



## EPISODE GUIDES

### Soul Deep - The Story Of Black Popular Music

#### The Birth Of Soul - Ep1/6

BBC Two

7 May, 9.00-10.00pm

Soul music has conquered the world in the last 50 years - growing from the raw, electric rhythms of the black underclass, it is now a billion dollar industry with R&B and hip-hop dominating the world's charts. It's been the soundtrack to some of the most extraordinary social, political and cultural shifts. And, together with the civil rights movement, it has challenged the white hegemony, helped breakdown segregation and encouraged the fight for racial equality.

This new six part series, made by the BBC team who produced the critically-acclaimed *Lost Highway*, *Walk On By* and *Dancing In The Street* series, charts the evolution of soul music -with a fascinating combination of rare archive and contemporary interviews.

From rhythm and blues to today's R&B, via gospel, southern soul, Motown, funk and hip-hop soul, *Soul Deep* tells the story of the rise of black popular music - in the words of its greatest performers, producers, musicians and commentators.

Starting with a previously unseen BBC interview with Ray Charles, he reveals how his innovations first brought soul to a wider audience. "Ray was the genius. He turned the world onto soul music," comments Bobby Womack. The term rhythm and blues was coined by Billboard Magazine journalist Jerry Wexler after he was asked by his editor to find an alternative for the label 'race music'.

After many years touring on what was known as the 'chitlin' circuit' (a network of black clubs and bars) with artists like Ruth Brown, Ray finally created his own style - by unifying the sexually-charged music of the dance floor with the spiritually-charged sounds of the church hall.

Life was hard and sometimes dangerous for black musicians in a segregated society. Ruth Brown explains: "When the dance was over sometimes it was so scary we wanted to get out of town as soon as we could. There were still crosses burning in the middle of the night. There was a price paid for this music."

The creation of the Atlantic record label took the music to a wider, more mainstream audience. Ahmet Ertegun who, with his brother Nesuhi, started the label, says: "We had a good feel for where the music was going. Our target audience in the beginning was the black audience - which understands the music they like. Their tastes change and, once they change, don't go back."

As the black sounds crossed the racial divide, rhythm and blues gave birth to rock 'n' roll - a far more sanitised version of the black sound which was seen to be "too uninhibited, too loose, and too sweaty." Ray Charles says: "Rock 'n' roll is the white version of rhythm and blues. There was a big difference, if you really listened to the music, between the two styles. One is more pure, one is more dirty. R&B has got more toe jam in it."

Black artists were squeezed out of the mainstream charts by white covers of their songs and Charles looked back to his roots for his inspiration and the creation of his own distinctive sound. He quotes his mother's influence in his music and his fusion of gospel and sheer dance hall sex. "I started taking my music and saying it the way that I felt it - the gospel sound that was part of my growing up. I knew all I was doing was being myself."

With backing singers the Raylettes, Charles further honed his own sound, much to the chagrin of the church community. Charles' biographer Michael Lydon describes: "He went for a completely uninhibited gospel sound but made it sexual. The Raylettes became the choir behind the preacher."

Another young gospel singer was hot on the heels of Ray Charles - James Brown's hit *Please, Please, Please* in 1956 was the embodiment of the black American experience. It spoke of the hurt as well as the hopes and aspirations of an underclass. "If you really enjoy it, the spirit comes out," Brown tells *Soul Deep*.



## EPISODE GUIDES

Soul Deep - The Story of Black Popular Music

The Gospel Highway - Ep2/6

BBC Two

May 14, 9.00-10.00pm

Gospel singer Sam Cooke changed pop music forever and set the standard for every artist that followed him. His first "cross over" single from gospel to pop *You Send Me* sold a million worldwide and its success inspired a generation of gospel singers, including Aretha Franklin, Solomon Burke and Ben E King. BBC Two's *Soul Deep*, which charts the evolution of soul music, looks at the world of black music before and after that revolutionary moment in 1957 when Cooke went pop.

"You couldn't have the popular music we have today without that crossover from church to pop," explains expert Peter Guralnick. As a member of Chicago's Soul Stirrers, Cooke travelled the gospel highway (a network of black American churches) from 1950 for seven years, along with stars like Candi Staton and Mavis Staples.

Candi and Mavis describe the harsh realities of racism and life on the road. But when they hit the road they were treated like superstars. Bobby Womack says: "Sam was electrifying. The places were jam-packed - it was like Elvis Presley was coming." It was in front of these ecstatic crowds that artists like Cooke learned to work an audience.

Ben E King, followed Cooke into the pop world but his biggest hit *Stand By Me* drew its title from a famous gospel hymn. "Stand By Me was a love song that went way beyond a love song. It has a meaning for people that I never thought it would," King explains.

Not content with smashing the gospel to pop taboo, Cooke was one of the first artists to establish control over his own music by setting up his own label - SAR. This, in turn, was to bring protégées - such as Bobby Womack and Johnnie Taylor - their first taste of fame. Cooke then went on to break-away from love songs into social relevance. After hearing Bob Dylan's iconic *Blowin' In The Wind*, he recorded the first political soul song *A Change is Gonna Come*.

Tragically, Cooke was killed in 1964 at the prime of his career but he bequeathed an extraordinary legacy, inspiring a myriad of black artists from Motown's Berry Gordy to Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin.



## EPISODE GUIDES

### Soul Deep - The Story of Black Popular Music

#### The Sound Of Young America - Ep 3/6

BBC Two

May 21, 9.00-10.00pm

Motown changed the landscape of pop, rewrote the rulebook and created the sound of young America, which appealed to whites as much as to blacks. Crossover soul was the vision of Motown's founder - Svengali figure Berry Gordy. "Motown was a little hit factory, and I got the idea from the assembly line that I worked in at an automobile plant," he explains.

Reflecting the optimism of the early Sixties and the promise of integration, Gordy's artists were coached, groomed and targeted at the lucrative white audience. Gordy's crack song-writing team Holland/Dozier/Holland in Detroit pumped out 40 hits for artists such as The Supremes, Martha Reeves, The Temptations and The Four Tops. "If we didn't get the goose bumps or the hair standing on the arms, then something was missing," comments Lamont Dozier.

His master strokes for cracking the uptown, white establishment was hiring both Maxine Powell, who ran the Artists Development finishing school, and white marketer Barney Ales, who ensured that the company always got paid. Supreme Mary Wilson recalls: "It was Maxine Powell's job to refine us. She very early on told us that we were all diamonds, in the raw, and we needed refining."

Over in Chicago, white-owned, family business Chess Records enviously eyed up Motown's success. Although the label already had a reputation for blues and black rock 'n' roll, they wanted a fresh sound that echoed the mood of the growing aspirational black population. By "sweetening" with strings and pop arrangements, the gritty Chicago sound was transformed into sophisticated soul. Etta James' 'Only Time Will Tell' brought Chess a taste of crossover magic and Fontella Bass's hit 'Rescue Me' emulated the Motown formula.

As the mood of the nation changed, with the rise of the civil rights movement and protests over the Vietnam War, it was in Chicago - not Detroit - that music with a social conscience was first heard. In 'People Get Ready' and 'Choice Of Colours' Curtis Mayfield captured the zeitgeist and sang openly about community struggle and racial harmony. The Detroit riots were a huge wake-up call for Motown, who now seemed embarrassingly out of kilter.

Cracks appeared in the company when, after a dispute about money, Holland/Dozier/Holland left, producer Mickey Stevenson departed and Supreme Flo Ballard was fired. But Gordy was a survivor and, determined to prove the company could move with the times, he released 'Love Child' by Diana Ross and the Supremes. The song, which had a social message, became one of the biggest selling records in Motown's history. Gordy moved the business out to LA and it entered a second golden age. But the age of innocence for Motown was over.



## EPISODE GUIDES

Soul Deep - The Story of Black Popular Music

Southern Soul - Ep 4/6

BBC Two

May 28, 9.00-10.00pm

In the summer of 1967, Otis Redding performed in front of a 200,000 strong, mainly white, crowd at the Monterey Pop Festival. Five years after walking into Stax Records studio in Memphis as an unknown singer, he was now breaking into the mass white market and seducing its counter culture without diluting his sound.

Soul Deep follows both Redding's rise, as he became the embodiment of Sixties soul music, and that of Stax Records as it crossed the racial divide at a time of segregation.

Founded by two whites- Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton - black and white musicians came together at Stax to create gritty, passionate soul. "Stax Records was an oddity - it was like an oasis in the desert. Both black and white musicians became friends because of what they did. It was wonderful. But right outside those doors it stopped," comments Stax songwriter David Porter.

Redding's triumphs at Stax encouraged other labels to look for this new style raw talent. The local Gold Wax label signed an incredible talent - James Carr. One of his rare, previously unseen television performances features in Soul Deep. Classics include Love Attack and At The Dark End Of The Street. "The roar, the depth of soul that we hear when James opens his mouth is the voice of the south. It's that depth of pain and longing for something better," comments Alan Walden, Redding's former manager.

The sound of the south began to influence other labels. New York-based Atlantic Records' Jerry Wexler would bring his musicians south whenever they needed inspiration. Wilson Pickett's huge hit In the Midnight Hour resulted from a night in Memphis' Lorraine Motel with Stax songwriter Steve Cropper and a bottle of "Jack". After Wexler teamed performers Sam and Dave up with Stax writers Isaac Hayes and David Porter, classic hits included Soul Man and Hold On, I'm Comin'.

Wexler was soon alerted to another southern record company - Rick Hall's Fame Studio in sleepy Muscle Shoals - where Percy Sledge cut southern soul's first number one pop hit, When a Man Loves A Woman. It was here that he brought a new artist he had just signed - Aretha Franklin. "It was so evident to me that she was a blazing genius. She was so far ahead of the pack. She made a lot of beautiful records for Columbia but they were all over the place, they had no focus, no direction," explains Wexler.

Fame studio musician Dan Penn describes Franklin's dramatic entrance. "She sat down by the piano and played this unknown chord and the musicians were just like little bugs running for their instruments." That day she recorded her number one hit I Never Loved A Man The Way I Loved You. Her next monster hit was with Redding's Respect. Imbuing it with a new social relevance, it became an anthem and she an icon.

In 1968, in a strange twist of fate, Martin Luther King was murdered in the same Memphis motel where Pickett and Cropper penned In the Midnight Hour a few years before. His death heralded the end of an extraordinary era of hope as black attitudes hardened. "The fraternalism between black musicians and white musicians seemed to suffer," explains Wexler. A new black sound was on it way!



## EPISODE GUIDES

### Soul Deep- The Story of Black Popular Music

#### Ain't It Funky - Ep 5/6

BBC Two

June 4, 9.00-10.00pm

The tough, urban syncopated rhythms of funk were the sound track to the riots and revolutions of the late Sixties and early Seventies. Soul Deep traces the roots of funk from James Brown's seminal Papa's Got A Brand New Bag to the crazy psychedelia of George Clinton.

By emphasizing the first beat of every bar in Brand New Bag, Brown created a musical revolution that changed the course of rhythm and blues, opening the way for hip hop. Brown says: "Well, I took it off the top and put it on the bottom". Brown's music mirrored a new era for African Americans defined by the Black Panthers and a new racial epithet - negro was out and black was in. Rickey Vincent, funk expert, explains: "People said 'what we have is tight, what we have is cool. We gotta lot of raw style, we gotta lot of rhythm. We're bad ass."

The night after Martin Luther King's murder Brown performed an extraordinary concert in Boston which was televised live to lure potential rioters back into their homes. Here he appealed for peace, using his status as a black man. Later that year he released Say It Loud I'm Black And I'm Proud - a song which was embraced by black people but rocked the whites - with many radio stations refusing to play it.

Born out of liberal San Francisco, Sly and The Family Stone was a funk act which brought the psychedelic into soul. A multi-racial band, it entered the Seventies with one of the most influential funk tracks ever - Thank You For Letting Me Be Myself." And it was this new edge which influenced two emerging songwriters at Motown, Norman Whitfield and Barratt Strong, who became the architects of that label's psychedelic soul years. "When Motown saw what was happening, they shifted. They shifted as much out of commercial acuity as artistic integrity," describes commentator David Ritz.

Two of Motown's biggest stars in the Seventies were Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. Gaye rebelled against his clean cut, boy-next-door image to record What's Goin' On, an anthem for change inspired by his brother's time in Vietnam. "It's basically a landscape painting of post-Vietnam Afro-American ghetto life. Marvin takes what is ugly and makes it beautiful."

Inspired by Gaye, Stevie Wonder negotiated himself considerably more artistic freedom from Motown. He hired TONTO - Malcolm Cecil and Bob Margouleff, two studio whiz kids who specialized in analogue synthesizers and a new sound was born.

If previous soul musicians reflected social unrest and the plight of the Afro American, George Clinton's psychedelic glam-funk was in the realms of fantasy. "I was a traffic cop, ringmaster, a bridge between great musicians. The humour had to be there because it was so serious in those times," he explains.

But just when funk looked like it had had its day, a new style emerged from the burnt-out Bronx bringing the music back to gritty social reality - hip-hop.



## EPISODE GUIDES

### Soul Deep - The Story Of Black Popular Music

#### From Ghetto to Fabulous - Ep 6/6

BBC Two

June 11, 9.00-10.00pm

Mary J Blige, the queen of hip-hop soul, speaks candidly about her journey from ghetto to fabulous in the final programme of Soul Deep. Her music represents the fusion of R&B and hip-hop and completes the journey that started 50 years ago with the emergence of the early soul sounds of Ray Charles and ends with black R&B artists' domination of the charts today.

The extraordinary story of the unstoppable rise of urban R&B, with its diamond-dripping, darlings of the media, high profile celebrity artists - such as Beyoncé and Destiny's Child - is traced back to the housing projects in Yonkers in the Eighties where Mary J Blige started out. Her tempestuous career began when producer Andre Harrell signed her to Uptown Records. "She wasn't an album, she was a movie," comments Andre.

On the way up, the pressure of stardom nearly destroyed her. "To cope with life in the music business, I had to get wasted all the time," she admits. But her music spoke to the streets. She brought the rawness of classic soul into the hip-hop era.

Andre says: "We took her pain and put it on a platform to be the communicator for all that generation of women who grew up in the Eighties in a single parent decade, with crack being the main drug - which took whole households out."

Her music has had a massive influence. Kelly Rowland from Destiny's Child says: "I think of Mary J Blige as the Aretha Franklin of our generation because she's got so much soul." Producer and former Fugees, Wyclef Jean discusses the meteoric rise of Destiny's Child (which has made them The Supremes of the R&B generation) and comments: "It's the hard rhythmic singing style of Beyoncé Knowles that makes her an extraordinary vocal figure."

A pre-cursor to hip-hop soul was the emergence of new jack swing, epitomised by the alpha male performance of Bobby Brown. He brought black masculinity and ghetto style back to the game.

Another part in the jigsaw of world domination by R&B artists was played by video producer Hype Williams. A former graffiti artist, he placed black artists in dreamy, exotic locations which brought urban R&B music to a wider audience. Images like Missy Elliott in an inflatable rubber suit, TLC on a swing and Puffy on a yacht "did for the video world what Picasso did to the art world - turned it on its head," comments writer Barry Michael Cooper.

The combination of all these factors has meant that R&B - with its roots in soul music which has been evolving over the last 50 years - has moved from ghetto to ghetto-fabulous to simply fabulous.