



Big Maybelle got soul

The Gospel Truth



VARIOUS ARTISTS From Sacred To Secular: A Soul Awakening

★★★★★

HISTORY OF SOUL 8-CD BOX SET

While the many rivers and local streams that soul music flowed through in the '60s have been comprehensively mapped and made accessible for aural explorers, there have been far fewer attempts to place the explosion of black American vocal music within a broader social and historical context, which is where this stunning 231-track collection comes in. Tracking the many tributaries that fed into the breaking of the dam in the late '50s and early '60s, we move all the way from Arizona Dranes' 'I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go' (1927), noticeable for allegedly introducing pounding piano accompaniment to previously a cappella Pentecostal gospel songs, right through to Little Stevie Wonder's '62 extension and secular exploitation of the hard-edged, hysterical, holy rollin' church sound.

We move from the '20s to the '50s in just one disc, which is

perhaps slightly too rapid a dash, given the intense redemption-through-enraged-confession gospel blues of Blind Willie Johnson, and the sweet rolling locomotion of The Jackson Gospel Singers' 'Heaven Bound Train'. For the remaining seven discs, there's a mix of familiar artists doing lesser known tracks (Aretha's unreleased 'While The Blood Runs Warm', Big Maybelle's 'Ocean Of Tears' - tough as old boot leather, raw as sashimi), more obscure takes on well-known songs (Little Miss Cornshucks' heart-breaking small hours stab at 'Try A Little Tenderness' being a standout case in point), out and out classics ('Work Song', 'What I'd Say', 'Looking For A Love') and tracks that will have hitherto been unheard outside of small circles of connoisseurs.

With its free interweaving of hard gospel and blues, the sweet succour of (post-) Jubilee spiritual quartets and the sensual, secular exploitations of these sounds, this collection almost imperceptibly threads together a loose narrative that shows how black singers responded to the enthusiastic consumption and subsequent appropriation of early '50s blues and R&B by a white audience, as well as to the contemporaneous dark decade-long struggle for basic civil rights. Nurtured and replenished time and again by the continuity and community provided by the church, a more emotive, expressive, soulful style of singing emerged and left its mark on all that was come.

This writer's compilation of the year by quite some distance.

Hugh Dellar

LINK WRAY Early Recordings

★★★

ACE CD



This twofor links the original 1978 Chiswick *Early Recordings* set with the later collection, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, originally released in '82.

The first half of this CD is the real must have, collecting the shattered speaker reverb of Wray's Swan label releases including 'Ace Of Spades' and of course the track that's become a cliché of scene-setting in '50s documentaries - 'Rumble'. Swerving across the instrumental genres from the novelty comic spiel of 'Batman Theme' and 'The Shadow Knows' to the frantic chicken-picking of 'Run Chicken Run' and incorporating the proto-Sonics scuzz of 'Hidden Charms', these sounds influenced countless Sears Silvertone strummers and laid the foundations of surf and garage.

Containing more than a few intro versions of hits, the second collection is patchier but Link's unhinged vocal on 'Good Rockin' Tonight' is a highlight alongside the twangtacular cover of 'Heartbreak Hotel'.

A bonus recording of The Beatles' 'Please Please Me' is surprisingly entertaining!

Henry Hutton

TIMI YURO Something Bad On My Mind / The Unreleased & Rare Liberty Recordings

★★★

MORELLO CD



We will aim this one squarely at those of you who are fans of the USA's "Girl Group" sound, and who wish there were

some still-undiscovered veins to mine. That's probably quite a few of you, right?

Timi Yuro had a couple of big hits, starting way back in 1961 with 'Hurt', and never managed to recreate that kind of success again. This set consists of a shelved LP from '68 - recorded in England - and an equal weight slathering of extra tracks and demos reaching all the way back to '61.

The thing is, all of these recordings sound like they belong together, and that's quite something considering their time frames.

The material is mainly flawless, the arrangements are masterpieces, and her voice is, well, stunning. There's nothing on here as utterly massive as, say, 'What's a Matter Baby', but you will certainly wonder why most of this never saw the light of day till now.

If not her finest, this is still certainly worth inspecting.

Mike Fornatale



Timi Yuro thinks bad thoughts