

# A RIGHT ROYALE OCCASION!

Tony Watson investigates 'Soul & Swagger', the new highly-acclaimed box set of the complete '5' Royales from Rock Beat



Courtesy Rock Beat Records.

To quote a line from the booklet's introductory chapter: 'There's music you listen to and music you absorb'. This is never more so than when discussing the music of the '5' Royales. When it comes to vocal group r&b harmony, opinions between various factions of the collecting fraternity differ wildly. Many 'doo-wop' collectors would tend to prefer their vocal harmony smooth and sophisticated, such as the Larks, Five Keys and such, others enjoy the more rock & roll stylings of such as



The Royal Sons Quintet, circa late 1940s. Courtesy Rock Beat Records.

the Teenagers and the many New York aggregations. Most would rank the '5' Royales well down in their list of favourite groups. However, those who like their music earthy and unsophisticated often rank the '5' Royales high in the pecking order of great groups. This new five-CD box set is a fitting tribute to the group, who along with such as Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and others, succeeded in breaking out of sanctified music into the heady world of r&b and soul.

They began in the late 1940s as a gospel group, The Royal Sons Quintet, in their hometown of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Coming to the notice of New York-based Apollo Records in 1951, their first recordings were pure gospel. They cut two sessions for the label in August and October of that year, resulting in two releases, Apollo 253 ('Bedside Of A Neighbour'/'Journey's End') and Apollo 266 ('Come Over Here'/'Let Nothing Separate Me'). Whilst, excellent, their initial sides failed to stand out in the array of gospel talent already in place in Apollo's roster. They already had Mahalia Jackson, The Dixie Hummingbirds, The Roberta Martin Singers and The Prof. Alex Bradford Singers on their books. Persuading the group to depart from their gospel vocation to sing secular didn't prove too difficult, and at their second session, they recorded two r&b numbers, 'Too Much Of A Little Bit' and 'Give Me One More Chance'. Issued as

Apollo 434, as by the Royals. Whilst the release didn't exactly set the hit parade on fire, it did come to the notice of Federal Records, who already had a group of that name and were threatening litigation. Thus The '5' Royales were born. The group, having seen several changes to their line-up in their final gospel period, now consisted of Lowman Pauling, Johnny Tanner, James Moore, Obediah Carter and Otto Jeffries.

The Royales' line-up, although varying somewhat due to the draft and other reasons, remained reasonably stable throughout their 15 or so year career: Lead tenor Johnny Tanner provided the powerful lead singing on most of the Royales' classic recordings over the next decade and a half, being joined by his brother Eugene (tenor), who was with the group for 10 years from 1954. James E. 'Jimmie' Moore (baritone) sang with the group until 1963. Obediah 'Scoop' Carter (baritone/ tenor) was with the Royales throughout their career. However, it was Lowman Pauling who was the driving force of the group, writing most of their material and later providing the devastating guitar licks that he became famous for and besides singing bass, also fronting the Royales with his own deep-voiced lead on several sides.

Lowman's powerhouse guitar licks on the later King sides are legendary. The amazing story is that since their gospel recordings, Pauling was not called upon to play his guitar on any of their recordings, Apollo using the services of Charlie Singleton's cooking band for the most part, whilst King used a variety of session players, notably Mickey Baker on guitar. It wasn't until a February 1957 recording date on which they were using legendary guitarist Tiny Grimes, when, halfway through the session, whilst recording 'Think', Pauling picked up his axe and the number just exploded. The song became a major milestone in the group's career, being later picked up by James Brown, becoming one of the cornerstones of his act, until today it would be most likely regarded by the average soul fan as a Brown number. The Royales' original, with its swinging treatment is much preferable to Brown's funk-ed-up version to these ears.



The '5' Royales, early 1950s. Courtesy Rock Beat Records.

The other number which went on to bigger things by other acts was 'Dedicated To The One I Love', which of course was a smash by The Shirelles, and later still a pop hit by The Mamas And The Papas, but here we get the Royales' version in all its raw r&b-going-onto-soul glory

As the group's career progressed, various 'splinter' groups spun off, usually fronted by Pauling, who, teaming up with original Royal Sons member Royal Abbit, recorded variously as El (or 'Ed') Pauling, Royal Abbit & The Royaltones, and later aggregations The Exciters and The Poor Boys. Even included is an early track by bluesman Guitar Shorty that features background harmonies by the Royales, 'Pumpkin Pie', a rather undistinguished number from 1959.

'Soul & Swagger' (great title) is a mighty handsome thing to own. Consisting of a 7" (45 rpm size!) square, stiff backed, 116-page book, with inlays in the inside front and back covers and three thicker inner pages for the five CDs to nestle in. First problem, the CD inlay pop out on the inside front of my copy will not grip the CD, causing it to fall out, a minor problem when reading through the book. Secondly and more serious, the second CD was jammed into the pocket solid and wouldn't budge when trying to ease it out in the normal manner. I had to resort to inserting a round-edged piece of plastic behind the CD and prise it out. It was then evident that the CD had become jammed in the adhesive used



Obadiah Carter and Lowman Pauling, 1956/57. Courtesy Rock Beat Records.



Label shots: Victor Pearlín, Rock Beat Records.



Lowman Pauling and Royal Abbit. Photo: Billy Vera, courtesy Rock Beat Records.

to bind the stiff pages together. The disc had a fair amount of residue on the playing surface, meaning it would not play. I resorted to removing it with the help of WD-40. The CD is still badly scuffed, but at least I got it to play.

Okay, whinging over. Following a single page foreword by No one Royales fan Steve Cropper, there follows an eight-page introduction by the set's creators James Austin and Tom McCullough; next up is a 53-

page essay outlining the Five Royales recording career by Bill Dahl. Dahl gives a blow-by-blow commentary on each and every track. Ideal for reading whilst playing. Then comes a bibliography, followed by a 35-page track-by-track annotation by Tom McCullough that gives full recording and release information, trade reviews, composer credits, chart placings and various other titbits of information. Finally we get a five page track listing, then credits and several pages of label shots, covering just about every '5' Royales single release.

Interspersed within the above, we have many large label shots, trade adverts, theatre photographs and a bunch of wonderful photographs of the group, including several taken live on stage, giving us a little insight of how exciting a Royales live show must have been.

Bill Dahl's sleeve notes are always a delight to read, and this is no exception, although a couple of titles puzzled me at first. Dahl describes a Home Of The Blues track named 'Don't Let It Worry Your Mind'. No title of this name appears on the CDs or track listing (although it does appear under this name on an Eagle CD). It turned out to be 'She Did Me Wrong' (HOTB unissued) - which is annotated by Dahl as a separate track. The other mystery title on the Eagle CD is 'I Don't Need Nobody', which at first I thought had been left off the box, but I believe it is a mis-titling of 'If You Don't Need Me' (HOTB 218).

Is this then the 'complete' Five Royales?, Well I'm afraid it isn't quite. There are several Home Of The Blues test recordings which have surfaced on a newly-issued double CD of the '5' Royales entitled 'Home Of The Blues And Beyond' on History Of Soul Records. Apart from these test pressings, this contains a number of oddities such as a release by Clarence Paul (Lowman's brother) with 'I'm Gonna Love You Till I Die'/'Baby Don't You Leave Poor Me' (Federal 12402, 1960), although this does not feature any members of the core group. There are other, later tracks, on the History Of Soul album, but they are outside the scope of the release in question.

Overall, this box set, lovingly created by Rock Beat, is a fine, worthy tribute to one of the great (though sometimes neglected) vocal groups in the history of r&b and soul. The presentation is superb, having all the hallmarks of the high standards set by such as Bear Family etc. I've played the whole thing through several times now and never fail to get caught up in the rich harmonies and tough r&b stylings of The '5' Royales, one of the all-time great groups in the history of black music!

#### SOUL & SWAGGER: THE COMPLETE '5' ROYALES 1951-1967. ROCK BEAT ROC-CD-3101

##### Track Listing:

##### DISC ONE:

ROYAL SONS QUINTET: Bedside Of A Neighbor/ Journey's End/ Come Over Here/ Let Nothing Separate Me/ So God Can Use Me/ I Wanna Rest; ROYALS: Too Much Of A Little Bit/ Give Me One More Chance; '5' ROYALES: You Know I Know/ Courage To Love/ Baby Don't Do It/ Take All Of Me/ Help Me Somebody/ Crazy, Crazy, Crazy/ Too Much Lovin' (Much Too Much)/ Laundromat Blues/ All Righty!/ I Want To Thank You/ I Do/ Good Things/ I Like It Like That/ Cry Some More/ What's That/ Let Me Come Back Home/ I Am Thinking/ I'm Gonna Run It Down/ Behave Yourself/ I Can't Stand Losing You; ROYAL J. ABBIT: Interview

##### DISC TWO:

'5' ROYALES: Monkey Hips And Rice/ Devil With The Rest/ School Girl/ One Mistake/ (Put Something In It) With All Your Heart/ (Put Something In It) With All Your Heart (Alternate Take 3)/ Six O'Clock In The Morning/ See, Hear And Know Nothing/ You Didn't Learn It At Home/ Every Dog Has His Day/ Mohawk Squaw/ How I Wonder/ I Need Your Lovin' Baby/ When I Get Like This/ Women About To Make Me Go Crazy/ Do Unto You/ Someone Made You For Me/ I Ain't Getting Caught/ Right Around The Corner/ When You Walked In Through The Door/ I Could Love You/ My Wants For Love/ Come On And Save Me/ Come On And Save Me (Alternate Take 2)/ Come On And Save Me (Alternate Take 3)/ Get Something Out Of It/ Get Something Out Of It (Alternate Take 2)/ Get Something Out Of It (Alternate Take 4)

##### DISC THREE:

'5' ROYALES: Just As I Am/ Just As I Am (Alternate Takes 3 & 4)/ Mine Forevermore/ Tears Of Joy/ Thirty Second Lover/ Think/ I'd Better Make A Move/ Messin' Up/ Say It/ Dedicated To The One I Love/ Don't Be Ashamed/ The Feeling Is Real/ Do The Cha Cha Cherry/ Double Or Nothing/ Tell The Truth/ Don't Let It Be In Vain/ Don't Let It Be In Vain (Alternate Take 1)/ The Slummer The Slum/ The Slummer The Slum, Aka Stompenin' Stomp (Alternate Take)/ The Real Thing/ The Real Thing (Alternate Take 2)/ Your Only Love/ Your Only Love (Alternate Take)/ I Know It's Hard But It's Fair/ Miracle Of Love/ Tell Me You Care/ Wonder Where Your Love Has Gone/ My Sugar Sugar; GUITAR SHORTY: Pumpkin Pie

##### DISC FOUR:

'5' ROYALES: It Hurts Inside/ I'm With You/ Don't Give No More Than You Can Take/ Why/ (Something Moves Me) Within My Heart/ Please, Please, Please/ I Got To Know/ Dedicated To The One I Love (Alternate Mix)/ If You Don't Need Me/ I'm Gonna Tell Them/ Not Going To Cry/ Take Me With You Baby/ Much In Need/ They Don't Know/ Just Can't Do Me This Way; ED PAULING & THE ROYALTONES: Solid Rock/ I'm A Cool Teenager/ I'm A Cool Teenager (Undubbed Version)/ Now Baby Don't Do It/ Everybody Knows; EL PAULING, ROYAL ABBIT & THE ROYALTONES: Raindrops Keep A-Fallin'/ Please, Please, Be Mine; EL PAULING & ROYAL ABBIT: Here It 'Tis Right Here/ Jail Bird/ Send Me Somebody/ Come On Let's Have A Good Time

##### DISC FIVE:

'5' ROYALES: Help Me Somebody/ Talk About My Woman/ Talk About My Woman Pt. 2/ Goof Ball/ Catch That Teardrop/ I Want It Like That/ What's In The Heart/ She Did Me Wrong/ Show Me/ Think (unreleased); FIVE ROYALES: I'm Standing In The Shadows/ Doin' Everything; FIVE ROYALS: Baby, Don't Do It/ There's Somebody Over There/ Baby, Don't Do It/ I Like It Like That/ Never Turn Your Back/ Faith/ Help Yourself/ Roll With The Punch; ED PAULING & THE EXCITERS: Time For Everything/ It Won't Be Long (aka Soul House)/ Mr. Moon Man Pt 1 & Pt 2; ED PAULING & THE '5' ROYALES: I'm On The Right Road Now/ Mr. Moon Man; KING RICHARD & THE POOR BOYS: I'm Not Ashamed; POOR BOYS: Didn't We Fool Them/ Washboard (take 1)/ (I'm) Gonna Spend My Money