copies. In a market where album sales were notoriously low, *Live at the Apollo* was a phenomenal commercial success with both races.  

Quite rightly, *Live at the Apollo* has long been considered one of the essential recorded documents of soul. Peter Guralnick has eloquently and sensitively evoked the emotional power of the album, noting the "dramatic artifice" and "intentional artistry" with which Brown worked the Apollo audience, by turns provoking, seducing and surprising it, until it surrendered itself to the compelling drama of the performance. Like the great gospel showmen, Brown was relentless in his pursuit of ecstasy. He would never let up, always coming back for one more scream, one more chorus, one more spin and split, one more exhausted collapse to the floor from where, time after time, he was lifted, fanned, draped in a crimson cape and ushered away by concerned attendants, only to reappear, possessed of new energies, dancing and singing until he and his audience were utterly spent. "I have to say he would give a performance that would exhaust you, just wear you out emotionally," enthused Michael Jackson. "His whole physical presence, the fire coming out of his pores, would be phenomenal". As Greensboro A&T student Reginald Defour said after witnessing a Brown show, "James Brown can make an audience do anything he wants".  

Repetition was as crucial to live soul as the powerful ostinato rhythmic and melodic patterns were to recorded soul. Technically, repetition served a communalizing function, reinforcing phatic contact between performer and audience. It built up a suspense which could be manipulated, delayed, renewed and then either resolved "pleasurably" or shattered "euphorically" by the sudden interruption of a genuinely ecstatic scream or note – as in the innumerable "ooh-ween's Brown himself unleashed in his songs. Both plassir and jouissance had their place in soul, which like most black music was a potent mixture of musical formula and inspired spontaneity.  

Soul singers like Brown, Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett and Aretha Franklin recast the "house-wrecking" tactics of black preachers and gospel acts into an exhilarating showbiz ritual. Even devoid of any luminous dimension and often driven by a desire to replace spiritual with sexual gratification, such shows still fulfilled the basic social and psychological function of black religion. As performer and performing audience immersed themselves in the music and the compelling drama of the spectacle, they succumbed to an ecstatic state in which they could "experience intensely the human condition" and, more specifically, their blackness, which was at the celebratory core of many soul songs. A soul concert enabled each member of the audience to bear witness to the formidable strength and daedal qualities of black culture and affirm their own place within it.  

Soul music ultimately served as a sort of cultural cement for the mass of black Americans in much the same way that the freedom songs served to unite and fortify those at the forefront of civil rights activities in the South. Indeed, there were even examples of exchanges between the two idioms.

Civil rights activists cheerfully plundered r&b and soul, along with gospel, hymns, spirituals, union songs, folk, country and any other musics they could lay their larynxes on, to create new material fitted for a particular incident, moment or theme in the Movement. Once Cordell Reagan got hold of Little Willie John's "Leave my kitten alone" during the 1960 Nashville sit-ins it could be heard throughout the southern movement as "Leave my desegregation alone". Ray Charles was an especially rich source of material. Brenda Gibson, a student at Spelman College, fused the Five Keys' "Ling ling tong" and Charles' "What d'I say" to create "Sit-in showdown: the A & P song" during the Atlanta sit-ins of 1960. In Nashville, Bernard LaFayette and James Bevel adapted Charles' version of Hank Snow's country ballad, "I'm movin' on", while "Hit the road Jack" resurfaced as "Get your rights Jack".  

When they were not mining r&b for lyrical inspiration, young activists sometimes customized existing freedom songs by grafting r&b-style arrangements onto them, rather than using the more usual gospel-spiritual-folk musical settings. This happened with Guy Carawan's "Ballad of the sit-ins", which SNCC students not only hooked to an r&b riff, but from which they later excised a verse about Martin Luther King as if to emphasize the organization's independence from the older civil rights leadership.  

CORE volunteer James Van Matre recalled working on a voter registration project in Plaquemine, a small Louisiana town just south of Baton Rouge, where "Almost invariably, every time a group gets together, waiting for dinner or resting afterwards, we sing freedom songs. They range from old Negro spirituals to modified rock and roll. When a group breaks up, the final songs sometimes drives the people into a thoughtful silence: 'May be the last time, may be the last time I don't know'. As these young black and white workers remodelled "The last time" to suit their immediate emotional needs, it really did not matter whether they knew it from the Staple Singers and the black gospel tradition, or from the Rolling Stones' anglo-pop-blues."  

The analogy between soul and the freedom songs was not exact, of course. In the freedom songs, medium, message and messengers were always intimately and overtly linked to the organized struggle, whereas in Rhythm and Blues that connection was often coded, ambiguous, and sometimes tenuous. With relatively few soul songs and even fewer soul singers openly embracing the organized struggle during the decade after Montgomery, black audiences sometimes found themselves bestowing political meanings and Movement messages on ostensibly apolitical songs. These acts of creative consumption reflected changes in black consciousness as the civil rights movement developed, and sometimes involved popular readings of songs which were far removed from the original intentions of those who made the music.

In the spring of 1965, for example, the Chicago-based soul-bluesman Little Milton had a chart-topping black hit with "We're gonna make it".
PEOPLE GET READY

uplifting ode to true love's power to see a couple through hard times was seized upon as a soundtrack to the black struggle in much the same way as the Impressions' more obviously engaged "Keep on pushing" was adopted the previous summer. Nobody was more surprised by this public response than Milton. Although in retrospect he could see how the positive sentiments of "We're gonna make it", with its evocation of triumph over adversity, might have struck a chord with a newly mobilized black community, his intentions were more mundane—if quite typical of soul's commercial priorities. "Now when we did this we had no thoughts, none at all, concerning the great Reverend Martin Luther King's movement which at that time was really beginning to pick up oodles of momentum. We were just trying to get a hit record . . . ".

In a similar vein, Marvin Gaye and Imamu Amiri Baraka both detected political messages in the records of Martha and the Vandellas, despite the absence of any explicit social commentary in their Holland-Dozier-Holland songs, or anything much in the way of personal commitment to the struggle from the group. "Funny, but of all the acts back then, I thought Martha and The Vandellas came closest to really saying something", remarked Gaye. "It wasn't a conscious thing, but when they sang numbers like 'Quick Sand' or 'Wild one' or 'Nowhere to run' or 'Dancing in the street' they captured a spirit that felt political to me. I liked that." Baraka agreed. "The Impressions' 'Keep on pushing' or Martha and The Vandellas' 'Dancing in the street' (especially re: summer riots, i.e., 'Summer's here . . .') provided a core of legitimate social feeling, though mainly metaphorical and allegorical for Black people".

This growing black thirst for more engaged social commentary in soul eventually resulted in a proliferation of such songs in the late 1960s. But even prior to this shift, soul — and Rhythm and Blues more generally — displayed a distinctive set of lyrical concerns and perspectives, deployed a set of stock motifs and phrases, and expressed itself in unmistakably black musical voices which had a peculiar currency in the black community. Rhythm and Blues often worked to express the black experience in ways only dimly understood by white fans and subsequent commentators, thereby encouraging the national sense of black pride and identity which bloomed in the 1960s.

In the decade or so after Montgomery, the essential realism of Rhythm and Blues, its musical and lyrical affinity to the material circumstances of black lives, dictated that economic factors often loomed large in its songs, just as they did in black life. Black unemployment continued to run at about 10 per cent — twice the level for whites — but became endemic in the inner cities during this period, with over 35 per cent of the urban black population out of regular work by 1967. For those in work, jobs were frequently repetitive, degrading and poorly-paid. Indeed, for all the statutory successes of the early Movement, a third of black Americans still lived in poverty in 1966 and the median income of black men was only 55 per cent that of white males, having been 50 per cent in 1954. Perhaps significantly, in terms of the revival of matriarchal stereotyping and compensatory macho posturing in the black power era, black women narrowed the gap rather more successfully, with a median income which was 76 per cent of white female income in 1966.27

The durability of the "romance without finance can be a nuisance" sentiment in Rhythm and Blues lyrics was testament to the fact that widespread black poverty continued to shape relations between the sexes. In 1961, Curtis Mayfield had provided his old colleague from the Impressions, Jerry Butler, with "I'm a telling you", a poignant pop-soul ballad which offered a compelling account of working-class life on the breadline:

I'm a telling you,
my days get longer,
and my nights get shorter,
and my way gets darker,
and my work gets harder.

When I get home,
the wife is mad,
the little girl is feeling bad.
The little boy, he's got the blues,
says he needs a pair of baseball shoes.

Allen Toussaint was a multi-talented lynchpin of New Orleans Rhythm and Blues, who wrote a number of pithily humorous studies of black work and its absence for Lee Dorsey in the mid 1960s. "Gotta get a job" echoed the Silhouettes' "Get a job", and portrayed unemployment as an occasion for male shame and domestic unrest: "The roof is leaking and the rent ain't paid, need a new pair of shoes and I'm underfed, Old lady fussin' about the bills I made, I have to get me out and find a job". Recorded in late 1965, just before doubts regarding the Movement's ultimate capacity to overcome became pervasive, Dorsey's weary vocals nonetheless sounded an ominous note of resignation. He even turned, somewhat uncertainly, back to the Lord as the only source of comfort and respite: "Never made enough to put nothing on the side, Problems, problems, Lord, I'm so tired . . . I don't know how I'm gonna live, Something gotta break, Lord, Something gotta give".

Dorsey's "Working in a coalmine", also written by Allen Toussaint, suggested how little the heroic struggles of the Movement had changed the workaday experiences of ordinary southern blacks during the decade since Fats Domino's "Blue Monday" had similarly chronicled the enervating drudgery of much black labour:
5 o'clock in the morning,
I'm already up and gone.
Lord, I'm so tired,
How long can this go on?

'Course, I make a little money,
Hauling coal by the ton.
But when Saturday rolls around,
I'm too tired for having fun.

And yet, despite no hours, long hours, low wages, and often dreary and dangerous work, blacks had always sought and found that fun. Moreover, precisely because of their debilitating social and economic circumstances, it was often a mighty, passionate, irresistible fun which was by turns desperate and gaudy, cool and sublime. Rather like those poor white southerners with whom southern blacks often appeared simultaneously locked in mortal racial combat and an uncertain cultural embrace, blacks invested enormous emotional and physical energy in their Friday and Saturday night rituals. Throughout America blacks used their leisure time and entertainment as a focus for an intense, joyous celebration of self and community. As the absolute centrality of the church in many black lives declined, it was through their popular cultures that blacks — especially younger blacks — expressed their individual and collective identities; their histories: those distinctive aspects of the black experience in America that in the 1960s they came to talk and sing about as their soul. 

“Well, it’s Saturday night and I just got paid./ Fool about my money, don’t try to save./ My heart says go, let’s have a time./ It’s Saturday night and I feel fine … Gonna rip it up … and ball tonight”, roared Little Richard, just as Bobby Bland celebrated his own payday on his remake of “Stormy Monday blues”: “The eagle flies on Friday and I go out to play”. The whole weekend was an almost sacred quest for adventure and thrills. “There’s a thrill up on the hill, let’s go, let’s go, let’s go”, panted Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. These were precious moments away from the weekday routine in which to “let the good times roll”, enjoy black companionship and sample distinctively black pleasures.

In the 1950s shredder Roy Brown had proclaimed “Saturday night” as the time when he most felt himself, relaxed deep in the cultural and geographic heart of the black community. “Saturday night, that’s my night”, he half-sang, half-whooed with unabashed delight. It was the peculiar intensity of weekends in the black community which gave Sam Cooke’s “Another Saturday night” much of its exquisite melancholy. “Another Saturday night, and I ain’t got nobody. I got some money, ‘cause I just got paid./ How I wish I had someone to talk to./ I’m in an awful way”. Saturday night, of all nights, was not a time to feel alone.

Long before the soul of the 1960s, Rhythm and Blues lyrics had repeatedly evoked, invoked and commemorated the crucial features of black style, leisure, pleasure and place. Chuck Berry was a pivotal figure here. He foreshadowed many of soul’s lyrical concerns to encourage black communal pride and identity by focusing on the beauties and redemptive possibilities of black music itself, even as he universalized this theme for a young biracial audience.

Over the decades Chuck Berry has become almost as notorious for the red herrings he has encouraged gullible journalists to fillet, as for the red Gibson with which he helped to define rock and roll. Nevertheless, his 1988 account of the composition of “Johnny B. Goode” adds credence to the notion that he deliberately crafted his songs to work at multiple levels of meaning, with a more racially specific sub-text lurking beneath the more general celebrations of rock and roll’s energy and excitement. “Johnny in the song is more less myself”, Berry explained, while the “Goode” derived from the St Louis Street in which he was born and raised. The “little country boy” had originally been a “little colored boy”, but the ambitious Berry changed it because he “thought it would seem biased to white fans”. “Johnny B. Goode” began with the unlettered hero living in rural poverty, “Deep down in Louisiana, across from New Orleans”, which to Berry represented “The gateway from freedom … where most Africans were sorted through and sold”. The song described Johnny’s dream of wealth and fame; a dream which, as in so many of Berry’s songs, was conceived as an actual journey from oppression to freedom. In “Johnny B. Goode” Chuck Berry offered a mythical representation of the sort of rise which he and some of his contemporaries had actually achieved, and which the vast majority of blacks hoped the success of the civil rights movement would enable them to emulate in their own fields of endeavour.

Johnny B. Goode merits a place alongside the folk heroes of earlier black tales and blues ballads, like John Henry, Shine, Stack O’Lee — or, for that matter, Joshua and Moses — since like these men, he embodied the hopes and aspirations of the black community. There were, however, important differences which reflected the changed mood of black America in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Typical black heroes from slavery and the heart of the Jim Crow era were usually depicted in some act of cunning defiance or violent rebellion against white society and its institutions. They symbolically waged battles which in reality blacks had often been unable to wage effectively. After Montgomery, however, with a diverse and dynamic civil rights movement orchestrating a concerted and apparently successful campaign against discrimination, there was less pressing need for mythical heroes who would martyr themselves in epic battle with an oppressive system: such heroes were now available in real life.

Johnny B. Goode, then, was a black hero for the promised new age of integration, respect and equal opportunity in America. He was a hero.
because, much like Berry himself, or Ray Charles, or Berry Gordy, he achieved conspicuous success, not just in his own black Louisiana backwoods, but in the mainstream, where he secured recognition of both his talent and his humanity. "I imagine most black people naturally realize but I feel safe in stating that NO white person can conceive the feeling of obtaining Caucasian respect in the wake of a world of dark denial, simply because it is impossible to view the dark side when faced with brilliance", Berry explained. For him, white appreciation of black genius, in this case Johnny's guitar prowess, should have made continued white denial of black humanity and equality impossible. This may have been naive, but Berry was undoubtedly articulating the prevailing optimism of the early civil rights years.60

While Chuck Berry and Johnny B. Goode pursued the black American dream of mainstream acceptance and success, Berry also gave early notice that this should not be achieved at the expense of the distinctive qualities of black culture — after all, even Goode's success derived from his mastery of black musical style. Berry subtly expanded upon this theme in "School days", where he sang "Hail! Hail! Rock and Roll!/ Deliver me from the days of old/ The feeling is there, body and soul".

Lines like these may have expressed the feelings of earnest white fans, and provided easy platitudes for others, but for blacks they had a much deeper resonance. Sung by a black performer, lines like "Deliver me from the days of old" rapped into a black theological tradition, enshrined in the spirituals and gospel, which stressed ultimate black deliverance from oppression. Historically, a vibrant, distinctive, participatory musical culture had always provided one mechanism whereby the black community prevented physical and social oppression becoming mental and spiritual bondage. Music was a cultural space in which "feeling", "body and soul" — in other words, black humanity and identity — had been preserved in the face of repeated attempts to deny it.

As Berry nearly sang in "Rock and roll music", black culture had a back beat it could not afford to lose if it was to survive. As the Movement unfolded, such testimonials to the sustaining and defining power of black music became ever more common. Berry's work and Arthur Alexander's "A shot of rhythm and blues" were proud progenitors of numerous soul celebrations such as Gene Chandler's "A song called soul" and a triumvirate of classic tracks released by the Atlantic subsidiary Atco in 1967: Ben E. King's "What is soul?", King Curtis' "Memphis soul stew", and Arthur Conley's "Sweet soul music".

Conley's "Sweet soul music", with its roll-call of distinguished soulmen, typified a trend among black singers to refer approvingly to other black artists in their songs. Sometimes, as in "Sweet soul music", or Warren Lee's "Star revue", this simply involved providing lists of the cream of black talent, their hit songs, and favourite dances. Thus, Lee attempted to impress his girl by offering to take her to see an unmissable alignment of black soul stars:

Now when the show gets real hot, Joe Tex holds on to what he got. So hurry get your ticket, If you want to see Wilson Pickett, Tell the world where we're headin', That you're going to see Otis Redding.

Warren Lee — an obscure Louisiana soulman who recorded for Allen Toussaint and Marshall Sehorn's Deesu label — proudly added his own name to this list of soul luminaries. In much the same way Edwin Starr boasted in "Soul master" that he was "the guy that they named soul after", while James Brown and Gene Chandler presented their own soul credentials at the end of their respective versions of Brown's "There was a time". Brown concluded his funky catalogue of black dance styles with a bold assertion of his own creativity and identity: "You should see me do the James Brown", he urged. Chandler's brassier version, replete with a breathtaking barrage of Chicago-style cresting horns, also ended with a boast of personal prowess: "You ain't seen nothing yet, until you see me do the Gene Chandler". In all of these songs, as in soul culture more generally, there was an assumption that personal respect and identity could, indeed must be, founded on individual expression and action within the sustaining framework of the black community and its distinctive cultural forms.

While rather too much has been made of soul's tendency to replace the "I" of the blues with a stated or implied "we", it was nonetheless a self-consciously inclusive musical form. While soul's musical structure was dependent on repetition and call and response devices which established phatic and empathetic contact between performers and listeners, the lyrics often worked in the same communalizing way. For example, black singers often referred to other soulmen, not just as musical idols, but as trusted friends and confidantes, suggesting a mutually supportive black world in which personal success and failure, happiness and heartache, were experiences to be shared, weathered or celebrated by the whole community. Don Covay's rap at the end of "Temptation was too strong" was typical, name-checking some of the artists he would later join in an ill-conceived, but tellingly titled group called the Soul Clan, as if they were a team of personal advisers:

You know, a friend of mine called me the other day, by the name of Joe Tex. He said, "Don, try to hold on to what you got". And "Ninety-nine and a half won't do", like Wilson Pickett said. I tried a "Lover's prayer", like Otis Redding said. It just didn't work, I'm gonna follow Solomon Burke's advice, "Tonight's the night"... I need someone to "Stand by me", like Ben E. King said...
Rhythm and Blues lyrics further encouraged this sense of inclusiveness by deploying a distinctive lexicon of “black” words and expressions. The songs were brimful of exhortations to “walk that talk, talk that talk”, “move on up”, “get down”, “feel it, don’t fight it”, and “tell it like it is”, and variations on stock phrases like “just a little bit higher”, “love come tumbling down”, and “so high I can’t get over it, so low I can’t get under it, so wide I can’t get around it.”

Although many of these phrases, like the be-hop-derived “cat”, “man” and “crazy” before them, quickly passed into the mainstream of hip white clichés, and even suffered from some glib over-use in the soul of the late 1960s, they initially represented black vernacular speech in song. Moreover, while white writers and singers could and did use these idioms, there was something unimpeachably black about the way in which a Wilson Pickett or an Aretha Franklin exclaimed “Lord have mercy”, “great God almighty” or “can I get a witness” in mid-song, drawing on the vocabulary, as well as the vocal techniques of gospel to lend absolute veracity to their secular tales. In all Rhythm and Blues, the ultimate test of quality was a song’s emotional honesty. It was, as the Five Royales and Ray Charles agreed, the singer’s duty to “Tell the truth”.

Another way in which soul helped to foster a growing, national, sense of black community and shared culture in the 1960s was through its depictions of, and invitations to, dance. In the early 1960s there was a whole sub-genre of Rhythm and Blues songs which provided instructions on the latest dance steps, from Hank Ballard and the Midnighters’ “Coffee grind” through the Dovells’ “Bristol stomp” to Rufus Thomas’ “Dog”. This was no trivial matter for young blacks, for whom social prestige, not to mention success with the opposite sex, could depend on mastery of the latest moves. “Do you love me, now that I can dance?”, begged the Contours, who further emphasized the need to grasp the nuances of black dance style in “Can you do it?”. Don Covay advised his lovelorn brothers, “If you do the Boomerang right,/ she’ll come back and say you’re out of sight”, while the Baltimore Afro-American even carried diagrams of the Madison to enable its black readers to follow a dance which some claimed had its origins in the Charm City.

At one level, this emphasis on dance was, as the Miracles put it, still an attempt to “dance to keep from crying”. But it was also part of the intense creativity which characterized black leisure time. Dancing represented action and initiative, and as such it counteracted the passivity and sense of being acted upon which still frequently blighted black lives. Moreover, in the mid 1960s a new breed of dance songs emerged, which, like “I gotta dance to keep from crying”, Art Neville’s “House on the hill”, James Brown’s “Papa’s got a brand new bag”, the Sapphires’ “Slow-fizz”, and countless others, did not offer instruction, but instead listed a range of dances which it was assumed all blacks would know. Chris Kenner’s oft-copied “Land of 1000 dances” was the prototype, namechecking, among others, the twist, mashed potato, alligator, yo-yo, go-go, sweet pea, watusi, slop and chicken. Like the sung lists of soulmen and women, these recordings were for the black cognoscenti; danceable directories of critical components in contemporary black culture.

Through this process of listing and participation, black dances became highly politicized, recognized by black leaders and the black masses alike as touchstones of black identity and solidarity. Stokely Carmichael, for example, proudly affirmed the strength and beauty of black music and dance, in the midst of a 1966 attack on white and black cultural elitism:

We are not culturally deprived. We are the only people who have a culture in America. We don’t have to be ashamed of James Brown.

We don’t have to wait for the Beatles to legitimize our culture.

Black intellectuals ought to come back to the community and let the community define what an intellectual is and what art is. Nothing is more hurtful to me than seeing a fine black woman doing the Dog.

Similarly, black poet Larry Neal believed that James Brown’s “There was a time” did nothing less than “trace... the history of a people through their dances”. Indeed, there was arguably as much racial politics in the list of dances on the fade-out of James Brown’s 1968 anthem, “Say it loud — I’m black and I’m proud” as in the main body of the lyrics, with their obvious, if effective, “we’d rather die on our feet/ than keep livin’ on our knees” sloganeering.

The very act of claiming, naming and evaluating distinctive elements of a shared black world according to black standards in a uniquely black musical and lyrical form was enormously empowering for the black community in a psychological sense. It reflected the acknowledgement and valorization of black cultural forms which the white mainstream had habitually ignored, denigrated or consumed as exotic novelties. Aside from dance steps, this inventory of black cultural predilections could extend to earnest discussion of sartorial style wars, as in Tommy Tucker’s “Hi-heeled sneakers”, Sugar Pie DeSanto’s “Slip-in mules”, and James Brown’s compendium of ghetto chic “Out of sight”. It also included honourable mentions for favourite black dishes, sometimes in the titles of instrumental cuts like Andre Williams’ “Bacon fat” and Jr Walker’s “Home cookin’”, but also in vocal tracks like the Soul Runners’ “Grits ‘n corn bread” and James Brown’s “Make it funky”, where he croons over “neckbone, candied yams, grits and gravy, cracklin’ bread”, or even Little Willie John’s “All around the world”, with its matchless declaration of streetwise affection: “If I don’t love you, baby, then grits ain’t groceries, eggs ain’t poultry, and Mona Lisa was a man”.

There were also many variations on the “Mashed potato”, most notably by Dee Dee Sharp — whose well-balanced diet of soul hits also included “Gravy” — and James Brown, whose “Mashed potato, USA” offered
a remarkable terpsichorean tour around most of the major black communities in the nation. "I'm gonna start by going to New York City", Brown announced, before dancing on into Boston, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, St Louis, Memphis, Nashville, Charlotte, Dallas, Houston, Miami, Jacksonville, Columbia, Norfolk, San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles and Richmond. Brown's marathon ended back in his adopted hometown of Augusta, Georgia, but he was concerned lest he might have missed some of his black brothers and sisters on his travels. "Now if any of these places I called, and I missed your turn, just want you to know I'm coming". Nowhere, it seemed, was to be denied a visit from "Soul brother no. 1", again reflecting the strong communalizing imperatives in soul music.

"Mashed potato, USA" was part of a much broader lyrical voice for black travelogues which also included Brown's "Shout and Shimmy" and his reworking of Bill Doggett's "Night train". Marvin Gaye's "Hitch-hike", Lee Dorsey's "Ride your pony", Cliff Nobles' "The horse", and, perhaps most compelling of all, Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the street", worked in much the same way, listing major black cities around the country, often in conjunction with lists of black dance styles, to create an impression of black cultural nationhood long before the Black Panthers declared "It's nation time".

These travelogues also presented vivid images of black mobility, thereby tapping into one of the central themes in black history, culture and consciousness. According to Keith Miller, the Exodus story, in which salvation for the Israelites was attained by means of an epic journey out of the land of oppression, has occupied a privileged position in the religion and popular consciousness of black America, since "no other story proved more sublimely expressive of the themes of deliverance". Moreover, in addition to the many other constraints upon their liberty, blacks were often denied freedom or ease of movement, first by slavery, then by peonage entrapment laws, Jim Crow transportation, whites-only bus terminals and segregated interstate motels, and always by insufficient funds. Consequently, the ability to move to a better life, as in the countess "Chicago bound blues", or even just to a better love life, as in Wilbert Harrison's "Kansas City", was much prized in black society:

Going to Kansas City,
Kansas City, here I come.
They got some crazy women there,
and I'm gonna get me one.

Well, I might take the plane,
I might take the train.
But if I have to walk,
I'm going just the same.85

It was in this context that Chuck Berry's fetishistic delight in cars, jetliners, trains and the thrill of sheer motion assumed particular significance. Berry tapped into the Exodus story most explicitly in 1964's "The promised land", which operated in a similar way to those black sermons analyzed by Miller, where historical and Biblical figures are introduced as actors in - and archetypal stories presented as explanations for - contemporary events.86

"Swing low chariot, come down easy, taxi to the terminal zone", sang Berry, in a demonstration of what Miller has termed "sacred time". Even more remarkable was the way in which Berry weaved his own Exodus story in and out of the story of the 1961 freedom rides. Described by James Farmer as an attempt, literally, to put "the movement on wheels", the freedom rides were designed to test the South's compliance with the Supreme Court's 1960 Boynton decision outlawing racial segregation in interstate bus terminals, and its earlier Morgan decision prohibiting segregation on interstate transport. CORE's plan was to travel in an integrated group through the South and arrive in New Orleans in time for the anniversary of the first Brown decision on 17 May 1961.87

In "The promised land" Berry's journey began on a Greyhound bus in Norfolk, Virginia, whereas the freedom riders left from Washington, D.C. on both Trailways and Greyhound buses. Berry also ended up in Los Angeles, rather than New Orleans. In between, however, there were some striking parallels in the two tales. Berry, for example, "stopped in Charlotte, but bypassed Rock Hill" - a wise move as Rock Hill was where the freedom riders first encountered violent white resistance. It was in Alabama, however, that they had really come to grief. White racists bombed one bus just outside Anniston, while in Birmingham Bull Connor allowed a mob of klansmen 15 minutes in which to beat up the riders at the bus terminal before his police arrived.

Following these events, the freedom riders were stalled in Birmingham, not least because it was impossible to find a driver willing to continue the increasingly hazardous journey through the Deep South. Many of the battered CORE workers chose to abandon the ride and fly down to New Orleans. They were replaced by SNCC activists from Nashville, who resumed the bus journey to Montgomery, where mob violence again broke out, and eventually on to Mississippi. A secret deal between the Kennedy administration, Mississippi senator James Eastland, and governor Ross Barnett ensured that the riders were protected from vigilante violence and, at least before the eyes of the media, politely arrested by police on their arrival in Jackson.88

It is hard to imagine that Berry's black audience did not hear echoes of these incidents in the verse: "We had most trouble, it turned into a struggle, half-way across Alabama. And that 'hound broke down, and left us all stranded, in downtown Birmingham." Nor would they have been surprised that after his, and the freedom riders', experiences in Alabama, Berry abandoned his bus for the journey through Mississippi to New Orleans: "Right
away I bought me a through train ticket,/ right across Mississippi clean,/ by sundown I was half-way 'cross Louisiana,/ smokin' into New Orleans."

Despite his trials and travelling tribulations, at the end of the song Berry phoned back to Norfolk, Virginia, triumphantly announcing his deliverance into "The promised land" of California. Berry was clearly relieved to have escaped the oppressive South. Yet unlike some of his Rhythm and Blues contemporaries in the decade or so after Brown, he refrained from ridiculing southern or country lifestyles, as had been the case in songs like the Showmen's "Country fool", or in the Coasters' disdain for hominy grits in "What about us". Indeed, around the mid 1960s there was a marked change in the treatment of the South in Rhythm and Blues as soul began to reclaim and celebrate the distinctive features of the black experience. In 1965 the Carter Brothers released "Southern country boy", a rough-edged blues-soul stomp on Stan Lewis' Shreveport-based Jewel label, which proudly boasted the band's regional allegiances. James Brown was forever going back to Georgia in his songs to recharge his soul batteries, while Otis Redding, performing In Person at the Whiskey, interjected into "These arms of mine" word that he was "Going down to Georgia to get some soul", as if that was where the essence of the black American experience could be found.

This soulful re-evaluation of the South's place in the black experience was but one aspect of a growing concern with notions of roots and place. That concern even extended to a new pride in the black urban environment which was frequently eulogized as the site of a vibrant black community and culture, and a place of psychological refuge from the pressures and hostility of the outside world.

One of the most powerful early celebrations of the ghetto was the Crystals' "Uptown". "Uptown" told the story of a black worker who works downtown, "where everyone's his boss,/ and he's lost in an angry land,/ he's a little man.../Downtown, he's just one of a million guys,/ he don't get no breaks,/ and he takes all they got to give,/ 'cause he's got to live". Back uptown after work, however, back in the heart of the black community, "he's tall, he's not poor, he's a king.../he can hold his head up high". Partly, of course, it was the singer's devotion to her man, for whom she dutifully waited in her tenement each night, which generated this self-respect. Nevertheless, it was also explicitly linked to a sense of place and community.

"Uptown" was written by the white songwriters, Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann, just as many of the Coasters' wry observations of black street life were penned by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Indeed, in the first half of the 1960s, when most black writers, singers and label executives were still very cautious about cutting songs with racially specific settings or subjects lest they might jeopardize their chances of crossover success, white lyricists were among the most forthright in their portrayals of black, especially urban, life and its social, domestic and economic travails. The Drifters' "Up on the roof" (Goffin-King), Ben E. King's "Spanish Harlem" (Leiber and Phil Spector), Garnet Mimms' "A quiet place" (Jerry Ragavoy) were also penned by whites. In collaboration with the black artists who performed and thus helped to legitimize their observations for black audiences, these writers sensitively evoked key aspects of the black mental and physical world.

Another immaculate Mann-Weil-Leiber-Stoller "message" song was the Drifters' "On Broadway", which brilliantly used Broadway as a neon-lit symbol of the wealth and opportunity routinely denied to most blacks.

They say the neon lights are bright,
On Broadway.
They say there's always magic in the air,
On Broadway.
But when you're walking down that street,
and you ain't got enough to eat,
that glitter all rubs off,
and you're nowhere,
On Broadway.

In 1965, Edwin Starr's "Back Street" amplified and extended some of the themes of "Uptown" and "On Broadway". Written by Charles Hatcher and Bill Sharpley, "Back Street" represented a careful mythologization of the ghetto, emphasizing the black camaraderie and soul style which thrived there. Even a black man who had managed to move up and move out appreciated that the Back Street offered him some kind of spiritual home, a place of transcendent soul brotherhood, "where people stick together, one for all and all for one".

I've been along Main Street,
where society is the thing.
People that live on Main Street,
you don't know how to swing.
But the people on Back Street,
you swing all night long.
Although I live on Main Street,
the Back Street is where I belong.

Not all soul offered such positive images of ghetto life. Garnet Mimms, on Jerry Ragavoy's "A quiet place", complained "I can't get no sleep,/ in this noisy street", but despairing of escaping to the "quiet place" of his dreams: "Tell me, where do you go,/ when you got no dough,/ there must be a way out of here?" The Drifters were luckier, finding respite from the hassles of street life "Up on the roof". As the decade wore on, and it became clearer that inner-city problems were proving unresponsive to federal
Poverty or Model City initiatives, some songs, like Jackie Wilson's melodramatic "No pity (In the naked city)" and Walter Jackson's "Deep in the heart of Harlem", began to offer much bleaker images of ghetto life. Echoing the sentiments of "Uptown", Jackson sang "I push and kick, and get my feelings hurt. Downtown, I'm just a little spoke that helps the wheel go round". For Jackson, however, there was no sense of solace uptown in Harlem, just a desire to escape. "If I was rich, maybe I'd move away, out to the country, where my kids could play", he mused, though with little of the optimism which had characterized the early years of the civil rights struggle. "We got to stay, can't get away", he wearily sang. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this lyrical trend would find full expression in songs like Marvin Gaye's "Inner city blues (Make me wanna holler)" and Aaron Neville's "Hercules", which stressed the intensely competitive, individualistic, often brutally exploitative society which poverty and racism had generated, rather than rhapsodizing about ghetto harmony and soul brotherhood. In its early years, however, soul's perspective on black culture and community was generally far more optimistic. This was only natural in a music which was suffused with the pride and passion of a people newly roused in concerted action to secure black opportunity and respect within a redeemed America.

CHAPTER SIX

"Everybody needs somebody to love": southern soul, southern dreams, national stereotypes

We hated Blacks in the abstract, but our greatest heroes were the Black stars of the great St Louis Cardinals baseball teams of the sixties. We listened to Chuck Berry and Tina Turner... A few of us became firm fans of Motown music, especially Smokey Robinson. These tastes did not supplant racism. (David R. Roediger)

A southern soul paradox

That whites continued to own most of the record companies which produced soul music in the 1960s was not surprising given that the triumphs of the early civil rights movement had done little to alter the iniquitous racial distribution of economic opportunity and power in America. Yet the contribution of whites to the development of soul, especially in the South, was critical in artistic, as well as purely economic terms. At one level this musical miscegenation reflected the "freedom high" which touched many parts of the black South, and even some parts of the young white South, in the early 1960s as the civil rights movement began to dismantle Jim Crow. Significantly, even when black nationalism became more prominent within black consciousness and liberation politics in the mid-to-late 1960s, the widespread interracialism in southern soul endured, only finally crumbling in the face of a particularly reactionary brand of black power militancy around the turn of the decade.

Perhaps, in retrospect, it was only in the South that such interracialism could have persisted for so long at the heart of a musical form which was in many respects the quintessential expression of a distinctive, self-consciously black identity. While the concrete achievements of the southern civil rights movement were frequently less than blacks had hoped and struggled for,
Just my soul responding

Rhythm and Blues, black consciousness
and race relations

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