



Artist:

Various Artists

Title:

Dirty Laundry

To pretend that there is no soul in country music or that there is no country in soul music is just plain ignorant. In the early part of the Twentieth century the godfather of country music, A. P. Carter (of the Carter Family) travelled around America with Black Blues singer Lesley Riddle. This gives an idea as to how far back the musical integration went. They would play to each other while they learned new songs they heard in different towns and cities across the country. Even before the 1920s when folk music really took hold on radio stations black and white musicians would frequently play together in groups. The segregation was imposed by the media not by the actual musicians.

Black field workers in the south listened to country music because it was all that was played on the radio stations, and many white country superstars like Hank Williams, Bill Monroe and Jimmie Rogers learned their trade from black musicians. Barely a soul record would be released in the Sixties without there being a country cover version and visa versa. This began in the early 1960s when Ray Charles recorded his seminal LPs, Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music, volumes one and two.

All of the 24 tracks by soul recording artists included here are fantastic. Many of them, soul renditions of classic country songs, not necessarily injecting more into the song, although sometimes they do, but definitely giving them an alternate twist and never losing the fact that they were country songs originally. As you might expect there is a southern flavour running throughout this hefty compilation.

Some of the highlights include Curtis Mayfield's sublime Dirty Laundry, Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown's funky version of Mama Mambo and Betty Lavette's cover of What Condition My Condition is in, the classic Country-Psyche track made famous by Kenny Rogers and the First Edition.

With more great tracks by legends such as Joe Simon, James Brown, Candi Staton, Solomon Burke and Etta James this is a great collection of tracks that you might not have heard elsewhere and frankly you really haven't heard the Pointer Sisters range until you've heard their Fairy Tale track included here.

Most of all this album aptly demonstrates the variety of styles of country music that were played by black artists mostly in the Sixties and Seventies. When artist Andre Williams, who features on this compilation, was asked why he was playing country music he replied "Which of the great Soul Artists hasn't recorded country music?" and of course he was exactly right.

Charlie Gower

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