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Black Music Month 2014: June 4 musical salute to Sam Cooke



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It's Black Music Month. Enjoy the 2014 series. Support the artists. Buy their licensed music. And turn up as you dance along.

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Brief history: In 2010, I wrote a music series honoring Black Music Month on Associated Content's site (republished on **Examiner**). The focus was to honor new R&B singers, veteran R&B singers, solo rappers, and evenly split the musical salute between female and male rappers. The only artists I was not willing to split up were Salt n' Pepa because they worked as a unit. In 2014, it's about time to salute more artists, but in the spirit of Salt n' Pepa's legacy, R&B groups and rap groups will be included. The pattern in 2014 will be newer R&B singers (from 2000 to present), R&B and/or hip-hop groups, veteran R&B singers, and then solo rappers, still evenly split between women and men.

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Black Music Month Turn Up Factor

"Turn down for what?": Sam Cooke was born on January 22, 1931 and killed on December 11, 1964. Regardless of the

controversial way that his life was taken, he left quite a mark in almost 33 years.

Although it's not nearly as common today, Sam Cooke was able to be embraced as a socially conscious soul singer who crossed color lines without losing his core audience. And he didn't hesitate to make songs that reflected the civil rights issues going on at the time.

My Connection/First Memory to Artist: I'm not sure when I saw the 1990 film "**Cadence**," but it released when I was about nine years old. I just remember walking around singing the "Chain Gang" song while mimicking the soldiers but not having a clue who was the voice behind the real song. However, I can't place why I knew so many of his other songs as a kid. I'm not even sure I can narrow it down to my parents or grandparents. Sam Cooke is just one of those artists who influences your favorite R&B singer. For today's popular artists, who can forget the impressive YouTube bathroom performances that singer/actress Brandy Norwood released? Never mind where it was filmed (for acoustic reasons). In her bathroom, she sounded better than most R&B singers today in a studio with select tuning. She proved to not only remind people how much of a phenomenal singer she is but also made people like me want to listen to Sam Cooke's version again. Every singer who thinks he/she can sing just isn't cut out for a Sam Cooke song. But Brandy did an excellent job singing the songs of a superb artist.

Numbers Don't Lie: You'd have to really be sleeping on R&B and soul to not know some of Sam Cooke's chart-topping hits. Some only lasted on the charts for five weeks or less: "Let's Go Steady Again" (peaked at number 97), "When a Boy Falls in Love" (peaked at number 52) and "That's Where It's At" (peaked at number 93).

Others hung around for 10 weeks or less: "Feel It" (peaked at number 56), "Sugar Dumpling" (peaked at number 32), "It's Got the Whole World Shakin'" (peaked at number 41), "A Change is Gonna Come" (peaked at number 31), "Good Times" (peaked at number 11), "Tennessee Waltz" (peaked at number 35), "Good News" (peaked at number 11) and "Little Red Rooster" (peaked at number 11).

Then there were the ones that stayed around for 15 weeks or less: "Shake" (peaked at

number 7), "Cousin of Mine" (peaked at number 31), "Frankie and Johnny" (peaked at number 14), "Twistin' The Night Away" (peaked at number 9), "Cupid" (peaked at number 17) and "Wonderful World" (peaked at number 12).

And then there were chart-toppers that lasted over 15 weeks: "Chain Gang" (16 weeks, peaked at number 2), "Love You Most Of All" (16 weeks, peaked at number 26) and "Win Your Love For Me" (17 weeks, peaked at number 33).

For the first series of Black Music Month artists republished on Examiner (originally on Associated Content), [click here](#) to see all 30.

*Shamontiel is also **The Wire Examiner**, and for the gladiators, she's the **Scandal Examiner**, too.*

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