonders for me at least, and I'm sure that were others to go halfway in meeting him, this guy would have an even larger following over here.

"We All Wanna Boogie", which was penned by **Allen Toussaint**, lops along at a groovy pace with a slight bayou undertow, and "The End" (written, can you believe, by one **Eve Moon**?) is ultra-typical **Havens** with flavours picked up from **Dylan**, **Buckley** and **Hall & Oates**. This LP may not be everyone's pleasure, but there's a lot more to **Ritchie Havens** than strikes on a cursory hearing. Stick with him if you can, and I think you'll find the trip most rewarding.

Finally, it's great to welcome **Dionne Warwick** back with "Love At First Sight" (*Warners 56429*), looking and sounding as fresh as ever. Obviously they've reverted to the **Bacharach** type formula that was such a winner for her in the 60s, and I particularly like the track "One Thing On My Mind".

I heard this song some time ago recorded on **A&M** by a group called **The Persuaders** (or it could have been **The Persuasions**), and although that remains a gem I've yet to acquire, this is a splendid rendition. The whole LP is certain to overjoy her legion of loyal and steadfast fans. And I still count myself as one of them!

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