

soul sides

Chris Wells opens a variety pack of summer soul.



●●●● Don't you just love it when something new jumps out of nowhere and takes the scene by storm? Then you need to be casting a fast ear to **Rasheed Ali's** 1968: *Soul Power!*, an extraordinary 18-track funk album of out Los Angeles that just appeared online and in DVD/CD format.

The best place to check it initially is at 1968soulpower.com, for the simple reason that Rasheed has set each and every tune to its own individual video - sourcing the images from freely available Public Domain material - which not only gives you something to watch while you groove, but also adds a semi-documentary style flavour of how it was for a teenage African-American in the late sixties [which he indeed was]. Thus, while the music powers its way past, you'll hear tales of what it was like to wake up one day and find your city on fire after Martin Luther King had been murdered [*Burn Baby Burn*], about watching white people wanting to be black 'cause it was hip, without realising what it meant to be black full-time [*Twenty Four Seven*], about heroes on *Float Like A Butterfly*, a JB-style tribute to Muhammad Ali, about freely available drugs [*Going Up In Smoke*], Nation of Islam separatists [*Down With The Program*], the Black Panthers [*Black Power Revolution*], radical politics [in a Cameo-like groove on *Stand Up*], student uprisings across the world [*Student Revolution*], flower-power/pacifism [on the Sly-like funk of *Psychedelic*], post-Vietnam shock suffered by war veterans [the Curtis-ish *Vietnam*], and the original sixties 'summer of love' [the Family Stone sounding *Out Of Sight*]. It's all as vibrant and frenetic as the times: the horns blare and the basslines hum, and through the lyrics Rasheed has astral-travelled himself right back to his youth. It's a great idea and it works even better that it doesn't seek to disguise all its rough edges. Read more on page 20. Meanwhile the album/DVD/CD combo ought to be available from Soul Brother by the time you read this: visit soulbrother.com or call 020 8875 1018. Oh, and thanks to Mike Ashley in Bristol for pointing

Rasheed in our direction.

●●●● And while we're on the subject of funk, the latest volume in BGP's *Superfunk* series, **Soul Emissaries**, is definitely worthy of some attention, as the temperatures rise. This time the music straddles the soul-funk divide for the most part, artists like **George Jackson, Viola Wills, McKinley Mitchell, Chuck Brooks** and **Mary Love** mixing it with more obscure, usually temporary, late sixties and early seventies aggregations such as **The Two Things In One, Lee Porter & Peaceful Persuasion, The Huck Daniels Co.** and **The Funky Kids**. The latter is an interesting one: basically what we have there is The Olympic Runners plus guest vocalist George Chandler and a UK recorded cut that sits somewhere between Sly Stone and *Papa Was A Rolling Stone*. More than six minutes of it, too. For me the best sounds are provided by the James Gadson produced **Viola Wills** tune *Sweetback* [which really needed to be a lot longer than just over two minutes], the punchy, organ speckled *Work It Out* from **Marcene 'Dimples' Harris, Mary Love's** horn-blasted shuffler *Born To Live With Heartache*, the JB-style instrumental *Foolish Man [Part 2]* by **The Huck Daniels Co.**, and the straight-ahead



soul cut from **Obrey Wilson**, *Daddy Please Stay Home*. It's all pretty good, though, and you almost certainly won't find any of this stuff elsewhere.

●●●● In a completely different style, just arrived is the album debut from Jarrod Lawson's backing vocalist, **Tahirah Memory**. Entitled *Pride*, it's produced by Jarrod - he also sings co-lead on one track, supplies keys and backing vocals - and is right in that jazzy soul pocket we loved on Lawson's own album. Tahirah's depth of tone and easy elasticity is glorious to behold, resting perfectly, as it does, on top of Lawson's increasingly confident handling of the arrangements - witness the slowly building *Time* as it grows from a grandfather clock tick-tock through eerie bassline and strings to become a multi-compartment jazz-soul masterpiece. *Beautiful Disaster* is just as good, wending its way through several gears and mood changes, while the easy going *Again* has a more relaxed, Philly vibe. The duet with Jarrod, *All The Time*, is a fine waltz-time soul ballad, leaving Tahirah to shine on her own on the closing slowie, *I Can't Change*. Very, very nice indeed.

●●●● Tahirah shows up again on an album by **Hailey Niswanger**, name of *PDX Soul*. It's basically an OK set of jazz-funk and smooth-jazz instrumentals, but does feature three vocal cuts, one of which is a version of Al Green's *Take Me To The River* starring La Rhonda Steele, while the most interesting track, for me, is *Yes I'm Ready*, a ballad led by Ms Memory.

●●●● Another switch in style, this time to **Ty Causey's** brand of old-fashioned, romantic soul on his latest set, *Cause & Effect*. Nearly everything this guy has released has reminded me of Al Broomfield's album from 1987 - essentially he also produces understated, sexy, right-to-the-point soul music that doesn't spend much of its time considering what else is going down across the airwaves or in cyberspace: it just gets on and does what it says on the tin, sometimes sliding by as an average Ty Causey album, on other occasions, for some reason or other, coming over as more inspired than usual.

This time? Well, somewhere between the two, actually. There's nothing at all amongst the 10 tracks that I didn't enjoy when it was on; on the other hand, not much set the pulse racing, either. I do enjoy his tendency to sound like Frankie Beverly, a trademark that shows up especially on his vibrato, and there's no doubt this kind of music suits a certain kind of late night mood to a tee. No new ground is broken, no unexpected tangent explored, but you can't say the man lets down his supporters. If that includes you, then contact Soul Brother, who supplied it to me, and purchase with confidence. Press that 'Switch' button one more