

Black Music Month 2014: June 8 musical salute to TLC



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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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Photo by David Becker

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.

Black Music Month Turn Up Factor "Turn down for what?": There are some female groups that look like they're 2.5 seconds from breaking up as soon as they release their first single, but I never had any doubt in my mind that TLC (Tionne Waktins, Lisa Lopes, Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas) would ever part ways. It was surprising to see that Lisa wanted to go solo during "Crazy Sexy Cool: The TLC Story (TV Movie 2013)." That movie also cleared up why Chilli is so paranoid about men. Had this movie come out first, "What Chilli Wants" reality show would've made total sense. And the popularity of that film, even after Lisa Lopes' unfortunate plane death in 2002, proves just how much people still care about the group over a decade later.

TLC could bring the crazy, the sexy and the cool, but they also brought up relevant newsy topics in song: HIV/AIDS, friendship, backstabbing, infidelity, female insecurities and lots of relationship songs. And they didn't just sing the songs; they made a point of physically proving their points (ex. condoms taped all over their bodies). Similar to Salt n' Pepa, this was another girl group who bypassed lecturing but instead practiced what they preached -- fashionably.

My Connection/First Memory to Artist: A friend of mine from Girl Scouts used to want to be like Left Eye so much. And all of our crew dressed a little bit like TLC -- flannel shirts, tanktops, baggy khakis and all. In true '90s fashion, three of four of us rocked dog chain tags (eighth grade graduation gift from the fourth person) to complete the ensemble. Minus one covered boob shot, TLC (and quite a few other female groups and artists in the '90s from the hip-hop and R&B era) made it sexy to keep your clothes on. And for young girls like myself, that was important. They proved that you didn't have to strip down to nothing to attract male attention, and the fellas loved TLC almost as much as ladies did. I still remember my prom date refusing to dance with me when the deejay played "No Scrubs," but that didn't stop me from going to the center of the dance floor. And even when guys had momentary grudges with the group (ex. "No Scrubs"), it didn't last long. They were girls' girls, guys' girls and had such crossover appeal that even through monetary issues, they still managed to bounce back. I was elated to be around for it all, especially considering there has been no group like them since then and probably never will be.

Numbers Don't Lie: These young ladies knew how to make hits and many of them made it to the top 10: "Ain't 2 Proud 2 Beg" (22 weeks on the Top 100 charts, peaked at number six), "Baby Baby Baby" (33 weeks, peaked at number two), "What About Your Friends" (27 weeks, peaked at number seven), "Unpretty" (32 weeks, peaked at number one), "No

"Scrubs" (28 weeks, peaked at number one), "Diggin On You" (20 weeks, peaked at number five), "Waterfalls" (34 weeks, peaked at number one), "Red Light Special" (22 weeks, peaked at number two) and "Creep" (32 weeks, peaked at number one).

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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