

★ MOVIES
★ THEATRE
★ DINING

Entertainment

★ DANCING
★ SHOWS
★ LOUNGES

THE CHARLOTTE POST

"Charlotte's Fastest Growing Community Weekly"

Thursday, January 9, 1986 - THE CHARLOTTE POST - Page 1B

Ben E. King's Voice Is A Most Expressive Instrument

By Loretta Manago
Post Managing Editor

More than 20 years after he made his first musical mark with the Drifters, Ben E. King's voice remains one of the most expressive instruments ever to be presented on vinyl.

In fact, if anything, time and experience have brought added nuances, shadings and a mature subtlety to his gift. Ben E. King has got the voice and when the master sings, there's nothing else like it in the world.

His story is not much different from others in the entertainment field. Singing in the church choir was Ben E. King's first formal musical experience. With a move to Harlem Ben King also moved from gospel to secular music. He formed a group called the Four B's (each member's first name began with the letter B).

"The best I could get out of that group, though," King recalled, "was marrying Betty, the sister of the two brothers in the Four B's. There were more groups for King to go through before he would get one of the first major breaks of his career, one of which was an opportunity to sing with the Moonglows.

"I had the chance to be one of the Moonglows," King noted, "very few people know about that. I fit in but I just wasn't experienced enough to go through with it." Then, one day in '59 King was singing in his



SINGER BEN E. KING

...Destined for solo career

father's restaurant; the manager of a group called the Five Crowns stopped in. And that was really when it all began to happen for King.

In 1959 the original Drifters had disbanded. This left their manager with a recording contract with Atlantic Records to fulfill, as well as a long-term performance contract for annual appearances at Harlem's Apollo Theatre. The Five Crowns with

the new addition of King stepped in and became the new Drifters.

For King, entering Atlantic Studios for the first time was a dream come true. "There Goes My Baby," their debut single reached the top 5 on both pop and R&B charts. Many critics and music observers insisted that it was King's gospel-rooted, high-pitched vocal delivery, both with the Drifters and then on his own - that has influenced every high

tenor R&B vocalist to come along since.

As long as Ben King was with the Drifters and especially as long as he sung lead, the Drifters scored hit after hit.

But as fate would have it, Ben King was destined for a solo career. At an Atlantic session, a mid-winter snowstorm kept the other three Drifters from attending. Phil Spector, a young discovery of Leiber and Stoller was supervising the recording. King had brought along "Spanish Harlem," a tune he had co-written with Leiber. And although Ben had sung solo before, this time the session really clicked. Another hit came with "Stand By Me," followed by "Don't Play That Song" and King's biggest record to date, "I (Who Have Nothing)."

In association with writer-producer Bob Gallo in 1963 an admittedly strange single called "What Is Soul?" proved to be King's first hit record outside of the States, first in Canada, then in Europe.

Succeeding in Europe was not the same as making it here in the States. After being on foreign soil for a number of years King got the feeling to go "American style." Returning to the States, King also returned to the Atlantic family. With the releases of "Let Me Live In Your Life" and "Street Tough" King is spreading his magic all over again.

Diana Ross To Host Prime Time Special

Diana Ross will host the 13th annual "American Music Awards," airing on ABC-TV as a three-hour prime-time special, Monday, January 27, 8-11 p.m. The awards special, produced by Dick Clark Television Productions, Inc., will originate "live" from the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

There will be a special appearance by Lionel Richie, telecast live via satellite from London. He will be joined by some of contemporary music's top performers, including Clarence Clemons, Phil Collins, Roger Daltrey and Wang Chung, among others.

Also making a special

appearance, live via satellite from Hong Kong, will be Madonna.

Nominations for "American Music Awards" are in three categories - pop-rock; country and soul - rhythm and blues. There are nine awards in each category - favorite male and female vocalist; favorite group; favorite album and

single; favorite male and female video artist; favorite video group and favorite video single.

Winners are determined by votes cast by a cross-section of the American record-buying public in a poll conducted by Herbert Altman Communications Research, Inc.



Diana Ross
...Famous performer