

Music My Family Use To Play - Part II

Written by Anthony Frazier
Friday, 12 August 2011 13:26



High Volume - Music Review

by Anthony Frazier

A few weeks ago I wrote an article about the music I grew up listening to and the influence it had on my life. I promised there would be another segment and here it is! I hope you enjoy it!

Music, no matter what genre....., is still music. I grew up around music and aside from my family, music is my first and true love. Music is my passion.

I am in the process of ripping all of my cds, lps, cassettes and videos to my external hard drives so that I can have easier access to it all. It's going to take me at the very least 6 years to complete the whole task.. I'm down for it though because it keeps me out of trouble.

So, where did it all begin?

When I was a kid no more than 5 years old I guess, I heard James Brown for the very first time. I fell in love with hits like "I Feel Good", "Say It Loud" and later on tunes like "The Payback" and "Talking Loud". I used to go to church and just out of the blue stand up and sing James Brown tunes.. Talk about getting in trouble. It was so funny thinking back now.

I also remember pretending to be a disc jockey on a major radio station I called W-H-A-N-D. I called it that because I did everything by hand. I used to take pennies and pretend they were records. I would take pens or pencils and pretend they were tone arms on a record player. I then put on my best dee jay voice and announced different songs. I would say things like "this is your favorite deejay coming to you from station W-H-A-N-D and here's The Supremes with "Floy Joy." And it didn't matter if it was Hank Williams or Freddie King, I would pretend to be playing it

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and singing along to it!

My parents always had music in the house. There was everything from Sister Rosetta Thorpe to BB King and many other artists in between. I guess I can truly say my love started there. My parents, (although I never saw them buy any records), always had new music in the house. Not only would they have the latest by some of the hottest artists at the time, they also had new tunes by artists who might have only released a single or maybe one album. It was all there. I did start making trips with them both to the record stores when I got older and they would buy tunes by artist like Zapp featuring Roger Troutman, Tracy Chapman and many others. My parents, up until their deaths, always seemed to stay hip as far as music was concerned. I remember my mom actually jamming some Public Enemy with me when I was in college and with my dad, whatever had a groove, no matter who it was, he jammed it. He sometimes got a little tipsy from it!!!

During my early years of loving music I didn't quite remember the artist names but I remember seeing a lot of the labels at the time going round and round on the turntable. Many of those labels, (Duke, Fame, Peacock, Chess, Checker, ABC, Galaxy, Brunswick, United Artists, Tamla) and others have been gone for many years now. Some were "swallowed" whole by major labels, whereas others just drifted away.

Many of those artists didn't reach that level of celebrity that they should have, but their music, to this day had an impact on, not only me, but many of my friends in music like my good friend A. Scott Galloway on the West Coast and Chris Parrish down south. They and so many of my peers in music, like so many others latched on to the music of the time and became writers, musicians, poets, artists, reporters or just lovers of the groove and more.

Lesser known artists like JJ Malone, Fred Hughes and more popular artists like Bobby Bland, Mahalia Jackson and others were always on in my home. I can't remember a day when music wasn't played in my home. I remember one time when I was a kid, I got in trouble at school and instead of taking the tv and outdoor activities away from me, my mom decided to take away my little tape player..Talk about hurt. Yeah, music is and always will be a part of my being.

By the way - Who remembers tape players?

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I still remember to this day the very first album I bought and the very first 45 I bought. Surprisingly enough, I still have both! The first album I ever bought was "Mothership Connection" by Parliament in 1975 and the very first 45 I bought that same year was "Golden Years" by David Bowie. Talk about two different extremes!

"Golden Years" still to this day stands as one of my all time favorite top 100 songs.

Now my parents weren't the only ones who had a huge influence on my love for music. I have to credit my two brothers, my two sisters and one of my cousins as well. As the years went by my two brothers turned me on to artist like Elton John, Curtis Mayfield, Willie Hutch and many others. My cousin flooded my ears with the sounds of Gladys Knight and The Pips, Stevie Wonder, Jr. Walker, Isaac Hayes and so many more. One of my sisters passed away when I was only 4 years old, but she left behind a record collection that boasted many artist including The Isley Brothers. Whereas my other sister, when I was old enough to go spend the night at her house, (she and her then husband), had a collection of artist like The People's Choice, The Supremes, William DeVaughn, Marvin Gaye, Peter Frampton and many others.

I would imagine the most pivotal time period for me was 1975. Wow, it's hard to think back to 1975 and it's 2011!! I was 8 years old in 1975 and my love for music had already been festering inside of me!!!

In the summer of 1975 my family took a road trip from Houston to Cali and Canada! What an amazing trip that was. My dad drove most of the time and we listened to some great music all the way there and back. One of the things I remember most was an amazing live album by BB King and Bobby Bland called "Live...Together For The First Time". This was one of the most incredible recordings I had ever heard in my short life!! (Remember I was only 8) LOL... By the time we got back to Houston, I knew that tape (8 track) by heart. Intro and all. Now who remembers the 8 track???

That kind of set the pace for me. But it's what happened when we got to California that really, really set me on fire! My brother had bought a copy of an lp by an English bloke named Elton John. Now this album, (I found out years later), had been released in 1974. It was Elton John's Greatest Hits! It featured tunes like "Rocket Man", "Saturday's Alright For Fighting" and "Honky Cat". I totally fell in love with that album....I fell in love with Elton's music as well. That same

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year, (back in Houston), my brother purchased two other Elton John albums, (both of which were actually released in 1975), "Rock Of The Westies" and one of my all time favorite albums ever "Captain Fantastic and The Brown Dirt Cowboy". Both of these releases have stood the true test of time, (my time). I still, to this day find myself listening to those two albums, (these days MP3's),back to back repeatedly as if they are brand new.!! True classics indeed.

Now, there was another group, (a family band), that blended gospel with Soul music long before Kirk Franklin and Mary Mary came on the scene. I'm referring to The Staple Singers. By 1975, the Staple Singers had already made their mark on the history of popular music with their massive hits, "I'll Take You There" and "Respect Yourself", both of which came from the 1972 release "Be-Altitude-Respect Yourself". I was already a huge fan of The Staple Singers, (I've even had the pleasure of befriending Mavis and Pops, (before he passed away), but my love for The Staple Singers really took shape when they released the Curtis Mayfield penned "Let's Do It Again" in, (yes..you guessed it 1975)!! This had to be one of the most awesome songs around at the time. I could sit on my porch and hear people passing by in their pimped out cadillacs playing "Let's Do It Again". That song had such soul, such a timeless feeling of being. It was incredible. After that, I became a true Staple Singers fan. I've been one since!!! I also enjoyed "Unlock Your Mind" which came out in 1978. Pops and Mavis made quite a few trips to Houston in the late 90's up until his death in 2000. I still have photos with the late, great Pops Staples..

I guess if my foundation for music was being laid, it might have started with The Staple Singers among others...

As it turned out, The Staple Singers had left an indelible print on my musical mind that was helped along the way by artist like BB King, Bobby Bland, Mahalia Jackson and a host of others..My music collection began in earnest in 1975 with the David Bowie single and the Parliament album I mentioned earlier. Since that time I've amassed a wealth of music that rivals any radio station disc jockey's collection..Hits and misses by some of the best artist of all time and some that should have been bigger than they were.

So, along with albums like BB King's "Indianola Mississippi Seed Blues" lp, The Staple Singers "Be-Altitude", Parliament's "Mother Ship Connection" and Prince's "For You" among other great releases from the early 70's through 1978. I had become hooked.

Music has been my drug of choice for many years now and it doesn't look like that addiction will disappear anytime soon.{jcomments on}

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