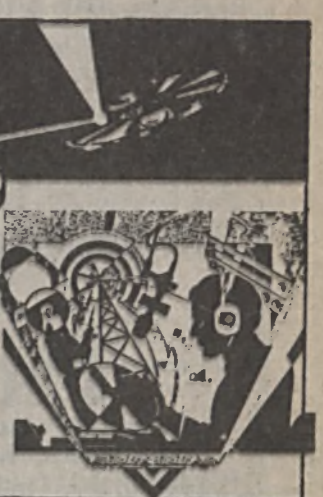




Entertainment



B Section

THE CHARLOTTE POST - Thursday, January 28, 1988

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Rock'n'Roll is Back

By William James Brock
Post Entertainment Editor

Rock'n'Roll is one of four great musical forms indigenous to American culture. Blues, Jazz and Bluegrass are the other three. All grew out of the hopes, dreams and heartbreaks of the unique American experience. Each is identified with a particular cultural segment, and each evolved from elements of all the others. Of course, Blues came first-out of the tragic experience of black slaves yearning for their African homeland long gone.

While all the great musical forms have left their imprints on our society, Rock'n'Roll has probably left the deepest impression. It began, in the 1950s, as youth protest music-



Janet Jackson

as young people began to rebel against parental values.

Chuck Berry, one of several credited with being a Founding Father of the new music, once said Rock'n'Roll would never die. He was probably right. The music has been going strong now for more than 30 years.

That doesn't mean nobody was trying to kill the youth music-many were in its early days. It was condemned by mainstream musicians and from America's pulpits. Rev. Billy Graham once called Rock'n'Roll "the Devil's work." The good parson also branded Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Elvis Presley as "the Unholy Three-the most dangerous men in America."

By the 1960s even the U.S. government had come around to Graham's view. Rock musicians were reviled by presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. Still, the music wouldn't die.

As the French say, though, everything becomes respectable if you live long enough. Rock'n'Roll is now a big bucks industry. And it's currently undergoing yet another revival.

Hollywood, which cashed in on rockflicks in the early days, is raking in big bucks again. It all began this time around with the 1985 release of "The Buddy Holly Story." More recently, "La Bamba" has been pulling in the bucks nationwide. Movie soundtracks are also paying homage to rock music. Ben E. King's classic "Stand By Me" was the title song in Rob Reiner's hit film of the same name. And the invincible "Stay" by Maurice Williams is on the soundtrack of the recent sleeper hit "Dirty Dancing."

Patrick Swayze, who starred in the film, liked "Stay" so much that he put it on the slipside of a new 45 record he recently cut. And the unsinkable little song also played under dialogue in a recent episode of the CBS show "Designing Women."

Even TV commercials these days are done around classic rock songs. The music that Chuck Berry said would never die has permeated our culture to a degree that even the legendary rocker could not have predicted back in those days. Over three decades, Rock'n'Roll has evolved from outlaw youth music to American institution.

Institution or not, though, rockers have retained the vis-

"Our Music Will Never Die."

--Chuck Berry, 1957

ceral style that made the music a secular religion. Though many of the greats are gone-Jimi Hendrix, Elvis, Marvin Gaye, Janis Joplin and others-the ones who remain still have the feisty spirit that made them superstars to begin with.

That spirit was in evidence at the January 20 Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame induction. Mike Love, of the Beach Boys, lashed out at Diana Ross and Paul McCartney because the two singers chose not to attend their induction into the Hall of Fame at New York's Waldorf Astoria. "It's a real bummer their not coming," Love said. The brouhaha made national headlines.

To her credit, Ross had sent a courteous apology and explanation of her absence beforehand. McCartney took a tougher line. He announced he would not "attend some phony Beatles reunion."

More recently, at the January 25 American Music Awards, rock superstars made more positive headlines. Anita Baker won the favorite album honors with "Rapture." She also surprised everyone by beating out Whitney Houston for favorite female R&B vocalist.

Houston copped that honor in the pop/rock category. She also had the favorite single in that slot.

Bad Michael Jackson, who has 11 previous American Music Awards trophies, copped only one-favorite single in R&B. Sister Janet Jackson won for favorite pop/R&B combo video.

Paul Simon won favorite pop/rock album honors with "Graceland," whose title cut is a tribute to one of the Founding Fathers of Rock'n'Roll. Well, as the Mexicans say-if it goes around it comes around. And the beat goes on.



Diana Ross



Maurice Williams Staying Power

Spotlight



By William James Brock
Post Entertainment Editor

One of the most innovative talents to come out of the great popular music upheaval of the 1950s is singer/composer Maurice Williams. Now living in Charlotte, the great rocker has travelled hundreds of thousands of miles on tour with his band, The Zodiacs. The song that made him famous is an unsinkable little ditty called "Stay." Rolling Stone magazine calls the 1:37 tune "the shortest Number One single in pop music history."

The singer wrote the song for a girlfriend when he was in high school. He threw away the lyrics but fortunately had recorded "Stay" a capella on a tape recorder. His girlfriend's sister persuaded Williams to shop the song around to record companies. The song became a hit for Maurice Williams and The Zodiacs, establishing the group's fame.

Maurice Williams started his career a few years before "Stay," in a small town of Lancaster, South Carolina. In 1955, he was a student at Barr Street High, playing piano and trombone, and singing in the glee club. He and four other young men formed a band called The Royal Charms, and right away the Charms started winning local

talent shows and playing high school proms. One night a college student from the University of South Carolina happened to catch their act. He booked them to play at a fraternity party. It was the first time the Charms played outside the Lancaster area, and it set them on the road to a career that has lasted over four decades.

In 1957 the group changed their name to the Gladiolas and Maurice composed a song titled "Little Darlin." The tune, recorded on Excello Records, was an immediate hit for the group, and so strong was its impact in the South, that shortly thereafter, a nationally famous recording act named The Diamonds did a cover version. It immediately zoomed to the top of the charts.

The song's success established Maurice as a double-barreled talent. Not only was he a gifted singer and entertainer, but now he was also one of the hottest songwriters in the business. The group changed its name to Maurice Williams and The Zodiacs, and in 1960, they recorded another of Maurice's songs. The song was "Stay," and its tenure as Number One all through the summer finally established the band as one of the

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By William James Brock
Post Entertainment Editor

Doing comely splits and contortions on her popular exercise video, she looks like any other glamorous middle-aged woman who is in great shape. Seeing her making her health and fitness pitch to affluent yuppies, most people don't immediately associate Jane Fonda with war and revolution.

Yet the film star-turned-fitness-guru was deeply involved in the Vietnam War-as an activist protestor against American policy during the conflict. Fonda even went so far as to visit Hanoi, at the height of the conflict, to pose for photographs with Viet Cong soldiers.

Ironically, it was also Jane Fonda who helped create the trend of Hollywood and television cashing in on the same war she had so vociferously denounced earlier.

With the 1978 movie "Coming

Home" she helped launch Vietnam as a cash crop for studio and network moguls. The film, as they say in Hollywood, proved the war "ad legs" as an entertainment vehicle.

The war had been show business all along, though. In fact, it was the first military conflict in America's history to get prime-time coverage on the nightly news. Many editorial pundits began calling it "the television war" early on.

It all began right after the Korean War ended in 1953. The U.S. had 300 military advisors working with French forces in Vietnam by 1954. By 1956 President Eisenhower had sent in another 300 to help prop up the government in South Vietnam. In 1961 President Kennedy stepped-up American troop strength-sending in 16,000 G.I.'s during his presidency.

Both Presidents Johnson and Nixon poured troops into Viet-

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A Vet's Widow

"These Vietnam war movies might be doing a service by getting the truth out about the war," said Betty Potts. She learned some harsh truths about that war. Her husband was killed in it. And she has had to raise two daughters who will never know their father.

They were high school sweethearts. They married young and settled into building a family life. While Harry Mitchell was in those bloody firefights they were enjoying brand new baby Bridget. That marital bliss was doomed, but they did not know it at the time.

When Pfc. Johnny W. Potts shipped out for Vietnam in November of 1967, Betty had a feeling he would not be coming back. By then she was pregnant with their second child. Youngest daughter Yolunda never saw her father. Pfc. Potts lived slightly more than three months after arriving in Vietnam. Neither of the daughters, now in their twenties, remember their father.

Two Army officers came one morning at 7:30 to tell her that her husband had been killed in action. The young bride was not



Pfc. Johnny Potts



Betty and Johnny Potts

even old enough to legally draw his military insurance or social security benefits.

Betty Potts has survived the 20 years since Johnny Potts died by hard work and sacrifice. At times she had to hold two jobs to make ends meet. At present she is an assistant book keeper with The Charlotte Post newspaper.

She loved her husband, and still has the wedding ring he gave her. Her girls read their father's old letters from Vietnam. But she has never remarried and has never been to see his name on The Wall.

"It's very ironic," Betty said. "He was killed in February-Black History Month. I still miss him around that time. I think it's my destiny to be married only once."

There are other ironies. Johnny Potts and brother Hazel Potts served in Vietnam at the same time-but never saw each other during their tours.