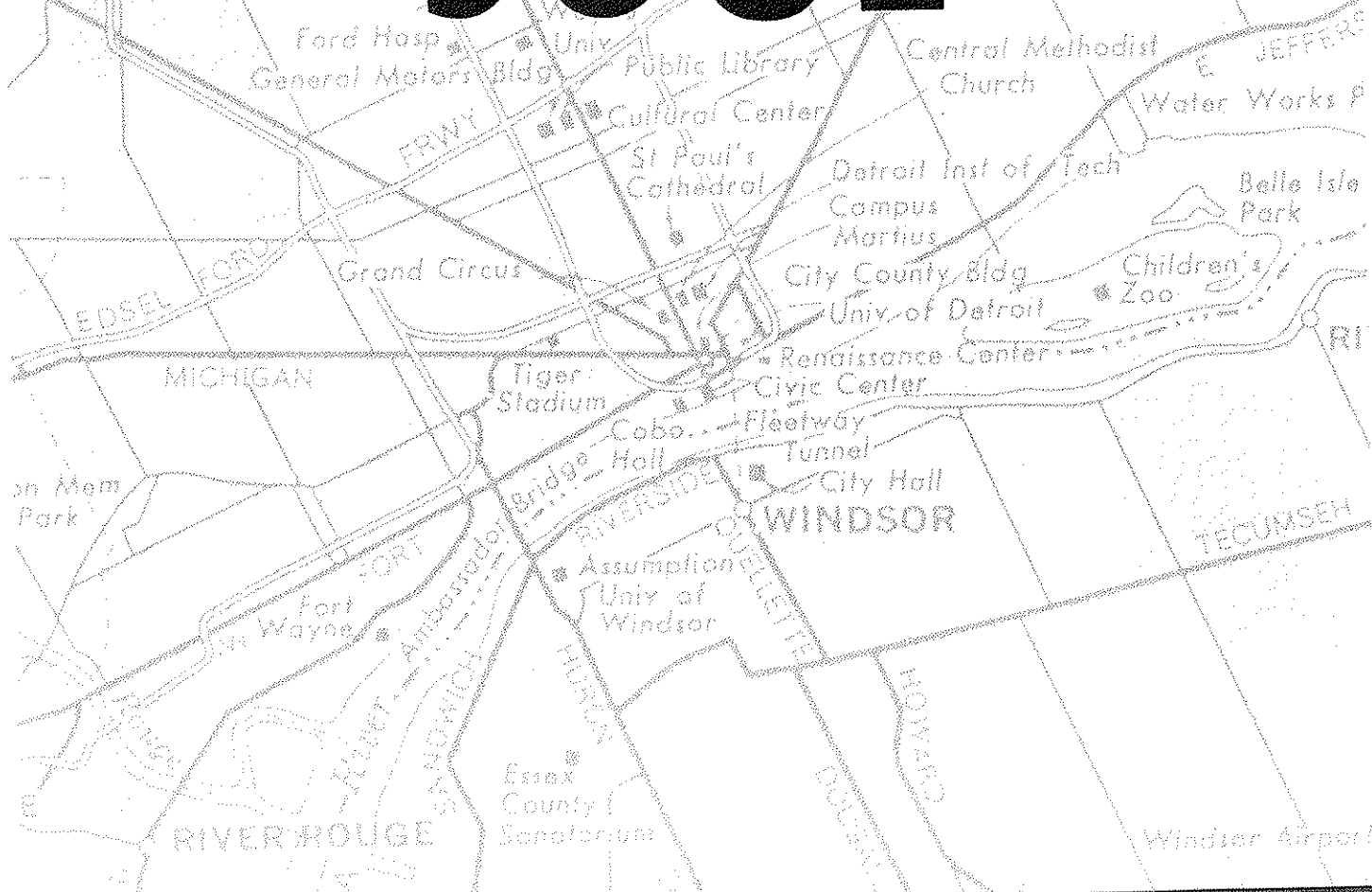


The British Soul Scene continues to throw up contentious issues almost as often as it unearths great but previously unheard records from as far back as the early 60's up until today's new releases. An era that for nearly a decade went largely unnoticed save for a hardcore of collectors is the late 60's and early-to-mid 70's, post 'on-the-fours' Motown and pre-disco. For years these records lay dormant, unable to assert themselves on the old 'traditional' Northern soul scene, being either too slow or too obviously 70's in production or, just as sadly, ignored by the early modern

scene, once the watershed period of the Mecca had passed and the emphasis was placed on uptempo (nearly) new releases like King Tutt, Larry Houston and Tony Fox. It was always an opinion of some that the British soul scene missed a great opportunity for cross-pollination when both scenes seemingly turned their backs on each other when, with a little tolerance a lot of common ground could have been cleared giving greater scope for shared venues (like Stafford), bigger attendances and a wider net to cast over 3 decades of black music. There are obvious barriers - the head-in-the-sand

60's-only crowd; the people who put down Northern Soul when they've never taken the trouble to listen to the soulful side of it. Only on something as blatantly clannish as the underground British soul scene could an internal clique appear almost from nowhere that is rarely documented, has no point of gravity and has ill-defined borders, yet has sent previously 'dead stock' records spiralling in price. What can make what was once a ballad become a dance track? And who is responsible for these uncharted waters that have offered a tenuous link between Modern and Northern Soul?

CROSSOVER SOUL



During a golden and innovative period ranging roughly from 1969 through to perhaps 1974, Chicago had evolved a distinctive sound which was essentially a forging together of post-Motown bass lines, a rolling, lurching rhythm and the luxurious strings which had previously adorned the mid-60's Windy City sound on such labels as Brunswick (**Jackie Wilson**, **Fred Hughes**); Vee-Jay, Mayfield (**Fascinations**); Blue Rock, Cadet (**Dells**, **Radiants**); ABC (**The Impressions**), Chess/Checker and, to a degree, smaller local labels like M-Pac!; Mar-V-Lus; Satellite; Bashie; St Lawrence and One-Derful.

It was a breeding ground for future generations of Chicago soulsters. People like **General Crook**, **Byron Woods** and **Marshall Titus** who would draw from the well that was built on the imaginations, will-power, talent and hustling ability of such luminaries as **Jack Daniels**, **Johnny Moore**, **Clarence Johnson**, **Carl Davis**, **Sonny Saunders**, **Bill 'Bunky' Sheppard**, **Barry Despanza**, **Jeff Perry**, **Emmett Garner**, **Richard Tufo**, **Willie Henderson**, **Eugene Record**, **Mel Collins** and **Jo Armstead**.

It would be remiss of me to imply that Chicago simply made mock Detroit sound-alikes - the two cities had been trading off R&B hits such as Detroit's **The Falcons** '59 smash "**You're So Fine**" (Unart 2013) and the **Wilson Pickett**-led "**I Found A Love**" (LuPine 1003) in '62. Chicago had **The Impressions** with that awesome line-up that included two pivotal Windy City figures, **Jerry Butler** and **Curtis Mayfield**. Their 1958 hit "**For Your Precious Love**" (originally issued on Abner - but then on Falcon 1013), then minus Jerry Butler with "**Gypsy Woman**" (ABC 10241) in '61 and "**It's All Right**" (ABC 10487) in '63, all helped shape the Windy City sound. Detroit had **The Miracles** "**Shop Around**", Chicago had **Barbara Lewis** "**Hello Stranger**" and **Jackie Ross** "**Selfish One**" and so it went on. Slowly, the 'Chicago sound' was evolving - **Major Lance's** "**The Monkey Time**" (Okeh 7175) also a hit in 1963, was an almost 3-D exercise in danceable subtlety, unlike the rather harsh dance hits Motown were enjoying via **The Contours** ("**Shake Sherry**") and **The Isleys** ("**Twist And Shout**").

To highlight for readers mystified by the term, or indeed, the atom splitting definition of 'crossover soul' - because to the uninitiated, the sound is merely a continuation of the successful 60's soul sound enjoyed by Motown though slightly more plusher and in most cases slower than an 'on-the-fours' Detroit pounder - a few well known examples which epitomise the moment are: **Otis Leaville's** "**I Love You**" (Dakar); **The Four Tops'** "**Ask The Lonely**" (Motown); **Garland Green's** "**Girl I Love You**" (Revue) or "**Jealous Kind Of Fella**" (Uni); and **Darrell Banks'** "**I'm The One Who Loves You**" (Volt).

Previously a no-go area for the majority of British soul collectors save for the hand-

ful of completists vainly juggling with random pieces of black music's huge jigsaw who have seen a glut of beat ballads and floaters rise in price from the giveaway sections of record dealers' lists into double figured gilt-edged investments. The rising interest in late 60's/early 70's soul sides raises more than a few interesting theories. Quite why records from this era should almost inexplicably catch the imagination and turntable time in clubs is open to conjecture. There's a school of thought that suggests it's a rejection of new releases and certainly as black America tightens its belt and the industry manipulates CDs into pole position as its market leader, less and less of the 'traditional' mid-to-up-tempo dance records upon which UK soul clubs are dependent are finding their way over.

In theory, people find their way into buying soul records on small labels or by artists who don't chart by a process of elimination and discovery, but which always commences by hearing new or more commercial records. This road of life in the 60's and 70's certainly almost always started at Motown, the sprawling Detroit indie owned by **Berry Gordy** which pumped out pop-soul hits by **The Four Tops**, **Supremes & Co**, but which often led to Atlantic or Stax with their gruffer, more 'Southern' or bluesy overtones (**Sam & Dave**, **Wilson Pickett**). From this arrival lounge - if you had the patience, interest and inclination - you could find more soul music than you could ever hope to hear or own. Because beyond the watershed of the large labels who dominated soul music's golden era were tens of thousands of smaller labels, largely independently owned and usually flourishing on a hope, a prayer and a dream. Paydirt was infrequent, but it happened and, fuelled by a steady stream of pop hits, local smashes and gigs, soul evolved to survive on labels both large and small. Save for those lured into the timewarp of Northern Soul, for the British soul fan this tenuous journey from novice to addict usually always meant moving forward onto new releases. It's hard to conceive if you entered black music through a **George Benson** hit, you'd work backwards to finally arrive at a point where owning **Frank Lynch's** "**Young Girl**" became the be all and end all of your collecting activities. The exception yes, the rule no. The likelihood is you bought whatever soul records your local shop stocked, occasionally happening upon lesser known items via people's recommendations or by following up reviews in the black music press.

The popular argument regarding the increasing in-roads made by early 70's soul is that it's either ex-Northern Soul pundits 're-discovering' records they should have naturally progressed onto, or by disenchanted 60's collectors broadening their horizons. Certainly, it's common knowledge that some leading DJs on the Northern scene are dealing in and collecting 70's soul releases, though no-one (at the time of writing) seems to want to be the first ot →

