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Music DVD Review: America's Music Legacy: Soul

"A sinister cabal of superior writers."

# Music DVD Review: America's Music Legacy: Soul

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GLADYS KNIGHT & THE PIPS GOLD

Sometimes the DVD's in the America's Music Legacy series remind me of nothing so much as one of those PBS oldies broadcasts only without the pledge drive breaks. There is a collection of fond memories of youth, some grown old gracefully, some not so gracefully, but all aglow with nostalgia. The Legacy presentation of Soul is no exception.

Basically a concert recorded sometime in 1983, it features performances by the likes of James Brown, Gladys Knight and the Pips, and Tyrone Davis. The one advantage this has over the PBS shows is that since this is a concert from the eighties, the singers still look pretty darn good. More importantly, they sound darn good, too.

Host for the concert is Leon Isaac Kennedy and while he is certainly a personable young man, the introductory material written for him leaves a good deal to be desired. It smacks of ad copy smarm, rather than the raw power associated with soul. This is especially true of the attempt to articulate some sort of definition of "soul." Too often, the only point the writers seem to be making is that soul draws from so many musical influences it is really not possible to define it. Certainly there are elements of gospel, rhythm and blues, and jazz, as well as a good many others, still one would think that a more or less cogent definition of the genre would not be impossible. Introductions to the individual acts are

The music is another story. James Brown opens the concert with characteristic high power performances of "Rap Payback" and "Jam." The latter featuring really excellent trombone and trumpet solos by unnamed musicians. Brown returns later for a dynamic turn on "The Man

Understands." Sweat pouring down from his brow it is clear that this is, indeed, the hardest working man in show business.

Ben E. King does "Spanish Harlem," and there is a cut in from an interview where he describes his discomfort with the Spanish feel of the music and the ruse that was used to make him comfortable during the original recording. This is one of the few interviews on the DVD. In the other, the lesser known Tyrone Davis talks about advice he was given by B. B. King that it was always essential for a performer to give his all. Davis, who is from Chicago, sings "Turn Back the Hands of Time" and comes back later in the show to do an interesting jazz version of a song called "In the Mood." (This is not the more famous Glen Miller tune.)

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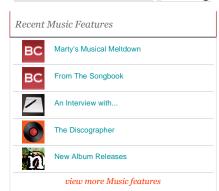
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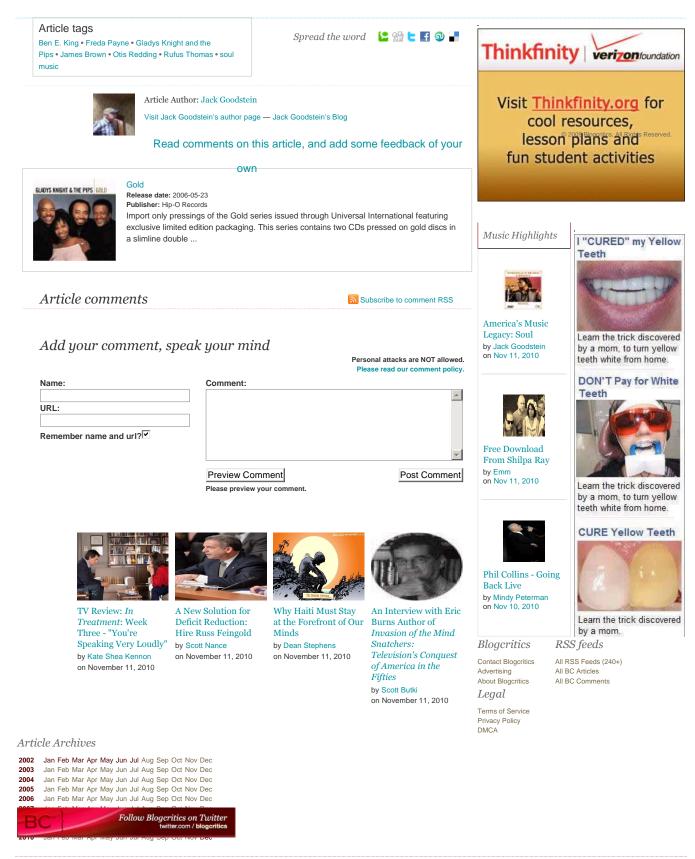
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