



Phil Spector

By Lenny Kaye

THE WALL – to keep in, to keep out; to set a further edge, a border; a component of rooms, of houses; upon which to hang overhead microphones, tympanis, orchestral bells, reverberations, decorations and declarations, limitation without limitations – of Sound. A Back-to-Monolith.

Phil Spector created that Wall, making a music of both grandeur and intimacy. Like a poperic conductor, he gathered the decibels of the universe in service of its most simplistic emotion: the moment when love reveals.

His was the space-time continuum of the three-minute single, a verse-chorus-bridge epiphany meant to be experienced in the present tense: “Be My Baby,” “To Know Him Is to Love Him,” “(Today I Met) The Boy I’m Gonna Marry.” Spector’s work, at random, presents pop-ular at its least ephemeral and most elemental, a we-put-the-us in music. Da Doo Ron Ron.

Harvey Phillip Spector, born December 25th, 1940, in the Bronx, was not merely a producer of records; he was, and remains, A Record Producer. His public persona, flash and double daring, embodied an oversoul that graced his art with genetic identity.

The impresario of sound’s musical genesis began at Fairfax High School, where he learned to play guitar and piano. In 1957 he and schoolmate Marshall Lieb began writing songs. A third friend, Annette Bard, joined Spector and Lieb to form the Teddy Bears. With that group, the skinny seventeen-year-old wrote his first Top Ten hit. “To Know Him Is to Love Him,” inspired by the inscription on Spector’s father’s gravestone (“To Know Him Was to Love Him”), was the only hit for the Teddy Bears, who disbanded shortly thereafter.

Spector recognized (in the liner notes to the group’s LP) that “in no other field of creative . . . endeavor can the youngster express himself for so many. . . . People buy the sound, the arrangement, the beat, and the rhythm.”

Spector’s creative genius flourished. Eighteen years old, back in New York, he co-wrote with Jerry Leiber what was to become a megahit for Ben E. King, “Spanish Harlem.” Tom Wolfe in a legendary 1964 essay documented the skyrocketing success of the young writer-producer. He most aptly dubbed Spector “The First Tycoon of Teen.”

Spector had a singular knack for matching great performers – singers like Darlene Love, Tina Turner, the Righteous Brothers and the Ronettes’ Ronnie Bennett (later to become Ronnie Spector); players like drummer Hal Blaine, pianist Leon Russell, saxophonist “Teenage” Steve Douglas; arrangers like Jack Nitzsche and engineers like Larry Levine, in studios like Gold Star, in cities like Los Angeles – with the most wonderful of songs: “Walking in the Rain,” “He’s a Rebel,” “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling,” “River Deep, Mountain High.” In the hallowed confines of the studio, he created a multilayered environment for the performance to happen.

The chronological measuring stick of a Phil Spector production is in its expanding use of echo. He had originally become intrigued with the possibilities while watching Lee Hazelwood record Duane Eddy. It was about the same time that Phil was taken under the business wing of entrepreneur Lester Sill. An apprenticeship in New York City with the writing-producing team of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller (beginning in May 1960) was his entree into Brill Building society. It was there that Spector played the guitar break on the Drifters’ “On

Broadway”; befriended young songwriting teams like Ellie Greenwich and Jeff Barry, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, Carole King and Gerry Goffin; and tested his three-track theories in a series of production liaisons with artists like Ray Peterson, Gene Pitney, Curtis Lee and the Paris Sisters.

By late 1961, Spector was ready for “Tomorrow’s Sound Today.” That became the motto of Philles Records, which he formed with Lester Sill and immediately successful with the Crystals’ “There’s No Other (Like My Baby).” Phil twisted the echo knob another notch, and by mid-1962, Philles was in high gear. The Crystals assured us that “He’s Sure the Boy I Love,” even “Uptown,” while Bob B. Soxx and the Blue Jeans wondered “Why Do Lovers Break Each Other’s Hearts?” Phil Spector was twenty-one years old.

Darlene Love was Spector’s “best” voice: as a member of the Blossoms, her harmonies were heard on dozens of recordings and live shows before and after her Philles hits. But when Phil discovered an aspiring “girl group” from Manhattan called the Ronettes, his heart sang its greatest hosannas: “Baby, I Love You,” “Walking in the Rain,” “Do I Love You,” “(The Best Part of) Breakin’ Up (Is When You’re Making Up).” The echo grew, and begat itself, until the sound encompassed the car radio and home phonograph, becoming one with the heavens above. And then there was *A Christmas Gift to You* . . .

His style gradually grew more cavernous, massive, possessed of its own inexorable momentum and majesty. The Righteous Brothers sang “Unchained Melody,” and as the river of song flowed to the sea, only the resonant echo remained. Each new single sought to top the previous one, until – with Tina Turner howling into the gale-force winds of “River Deep, Mountain High” – “Tomorrow’s Sound Today” caught up with yesterday’s memories at last. Realizing he’d come to the end of an era, Phil retired Philles Records in 1967, bringing to a close five years of unparalleled innovation.

Though a no less intense presence in the studio, Spector now took up a new role behind the scenes. He helped the Beatles organize the miles of tape that comprised *Let It Be*; produced George Harrison’s *All Things Must Pass*; and was instrumental in the creation of John Lennon’s boundary-breaking *Plastic Ono Band* and *Imagine* LPs. In the eclectic Seventies, Spector produced the first Derek and the Dominos single, “Tell the Truth”; a thrilling Darlene Love single, Mann and Weil’s “Lord, If You’re a Woman”; Leonard Cohen’s *Death of a Ladies’ Man*; and the Ramones’ *End of the Century*.

His classic records surround us still: the Ronettes’ “Be My Baby” has been heard in four different films (*For Keeps*, *Quadrophenia*, *Mean Streets* and *Dirty Dancing*). A new version of that first Number One, “To Know Him Is to Love Him,” recorded by Linda Ronstadt, Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris, became BMI’s most-played country song of 1987. In December 1988, SRO crowds packed New York’s Bottom Line for a loving onstage re-creation of *A Christmas Gift to You*, starring Ronnie Spector and Darlene Love.

“Nobody ever wrought deeper changes in the way the rock industry looked, felt, behaved,” wrote Nik Cohn. “To come out of a vacuum and force such changes, at such speed, with such totality – even now, it’s hard to conceive the force and self-belief it must have taken. Phil Spector, no doubt, was an earthquake.”



THE PRODUCERS

The Kind of Noise You Can't Forget: 1960-1964

By Ken Barnes

IN THE BEGINNING, giants rocked the earth. And after them came the producer-entrepreneurs, molding their artist protégés into craven images of the rock & roll pioneers. The starmakers valued the look over the sound, creating armies of cigar-store Elvises and idol curiosities. It was altogether too much *manqué* business. The script they followed was summed up in Bill Parsons's "All American Boy": "Along come a man with a big cigar/He said, 'Come here, boy, I'm gonna make you a star.'"

But by the turn of the Sixties, the entrepreneurs had shifted their emphasis from the look to the sound. Manufacturing hits was still the game's aim, but the new script was Gene McDaniels's "Hundred Pounds of Clay": "He took a hundred pounds of clay/And he created. . . ." What the producer-entrepreneurs created were "little symphonies for the kids," as Phil Spector, with all the hauteur an *auteur* could conjure up, characterized his records.

Spector, of course, was the classic producer-creator of the early Sixties. (The producers' heyday lasted roughly through 1964, when foreign influences and the ideal of the self-contained writin'-singin'-playin' rock group reduced the creative Svengali's influence in mainstream rock – though dominant producer-writers have continued to flourish in the R&B realm.) But Spector arose not from cracked and barren musical pavements but from a field in full bloom. All over the U.S.A., producers were creating distinctive songs and indistinct singers and groups to perform them. Girl groups, who tended not to write, produce, play instruments or insist on creative control, were well suited to the producer-entrepreneur's needs, but male groups and solo singers of both genders were also there for the shaping.

Bert Berns, perhaps New York's consummate cigar-chomping behind-the-scenes genius, worked with all varieties of artists – the Isley Brothers, Solomon Burke, the Exciters, the great, underrated Betty Harris. Producing, writing (often under the pseudonym Bert Russell), even recording (as Russell Byrd), Berns churned out classics – "Twist and Shout," "Tell Him," "Hang On Sloopy." He was farsighted enough to venture to England in 1964 and record the first tracks by Van Morrison (with Them) and Lulu, among others. He would go on to introduce Neil Diamond and the McCoy's to the world before his untimely death in late 1967.

Close but no cigar were a couple of Berns's New York compatriots: Luther Dixon produced the Shirelles, Chuck Jackson and Maxine Brown for Scepter/Wand Records and the Chantels for his own la-

bel, Ludix. Jerry Ragovoy produced the Majors ("A Wonderful Dream"), Garnet Mimms and the Enchanters ("Cry Baby"), Irma Thomas ("Time Is on My Side") and "Stay with Me," by Lorraine Ellison.

In the early Sixties, the New York record biz institutionalized the hustle long before Van McCoy (who was scraping together a record here and there) made it a dance hit. Spector and so many others started there, following the example or under the direct tutelage of George Goldner, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller and Al Nevins and Don Kirshner – triple-

threat producer-songwriter-dealmakers with a few years' head start on the new breed. Some of the up-and-comers slaved in cubicles in the song factories. After a while Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich, hearing their perfect fits of romantic depression dressed for success by Spector's and Berns's discoveries, would get the urge to role-play their own. They would throw Jelly Beans into the ring, release Butterflies and drum up the Raindrops (starring Barry and Greenwich themselves – the perfect guinea pigs for their protobubblegum experiments). "I Wanna Love Him So Bad," "Goodnight Baby," the thunderous "The Kind of Boy You Can't Forget" – all fierce exaltations of the crush-and-bum syndrome.

In their wake, a novice like Russ Titelman could think, "I can do that," deliver two of the most aching, sumptuous, knockdown-

gorgeous hymns to the sacred somnambulism of love, the Cookies' "I Never Dreamed" and the Cinderellas' "(If This Is Just a Dream, Then) Please Don't Wake Me," see them expire unclaimed and reclaimed for scrap vinyl, persevere anyway and go on to serve as producer for Steve Winwood, Paul Simon, Chaka Khan, Brian Wilson and many others.

And a Long Island no-hoper like Shadow Morton could bluff his way in to see Barry and Greenwich, bluff them into thinking he was a hot-prospect producer, bluff some girls from the 'hood to be his musical vehicle, keep bluffing all the way to the first scheduled session until he realized the bluff would be blown unless he had a song, pull his car to the side of the bluff and rough out "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)," drive on to the session and bluff the tune past the skeptical Shangri-Las and the impatient Barry and Greenwich, who were there to coproduce. At least that was Shadow Morton's myth-conception, and when he followed up with "The Leader of the Pack," who cared about the color of his lies? ("I don't know, he's always wearing shades.")

Another Spector haunted New York, an enigma in a minor key



– Abner Spector, producer of the atmospheric “Smoky Places,” by the Corsairs, and *éminence grise* behind the Tuff label, whose most mysterious moment, frozen in eternity, was the Jaynettes’ “Sally Go Round the Roses,” impenetrable slurry haze imbued with the sinister magic of jump-roping rhymes and dark secrets. Abner later produced another girl group, the Hearts (who may well have been the Jaynettes fallen on hard times), on a song called “Dear Abby,” in which the advice-dispensing heroine counseled the girls, waiting with bated breath, to go on a diet of worms, without any audible theological rationale.

Facing the same quandary as Barry and Greenwich, Burt Bacharach hooked up with quondam gospelizer Dionne Warwick for a succession of elegant and aloof but impassioned slices of city-slick soul. Their first hit, “Don’t Make Me Over,” still chills and thrills in a realm of its own. Warwick’s male counterpart in the Bacharach stable, Lou Johnson, is less well remembered, but his “If I Never Get to Love You” is a rich paean to the pain of unrequited love.

The Tokens – Phil Margo, Mitch Margo, Hank Medress and Jay Siegel – went from artists to producer-entrepreneurs. The proudest protégées of the team were the Chiffons, the Bronx’s soft-centered answer to the more insistent siren songs of the Crystals and the Ronettes. The Chiffons’ actual discoverer, Ronnie Mack, who also wrote their signature song, “He’s So Fine,” unfortunately died shortly after that record’s immortalization in the annals of wistful thinking. But the Tokens provided the exceptionally anonymous Chiffons – who never during their 1963-66 ascendancy so much as had their surnames acknowledged in album liner notes – with presentable material from the best New York song designers. “One Fine Day,” appropriated intact from a Carole King demo sans lead vocal, was the Chiffons’ pinnacle, although aging, well-worn Chiffoneers have furnished evidence that the perhaps equally transcendent “When the Boy’s Happy,” recorded by the Four Pennies, is actually by the Chiffons.

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, the entrepreneurial spirit flourished in equal measure. Spector had migrated there from New York for high school and the Teddy Bears era. He returned to New York to apprentice with Leiber and Stoller, only to return to L.A. once Philles Records was off the ground. But this recording Mecca boasted many creative forces.

Lou Adler graduated from writing songs like “Wonderful World” with his erstwhile partner Herb Alpert to presiding over Jan and Dean’s evolution from doo-wop to surf until supplanted by the ambitious Jan Berry. Adler also produced – in this period immediately preceding his historic work with Johnny Rivers, the Mamas and the Papas and Carole King – vocal groups like the excellent Untouchables, former Cricket Sony Curtis’s poignant “A Beatle I Wanna Be” and the second most successful version of “Alley-Oop,” by Dante and the Evergreens.

The “Alley-Oop” of song and story, however, was recorded by the Hollywood Argyles (named, one presumes, after the Hollywood street rather than the sock) and conceptualized by Gary Paxton, a cryptic character who also exhumed Bobby “Boris” Pickett and his “Monster Mash,” robbed the grave once too often with “Riboflavin-Flavored, Non-Carbonated, Polyunsaturated Blood,” by Don Hinson and the Rigamorticians, tossed off a jewel of a girl-group record called “Love Can’t Be a One-Way Deal,” by the Rev-Lons, recorded Leon Russell and David Gates and moved on to Christianity and Nashville, not necessarily in that order.

And there were more L.A. lights: H.B. Barnum, the veteran R&B

arranger-producer, worked with the early O’Jays and with Little Richard (in the guise of his band, the Upsetters). Lee Hazlewood moved from Phoenix with Sanford Clark and Duane Eddy in the Fifties and settled in L.A. to produce Al Casey’s “Surfin’ Hootenanny” (a magnificently audacious melding of seemingly incompatible fads), girl groups like Yolanda and the Castanets and the lovely Darlènes and later Nancy Sinatra. Terry Melcher, Doris Day’s son, produced two exceptional, emotional melodramas by Frankie Laine, “I’m Gonna Be Strong” and “Don’t Make My Baby Blue.” He moonlighted as a surfer in the Rip Chords, Bruce and Terry and the Hot Doggers and continued as a

The Genuine Imitation Life GAZETTE the 4 seasons edition

AMERICAN CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION

HUMAN TORCH has misgivings
LONDON (AP) — The 19-year-old singer-songwriter...
BONES LEFT ON ROAD
SPOKANE (AP) — A woman...
PHONE FOILS HOLD UP
PHOENIX (AP) — A...
AFRICAN KING DIES
LONDON (AP) — The...
TOMORROW'S NEWS IN BRIEF
A...
INDEX

the 4 Seasons

Sing Big Hits by Burt Bacharach / Hal David / Bob Dylan

THE WORLD BEARS NOW IS LOVE • MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF • ANYONE WHO HALL A...
WALK • BE • TO REMEMBER ME • BLOOD IN THE WIND • GIVERS AND APPROVED...
• LIKE A ROLLIN' STONE • DON'T THINK TWICE • ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO

THE 4 SEASONS' CHRISTMAS ALBUM

WHITE CHRISTMAS • THE CHRISTMAS SONG • JUNGLE BELLS • SILENT NIGHT
THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY • I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS • WHAT CHILD IS THIS
WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS • THE FIRST NOEL • DECK THE HALLS • JOY TO THE WORLD
GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN • SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN • AND OTHERS

hitmaker with the Byrds and Paul Revere and the Raiders. And most recently, he was the architect of “Kokomo,” the Beach Boys’ startling 1988 return ticket to the pop tops.

But I mustn’t leave the impression that everything in this vein was happening in New York and L.A. The Impressions, in fact, were in Chicago, where their singer Curtis Mayfield and producers like Carl Davis were bringing Major Lance to public notice. In Norfolk, Virginia, Frank Guida served up raucous, monolithic tune stones by Gary U.S.

THE RAINDROPS

STEREO

WHAT A GUY
THE KIND OF BOY YOU CAN'T FORGET
DA-DOO-RON RON
NOT TO YOUNG TO GET MARRIED
Plus 8 Other Great Hits

RECORDS
MURRAY HILL
& TAPES
MHT 344

FEATURING
ELLIE GREENWICH

proud and prescient "You Don't Own Me" for Lesley Gore before unleashing the Spokesmen (with "Dawn of Correction," the conservatives' answer to "Eve of Destruction"), Len Barry ("1-2-3") and Daryl Hall.

Working the Texas-Louisiana border was sometime barber Huey P. Meaux, Bert Berns with a Southern drawl, the man who put the cagey in Cajun. Huey would spring up out of the swamps every so often with a sleeper hit like "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do," by Jivin' Gene, and "You'll Lose a Good Thing," by Barbara Lynn, or hook up with Ronnie Milsap or Roy Head or Johnny Winter before their time came. Huey's own time came again later with the Sir Douglas Quintet and Freddy Fender. Down in New Orleans, Allen Toussaint, Harold Battiste and many more were rolling out irresistible R&B party grooves.

This could go on forever, touching on every city, state and even different states of mind. There were highly successful producers on staff or affiliated with a single label (Mercury's Quincy Jones, Liberty's Snuff Garrett, Reprise's Jimmy Bowen and Motown's famous and not so famous staffers - Smokey, Berry Gordy Jr., Holland-Dozier-Holland, Mickey Stevenson, Robert Bateman). These producers were not so radically piratical, not so bound to the karmic wheel of the deal as the entrepreneurs, but they represented a creative force that should not be forgotten.

Over most if not all of these entrepreneurological case studies looms the shadow of Spector. Some seemed to appropriate aspects of the Spector projection: England's closest equivalent, Don Meek, carried the eccentrics of the trade to extremes, recording in bathrooms and erecting shrines to Buddy Holly while catching satellite fever early with "Telstar," by the Tornadoes. Others wanted to steal a chunk of the Spector sound - Brian Wilson had a religious respect for Spector and attempted to hit the Wall

with the Honeyes and Sharon Marie but succeeded only when driving the Beach Boys' 409-powered mean vocal machine straight at it on "Don't Worry Baby" and its successors. Acolytes Jack Nitzsche and Sonny Bono applied their Spector session lessons well on obscurities like "Yes Sir That's My Baby" (cf. "Zip-a-dee-doo-dah"), by Hale and the Hushabeyes, and "Dream Baby" (cf. the Spector record of your choice), by Cheryl (cf. Cher). Best of all the sincere flatterers may have been David Gates, before he was inbred in Bread, with the titanic "You're So Fine," by Dorothy Berry, and - the apotheosis of imitation -

STEREO
ATLANTIC SD 8100

The Best Of Solomon Burke

GOT TO GET YOU OFF MY MIND

The Price **\$3.99** If You Need Me
Everybody Needs Somebody To Love
Just Out Of Reach
Cry To Me
Down In The Valley
I'm Hanging Up My Heart For You

If You Need Me
Everybody Needs Somebody To Love
Just Out Of Reach
Cry To Me
Down In The Valley
Tonight's The Night
I'm Hanging Up My Heart For You

Words
I Really Don't Want To Know
Home In Your Heart

JAN & DEAN

surf city

And Other Swingin' Cities

DETROIT CITY SOUL CITY

LIBERTY

I Left My Heart In SAN FRANCISCO
You Came A Long Way From ST. LOUIS
Why Down Yonder In NEW ORLEANS

SOUL CITY
DETROIT CITY
MANHATTAN
PHILADELPHIA, PA.
MEMPHIS
KANSAS CITY
TALLAHASSEE LASSIE

HONOLULU LULU

Bonds (e.g., "Quarter to Three," as impenetrably overwhelming, in its murky fashion, as Spector's best work) and apocryphal calypso adaptations by Jimmy Soul ("If You Wanna Be Happy" and the largely incomprehensible "Twistin' Matilda").

In the City of Brotherly Cheese Steaks was perhaps the most efficient assembly line of hits, supervised by Philly vets Kal Mann, Bernie Lowe and Dave Appell. Chubby Checker, Bobby Rydell, the Dovells and, more esthetically gratifying (at least to girl-group cultists), the Orlons and Dee Dee Sharp made their Cameo appearances demoing dances by the dozens for denizens of the *Bandstand*. In the midst of the twist, the fish, the frug, the mashed potato, the Bristol stomp and the crossfire, they made many, many records with surprisingly enduring impact.

Fellow Philadelphians John Madara and Dave White, failed teen idols both, had a couple of minor dance sensations: "Slop Time," by the Sherrys, and "Dancin' the Strand," by Maureen Gray. They also made fine girl-group records with those artists and with the Secrets, the Pixies Three and the Bobbi-Pins. They went overground by writing the

"My One and Only Jimmy Boy," by the Girlfriends.

But perhaps the most prolific and definitely one of the most successful of the men who would be Spector was Bob Crewe, teen-dream singer, songwriter, producer, empire builder. The Four Seasons were the franchise, and Crewe, working with future group member Bob Gaudio, quickly progressed from the shrill thrills of "Sherry" and "Big Girls Don't Cry" to heartbreak epiphanies like "Dawn," the vengeful "Big Man in Town" and the *lumpen*-throat masterpiece "Rag Doll." And if Crewe's-control efforts by Ace Kennedy and the Candies and Kevin McQuinn (with "Philly-del-fi-yea," a title that thoroughly discourages more in-depth investigation) deserve their obscurity, others, like "Across the Street," by Lenny O'Henry, and the creative-overload kitsch-in-sync extravaganza "I Won't Tell," by Tracey Dey, stand up to the best of an underrated era of overflowing, fermented pop creativity.