

CHAPTER 4

SOUL MUSIC

INTRODUCTION

By the mid-1960s, Rock & Roll began to undergo an enormous transformation. While Dylan's "electric" move and the emergence of psychedelic rock were critical aspects of this change, the rise and eventual cross-cultural success of Soul Music had a more monumental and lasting effect on musical taste and social values in America.

I. BACKGROUND

In general, Soul Music fused together elements from R & B, Gospel, Black-pop and to a limited extent 50s Jazz. Soul's intensely emotional, often pleading, vocal melodies were derived from Gospel singing. Soul's rhythm was a more powerful extension of R & B, while its harmonies drew from R & B, Jazz and Black-pop. Jazz also influenced Soul's trademark use of expanded ensembles—with a tight rhythm section, augmented by horn punches and often a small group of back-up singers in a "Call-and-Response" style.

Early Soul Pioneers

The basic style-phases of early Soul may be outlined as follows:

- c.1950:
R & B evolved out of Gospel and the Black-pop stylings of **The Ink Spots** and **The Mills Brothers**.
- Mid-50s:
Ray Charles (birthname Ray Charles Robinson, 1930-2004) became the first to successfully merge Gospel, Pop and R & B into an early-Soul style with hits such as "I Got a Woman" (1954; adapted from a Gospel tune) and "What'd I Say?" (1959; featuring Gospel-style back-up vocals in a "Call and Response" dialogue with Charles). Ray Charles was also one of prominent Soul artists to record with Atlantic Records (see below).
- Late-50s/Early 60s:
Soul style was refined by various "doo-wop" vocal groups,¹ and by black solo "crooners" such as **Sam Cooke** (1935-64; former lead singer of The Soul Stirrers),² with smooth, ballads like "You Send Me" (1957). From the mid-50s through the 1960s, a more intense brand of Soul was developed by the Georgia-born singer-dancer **James Brown** (1933-2006). His first big hit was the Gospel-derived "Please, Please, Please" (1956). Then, in 1965, he earned the nickname "Soul Brother No. 1" by initiating the "Funk-Soul" movement with "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" and "I Got You [I Feel Good]".³ By the end of the 60s, he was a primary spokesman for the "Black Power" movement, as epitomized by songs like "[Say it Loud] I'm Black and I'm Proud" (1968).

¹ For more on Doo-wop groups of the 1950s, see Chapter 2, Section II.

² The Soul Stirrers was one of the most important Gospel groups of the 1950s.

³ Funk had its greatest influence in the 1970s, leading to disco. (For more information, see Chapter 6).

II. SOUL CENTERS, STYLES AND INNOVATORS

In general, Soul music styles developed in five major U.S. centers—Chicago, New York, Detroit, Memphis, and Philadelphia:

• CHICAGO

Represented by “Blues-Gospel” Soul groups such as **The Impressions** (featuring **Jerry Butler** and **Curtis Mayfield**): “For Your Precious Love” (1958). When Butler went solo in 1959, Mayfield became lead singer, and recorded such socio-religious hits as “Amen” (1963), “I’m So Proud” (1964), “People Get Ready” (1965), and in 1972 came out with the Funk-Soul hit “Superfly”.

• NEW YORK

Atlantic Records (Nesuhi and Ahmed Ertegun/owners; Jerry Wexler/producer; Leiber & Stoller/songwriters)— an independent label begun in the 1950s that promoted such important black Soul artists as **Ray Charles** (1930-2004), **Soloman Burke** (1936-2010), **Percy Sledge** (b. 1941), and **Aretha Franklin** (b. 1942).⁴

Selected Examples of New York (Atlantic) Soul

- **Ray Charles**: “I Got a Woman” (1955); “What’d I Say” (1959): “Georgia on My Mind” (1960)
- **Soloman Burke**: “Got To Get You Off My Mind” (1965)
- **Percy Sledge**: “When a Man Loves a Woman” (1966)
- **Aretha Franklin**: “R-E-S-P-E-C-T” (1967)

• DETROIT

Motown Records (Berry Gordy, Jr., founder/producer; and Holland-Dozier-Holland, songwriters)— a very successful independent label that in the early 60s disseminated a choreographed, conservative blend of Soul-pop with artists such as

Mary Wells, Jackie Wilson, Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, Martha and The Vandellas, The Temptations, and The Supremes.⁵

Starting in the mid-60s, many Motown artists followed James Brown by adopting stronger, funkier styles:

Selected Examples of Detroit (Motown) Soul

- **The Four Tops**: “I Can’t Help Myself” (‘65) “Reach Out, I’ll Be There” (‘66)
- **Jackie Wilson**: “Higher and Higher” (1967)
- **Stevie Wonder**: “I Was Made To Love Her” (1967)
- **Diana Ross & The Supremes**: “Reflections” (1967); “Love Child” (1969)
- **Marvin Gaye**: “I Heard It Through The Grapevine” (1968)
- **Gladys Knight & The Pips**: “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” (1968)
- **The Jackson 5**: “I Want You Back” (1969)
- **The Temptations**: “Papa Was A Rolling Stone” (1972)

⁴ Burke was a minister, and Franklin is the daughter of a Baptist minister—so both have strong Gospel roots.

⁵ For more specifics on early Motown, see Chapter 2, Section VI.

- MEMPHIS

Stax Records/Volt (Stax—and its subsidiary Volt—were small, independent labels distributed by Atlantic). Stax had a more improvisatory, jazzier, horn-predominated Soul style, with the characteristic sound of Stax’s back-up instrumental bands—**The Memphis Horns**, and **Booker T. & the MGs**.⁶ Its main 60s Soul artists were **Sam & Dave**,⁷ **Otis Redding** (1941-67), **Wilson Pickett** (1941-2006), and **Arthur Conley** (1946-2003).

Selected Examples of Memphis (Stax/Volt) Soul

- **Booker T. and The MGs**: “Green Onions” (1962)
- **Otis Redding**: “I’ve Been Loving You Too Long” (1966)
- **Sam & Dave**: “Hold On, I’m Coming” (1966); “Soul Man” (1967)
- **Wilson Pickett**: “In the Midnight Hour” (1965);
“Land of 1,000 Dances [Na, Na, Na, Hey, Goodbye]” (1966)
- **Arthur Conley**: “Sweet Soul Music” (1967)

- PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia International Record Company (Kenny Gamble/Leon Huff, producers/songwriters). In contrast to Dick Clark’s *American Bandstand* Philadelphia sound, Gamble and Huff’s **Philadelphia International** established an intense funk-Soul style through a string of 70s hits by **The O’Jays** (featuring Walter Williams, Eddie Levert, and Bill Isles).

Selected Examples of Philadelphia Soul

- **The O’Jays**: “Love Train” (1972); “For The Love of Money” (1973)

Other important Soul artists of the late 60s/early 70s, who recorded on a variety of independent and/or major labels were Al Green (b. 1946) and Ike & Tina Turner.

Other 60s/early 70s Soul Artists

- **Al Green**:⁸ “Let’s Stay Together” (1972)
- **Ike and Tina Turner**:⁹ “River Deep, Mountain High” (1966);
“I Heard It Through The Grapevine” (1968); “Proud Mary” (1969)

⁶ Booker T. & the MGs featured Booker T. Jones (keyboard), Steve Cropper (guitar), Al Jackson, Jr. (drums), and Lewis Steinberg (bass). They recorded several instrumental hits of their own, including “Green Onions” (1962), and they collaborated with The Memphis Horns to back up almost every 60s Stax/Atlantic artist.

⁷ Featuring singers Sam Moore and Dave Prater.

⁸ Green (b. 1946), considered by many as the “classic” voice of Soul, he had 18 Top 40 hits from 1970-76. In 1976, he became a “born-again” Christian in 1976, and thereafter chose to record only Gospel music.

⁹ During a performance by Ike Turner in 1956, 17-year-old Annie Mae Bullock jumped onto the stage, grabbed the mic and began to sing. Ike was so impressed that he added her to his group as back-up singer. She soon became his co-star—changed her name to Tina—and in 1958 became his wife. The group rose to international fame in the late 1960s, and then Tina gained an even greater popularity in the 70s and 80s. Their rocky/abusive relationship is chronicled in the 1993 film *What’s Love Got to Do With It?*

III. “BLUE-EYED” SOUL

As Soul music rose in popularity, various white vocalists and their bands began to adopt elements of the style. The most notable were **The Young Rascals** and the British soul-rock singer **Joe Cocker**. (Other previously-discussed 60s white soul artists included **The Righteous Brothers**,¹⁰ **Eric Burdon and The Animals**¹¹ and **Steve Winwood**.¹²)

The Young Rascals (later simply “The Rascals”; formed in 1964/disbanded 1972)
Felix Cavaliere (keyboards/vocals); *Eddie Brigati* (vocals/percussion);
Gene Cornish (guitar); *Dino Danelli* (drums)

The Rascals’ explosive rhythm section and exciting vocals established them as one of the most innovative bands of the 60s. Between 1965 and 1968, they had three #1 hits (and several in the Top 10) including “Good Lovin’” (#1 April 1966), “Groovin’” (#1 May 1967), “People Got to Be Free” (#1 August 1968). They recorded on Warner Brothers/Atlantic (Warner Brothers’ parent company Seven Arts assumed Atlantic in 1967).

Joe Cocker

British soul-rock-pop singer Joe Cocker (birthname John Robert Cocker, b. 1944), began his career as a pop singer (using the stage name Vance Arnold). In November 1968, his cover of The Beatles’ “With a Little Help from My Friends” (from *Sgt. Pepper’s*) rose to #1 in the U.K. His career took a quantum leap forward after he performed this song at Woodstock the following August.¹³ From 1969-70, Cocker also did successful soul-rock covers of “She Came in Through the Bathroom Window” (Beatles), and “The Letter” (1967 hit by The Box Tops). In 1975, his ballad “You Are So Beautiful” made the Top Ten, and in 1982 “Up Where We Belong” (a duet with Jennifer Warnes) was a #1 hit.

Selected Examples of 60s White (“Blue-eyed”) Soul

- **The Righteous Brothers**: “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling” (1965)
- **The Young Rascals**: “Good Lovin’” (1966); “People Got to Be Free” (1968)
- **Joe Cocker**: “With a Little Help from My Friends” (1968)

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IV. SOUL IN THE LATE 60S/EARLY 70S: A REFLECTION OF THE TIMES

From 1964-67, white awareness of black culture had increased significantly. As a result, by 1967, white youths—who had already been buying Motown recordings—began to buy harder-edged Soul records, especially those by Aretha Franklin. 1967-68 also saw an escalation of Black activism, racial tensions and general civil unrest in the U.S., as exemplified by the following:

¹⁰ The Righteous Brothers—featuring the black-sounding white artists Bill Medley and Bobby Hatfield are discussed in Chapter 2, Section IV (above).

¹¹ Eric Burdon’s British-Invasion blues/soul style is discussed in Chapter 3. In the later 60s, he turned towards a psychedelic-blues style as seen in hits such as “San Franciscan Nights” (1967).

¹² As a teenager, Steve Winwood’s blues-rock debut was with the Spencer Davis Group (see Chapter 3, p. 26).

¹³ Cocker’s Woodstock performance of “With a Little Help From My Friends” became popular again in the 1980s as the theme song to the hit TV series *The Wonder Years*.

1967:

- Detroit riots in July leave over 40 dead, 2,000 injured, and 5,000 arrested (racial trouble/rioting also hits Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, then spreads to Chicago, Milwaukee, and other Midwest cities)
- By year's end, over 40% major U.S. cities suffered racial violence

1968

- The “leftist” Black Panthers form in Oakland
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4; violence erupts in over 160 cities across the U.S.
- Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles, after winning California's June 6 Democratic party primary. (He could have won the '68 election)
- Civil unrest during the '68 Democratic National Convention in Chicago
- “Black Power” demonstration at '68 Olympics in Mexico City (Black track athletes raised fist during gold medal ceremony)

Through the early 70s, Soul music played an important role in effecting awareness about racial, political and environmental issues, as seen in soul/soul-funk songs by **Marvin Gaye**, **Stevie Wonder**, **The O'Jays**, and others:

Selected Examples of 1970s Socially-Aware Soul

- **Marvin Gaye**: “What's Goin' On” (1971); “Mercy, Mercy Me [The Ecology]” ('71)
- **Stevie Wonder**: “Living for the City” (1973); “Higher Ground” (1973)
- **The O'Jays**: “Love Train” (1972); “For The Love of Money” (1973)

V. SOUL IN THE 1970S, 80S AND 90S

By the mid-70s, the rising popularity of funk/disco and the demise of Stax/Volt (and Atlantic—which was acquired in 1969 by Warner) led to a decline in Soul's commercial popularity. Nevertheless, Soul continued to flourish in the 70s, 80s and 90s through the innovative work of singers such as **Patti LaBelle** (b. 1944), **Teddy Pendergrass** (1950-2010), **Luther Vandross** (1951-2005), **Whitney Houston** (1963-2012), **Mariah Carey** (b. 1970), the white-soul singer **Michael Bolton** (b. 1954), and the Soul/R & B vocal group **Boyz II Men**.¹⁴

Selected Examples of 1970s-90s Soul/Soul-Pop

- **Luther Vandross**: “A House Is Not a Home” (1980s)
- **Michael Bolton**: “Georgia on My Mind” (c 1990)
- **Whitney Houston**: “I Will Always Love You” (1992)
- **Mariah Carey/Boyz II Men**: “One Sweet Day” (1995)

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¹⁴ Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey, Boyz II Men and others 80s/90s Soul-pop artists are discussed in Chapter 8 (“The MTV Generation”).

FEATURED SONGS FOR CHAPTER 4

[w] = Audio and/or lyrics available on the class website

[Time-Life Video] = Time-Life History of Rock and Roll Series

50s SOUL (Atlantic)

- RAY CHARLES: “I Got a Woman” [w] (1955; Time-Life DVD 1a); “What’d I Say” [w] (1959; Time-Life DVD 4b); “Georgia On My Mind” [w] (1960; Time-Life DVD 4b)

60s SOUL

Atlantic

- PERCY SLEDGE: “When a Man Loves a Woman” [w] (1966)
- ARETHA FRANKLIN: “R-E-S-P-E-C-T” [w] (1967)

Motown

- THE FOUR TOPS: “I Can’t Help Myself” [w] (1965; Time-Life Video 5); “Reach Out, I’ll Bet There” [w] (1966)
- “LITTLE” STEVIE WONDER: “I Was Made to Love Her” [w] (1967)
- MARVIN GAYE: “I Heard It Through The Grapevine” [w] (1968)
- GLADYS KNIGHT & THE PIPS: “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” [w] (1968; Time-Life DVD 4b)
- THE JACKSON 5: “I Want You Back” [w] (1969; Time-Life DVD 4b)

Stax

- SAM & DAVE: “Hold On, I’m Coming” [w] (1966); “Soul Man” [w] (1967)
- OTIS REDDING: “I’ve Been Loving You Too Long (To Stop Now)” [w] (1966; Time-Life DVD 4b)
- WILSON PICKETT: “In the Midnight Hour” [w] (1965; Time-Life DVD 4b)
“Land of 1,000 Dances [Na, Na, Na, Hey, Goodbye]” [w] (1966)

Other 60s Black Soul

- IKE AND TINA TURNER: “River Deep, Mountain High” [w] (1966); “I Heard It Through The Grapevine” [w] (1968); “Proud Mary” [w] (1969)

Funk-Soul

- JAMES BROWN: “Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag” [w] (1965; Time-Life DVD 4b); “[Say It Loud] I’m Black and I’m Proud” [w] (1968; Time-Life DVD 4b)

60s White Soul ("Blue-eyed" Soul)

- THE RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS: “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling” [w] (1965; Time-Life Video 2)
- THE YOUNG RASCALS: “Good Lovin’” [w] (1966; Time-Life DVD 2a)

70s SOUL (See also “70s Funk” in Chapter 6)

Motown

- MARVIN GAYE: “What’s Goin’ On” [w] (1971; Time-Life DVD 4b); “Mercy, Mercy Me [The Ecology]” [w] (1971; Time-Life DVD 4b)
- THE TEMPTATIONS: “Papa Was A Rolling Stone” [w] (1972)

Philadelphia International:

- THE O’JAYS: “Love Train” [w] (1972); “For The Love of Money” [w] (1973; Time-Life DVD 4b)

80s/90s SOUL

- LUTHER VANDROSS: “A House Is Not a Home” [w] (1980s; Time-Life DVD 4b)
- MICHAEL BOLTON (white soul): “Georgia on My Mind” [w] (c1990; Time-Life DVD 4b)