

## The Weekend *The Big Read*

# Soul survivor from the Swinging Sixties

Soul singer PP Arnold is performing at the Jersey Opera House on Friday to celebrate both 50 years in the music business and the belated release of her legendary 'lost' album, *Turning Tide*. She speaks to **Tom Ogg** about her poor upbringing, auditioning for Ike and Tina Turner and hanging out in London with Jimi Hendrix



■ PP Arnold at the height of her success in the 1960s Picture: GERED MANKOWITZ

BARRY Gibb. Jimi Hendrix. Mick Jagger. Tina Turner. Eric Clapton. The list of musicians with whom PP Arnold has worked throughout her career reads like a Who's Who of rock and roll royalty.

But then, there are many music fans – this writer included – who would argue that Patricia Ann Cole herself deserves to be ranked as a bona fide music legend.

Now in her eighth decade, the Los Angeles-born soul singer first found fame in the 1960s, when *The First Cut is the Deepest* and *Angel of the Morning* landed her in the UK Top 20 and made her one of the most recognisable faces of London in the Swinging Sixties.

Since then, she has recorded alongside some of the biggest names in the business, from Peter Dinklage and The KLF to Primal Scream. Those glorious female vocals that light up *The Small Faces' Itchycoo Park* ('It's all too beautiful')? Yep, that's her, too.

Today, Patricia is enjoying the latest of several career resurgences, with an autobiography on the horizon and a national tour in full swing.

'We did our first gig in Skegness last week at the Northern Soul Weekender festival,' says the 70-year-old, chatting over the phone from her UK home. '[Ocean Colour Scene guitarist] Steve Cradock has been kind enough to lend me his band for the tour and they're really great musicians. We spent a whole week putting the set together before the festival and it went down a storm. We're really looking forward to coming to Jersey.'

The concert will be held at the Opera House on Friday and will see Patricia

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**I'm an American soul singer who was produced by British producers and in a British way, and so my sound is totally different to Motown or any of the American stuff. I think that really makes my music quite unique**

singing all of her best-known songs. More exciting still, she and the band will also be performing tracks from her legendary 'lost' album, *Turning Tide*, which is finally due an official release in October – almost five decades after it was recorded.

'We're doing six tunes from *Turning Tide* in the show,' she says. 'I'm really pleased that the album is finally being released because I've believed in it forever. I've never given up on it and I've

kept fighting for many years for it to come out.'

Produced by Barry Gibb, *Turning Tide* was intended to cement Patricia's reputation as one of the most daring and exciting female soul singers of the 1960s, but instead it was unceremoniously shelved as a result of – as she puts it – 'a whole lot of politics'.

'As an artist, I have always tended to work with producers who are artists themselves,' she says, 'but this means that if they have things going on in their camp, then it affects whatever I'm doing with them.'

'At the time that Barry Gibb and I were working on *Turning Tide* – that period from '68 to '69 – the Bee Gees weren't recording together as a band, but Barry wanted to keep working.'

The pair had met through Patricia's ex-husband, Jim Morris, who worked with Robert Stigwood, the late RSO record label founder and long-time manager and producer of the Bee Gees (he would later prove instrumental in catapulting the Bee Gees to global fame).

'Barry had wanted to meet me because he liked my version of *To Love Somebody*,' says Patricia. 'We were both at a crossroads at the time. I didn't have a record label – my previous label, Immediate Records, had folded – and I didn't know where I was going. And as they say in this business: you're only as good as your last record. So I was searching to find myself a new musical home.'

It was at this uncertain time that Barry and Patricia began working together on

PP Arnold today Picture: GERED MANKOWITZ

*Turning Tide*.

'To be honest, Robert Stigwood wasn't as excited about Barry working with me as Barry was,' laughs Patricia. 'Understandably, he just wanted Barry to get back together with his brothers. But he also wanted to keep Barry happy and so he signed me up.'

Together, Barry and Patricia began laying down tracks for the album, the bulk of which were written by Gibb. But then Stigwood – fearful that RSO Records was heading for the same fate as Immediate – insisted that the Bee Gees reunite and, as a result, Patricia's album was postponed indefinitely.

The *Turning Tide* saga didn't quite end there, however. Although initially it seemed that Gibb's departure had sounded the death knell for the album, it soon transpired that another music legend was interested in working with Patricia: step forward, Mr Eric Clapton. 'At that time, Eric was getting ready to go on the road to do the Delaney & Bonnie & Friends tour, along with George Harrison and Billy Preston,' says Patricia. 'Stigwood landed me the opening slot on the tour and it went really well.'

After the tour, Eric and Patricia entered the studio to resume work on *Turning Tide* and recorded a number of gritty cover versions of songs that were popular at the time.

'We did *Medicated Goo* and *Brand New Day* and the Stones' *You Can't Always Get What You Want*,' she says. 'These tracks were really important for me because they connected me to my gospel r'n'b roots. Pop singer PP Arnold was just pop,

