

# British invasion of black soul music music essay



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In the early 1960's before the British invasion black soul music, Doo wop, Motown and R&B dominated the American audiences. The 1960's saw the civil rights movement. In 1963, a march on Washington saw the passing of the civil rights act of 1964 which outlawed discrimination in public accommodations and employment. This followed with the assassination of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, spurring riots in 125 US cities in 1968, coinciding with the civil rights act of 1968.

The 1960's saw Billboard change the name of its R&B chart to Soul, but the term Soul had been used as a label ' since the mid 50's.' It had its beginnings in the 1950's when Ray Charles exploited the ' gospel sound to create fusions of black religious and R&B music' with songs such as ' I got a woman' based on the gospel song ' My Jesus is all the World'. Sam Cooke also contributed a great deal to Soul. ' Cooke produced an almost unbroken sequence of hits from 1957 to 1964, the year of his death' his music gave ' proof that anything was possible.' This influenced artists who would later become global black Soul performers such as Aretha Franklin, The Falcons and James Brown. Groups such as The Angels, The Shirelles and The Righteous Brothers helped to popularize the music as mainstream. For much of the 1960's soul could be seen as the umbrella term for black popular music, which dominated American audiences in the early to mid 1960's.

However one of the biggest success stories was the Detroit based ' Motown', which could be seen as ' pop soul' which gave fame to names such as Diana Ross, Gladys Knight and Smokey Robinson. Tamla Motown was created by Berry Gordy Jr and although the stars were all black, you couldn't fully define it as black music as the intent was to make music ' palatable to white

audiences'. Gordy was also known to have controlled the performing styles and clothes in a way to prepare them for the wider mainstream audience. Amongst the most successful of his artist was Marvin Gaye, who was the first to take his artistic control over his recordings and repertoire.

The East Coast DooWop and girl groups also made a contribution to African-American music during the 1960's. They were singers and groups whose origins were found on the street corners in the form of cappella groups found in many urban centres. With very rare exceptions, these groups did not write their own songs, but relied on their handlers to set up the recording sessions, pick the material, and produce the records. In fact, many of these behind-the-scenes people eventually became stars in their own right in the seventies. The influence of Doo Wop can be seen in soul music through groups such as William Robinson's, The Miracles who started a Doo Wop group whilst at school.

White popular music of the UK developed into one of the most leading music's in the world. Through the 1950's ' there existed a barely understood American style.' – Rock and Roll. At the beginning of 1960 American pop music continued to set the patterns of the native musical efforts in the UK. " The US contribution to the British charts was large and extremely important" At this point- the twist was in full swing, Chubby Checker, Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis dominated the British charts. After rock and roll, Britain returned to its traditional values with the likes of Cliff Richard and ' Living Doll' which ' brought mums and dads along' as well.

For a short while in Britain at the end of the 1950's into the early 60's there was a revival of American Skiffle, made popular by Skiffle artist, Lonnie Donegan. Skiffle was the first attempt undertaken to appropriate American popular music. It was a growing interest in rural and urban blues. Many of these interests involved a conservative nostalgia for the authentic of some imagined yesteryear. Skiffle would later influence John Lennon and Paul McCartney in their first band The Quarrymen and The Beatles.

We can also see the influence of African American artists through British R&B which developed as a major musical movement in the early 1960s, initially in London, but also in other urban centres in the UK, as predominately young white male musicians attempted to emulate the style and recordings of African American R&B artists. We can see this influence through The Rolling Stones. Muddy Waters used song extension to transform 1940s Chicago Blues. This was achieved by reviving repertoire he had learnt and increasing amplification. 15 years later The Stones and subsequently Cream and Canned Heat followed his example in substance as well as spirit by themselves drawing from the same source. Thus The Stones recorded ' I Just want to make love to you' and ' I can't be Satisfied. Blues songs and influences continued to surface in the Rolling Stones' music throughout their long career.

Cream made versions of the delta blues and Canned Heat took their inspiration from the delta bluesman Tommy Johnson. This song copying tradition played a big role in the pop music.-

All these African American influences such as Skiffle, R&B and Soul along with white American Rock and Roll gave way to Beat music or the Merseybeat. Bands who defined this genre were largely the Beatles but also Hermans Hermits and Gerry and the Pacemakers, to name a few. In Walter Everetts ' The Beatles as Musicians' he describes their compositional style as imitations of buddy holly and R&B techniques ' practised by the witty guitarist Chuck Berry, the energetic Little Richard, and the humorous and skilful coasters'

After the large success of the Merseybeat in the UK, it transformed over to the US led by The Beatles on the 7th of February 1964. This would be then followed by other beat, pop and rock groups. Among the most successful bands in the genre were the Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds, The Kinks, Manfred Mann, The Animals, the Spencer Davis Group and The Who. Many of these bands dominated the UK and US charts from 1964, becoming a second wave of British Invasion acts in the US, and in the UK were central to the Mod subculture. Several of the bands and their members went on to become leading rock music performers of the late 1960s and early 1970s, helping to create sub-genres that included psychedelic, progressive and hard rock and making R&B a key component of that music.

However the British Invasion ended careers of black artists such as chubby checker and fats domino with only a handful surviving such as the Motown artists. However soul music did remain popular through evolved forms such as Funk which can be associated to James Brown. This later developed into Funk and Soul influenced by Phychedelic Rock. A good example would be the band ' Sly and the Family Stone' and their album ' Stand!' who were

successful. However groups such as The Miracles and The Supremes found it hard to keep up with the changing trends and could never recover. Black music charted a musical path different from white rock. Although much black music crossed over to the pop charts, black performers did not share common ground with their white counterparts.-