

The Weekend *The Big Read*

Soul survivor

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Fifty years later, Patricia's enthusiasm for her time at Immediate Records is still evident.

'We all worked together there – writers and producers and musicians. There was a real in-house sort of production thing happening, all very influenced by the Motown vibe where everyone collaborates with one another. It was there that The Small Faces and I first met.'

More singles followed in the wake of *The First Cut is the Deepest*, including the Steve Marriott-produced *If You Think You're Groovy* (Patricia would remain close friends with the former Faces guitarist until his untimely death in 1991).

However, she admits that she initially found it hard to adjust to life in London, which proved a culture shock after the segregation with which she had grown up in LA.

Thankfully, an unlikely saviour arrived in the form of a certain frizzy-haired American guitarist called Jimi.

'Jimi Hendrix had come over to the UK at the same time as me and was living right around the corner,' says Patricia. 'He lived in Montagu Square and I was in Bryanston Mews East.'

The pair first met when Jimi asked to take part in a gig that Patricia was scheduled to play at Soho's famous Bag O'Nails club.

'My guitar player said, "There's this American guy in the audience who wants to know if he can jam with the band". I look over at Jimi and I think, "Who is this brother with all this crazy hair and psychedelic clothes?" But I said to my guitarist, "Yeah, tell him he can jam at the end of the second set". I would never let anyone jam in the first set in case they blew me away – which, of course, Jimi would have done!'

Jimi and Patricia immediately became close friends, regularly hanging out together away from the clubs and recording studios.

'Jimi was on a mission and knew exactly what he was doing,' she says. 'But I didn't know what I was doing. I was trying to go with the flow, but I was still struggling to integrate into white society. I'd never lived in an integrated community at all, so having Jimi there was really great. He understood how I felt and he knew that I was really shy. He'd tell me to just go with the experience.'

Despite her inhibitions and insecurities, Patricia credits British society with enabling her to forge a successful solo career, something that she maintains would never have happened had she stayed in her home country.

'Absolutely not,' she says. 'There is no way that a young girl with no experience would have been able to have a solo career in America. I would never have been riding in a limo with a bunch of white guys like the Rolling Stones. None of it would have happened for me there.'

However, while America may have been behind the UK in terms of race relations in the 1960s, the majority of UK artists still looked to the US for their musical inspiration.

'The British were totally inspired by



■ The image of PP Arnold using on the cover of the *Turning Tide* album, which is finally being released in October – almost 50 years after it was first recorded. Picture: GERED MANKOWITZ

American music,' says Patricia. 'It was blues and Motown and even country that was behind the whole rock and roll revolution in the UK.'

Sadly, the non-appearance of the *Turning Tide* album proved an ominous portent of things to come for Patricia in the 1970s.

'It was a really horrible decade for me,' she says. 'In terms of being an artist, I was lost and searching for direction. I left the UK and returned to America, because there was all this talk of me working with American producers, but it never happened. And then I made a lot of really bad decisions.'

One such decision saw Patricia forming a band with American bassist Fuzzy Samuels of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. As she puts it: 'It was the wrong move for me. I mean, what was I doing in a band?

I'd completely lost my confidence as an artist.'

And then in 1977, Patricia's daughter, Debbie, was killed in a car accident.

'It was tough,' she says, uncharacteristically lost for words.

More happily, the decade saw Patricia giving birth to her third child, Kodzo, and she says his arrival provided a rare 'shining light' amid the gloom. Today, Kodzo is a hugely successful musician and record producer, having worked with, among others, Jessie J, the Sugababes and Plan B. ('I wish I could afford to work with him,' laughs his proud mum.)

After the 1970s, Patricia's life and career 'came back on roller skates' and today she is the picture of contentment, having recently finished writing her autobiography, which will be released later in the year.

'It was difficult to write at times, but it was also very cathartic,' she says. 'I've had a lot of ups and a lot of downs, a lot of laughs, a lot of tears. The book covers my roots all the way back to the plantation era, and it takes in the history of soul music, and all of my life leading up to meeting Ike and Tina, and then the highs of the '60s and the lows of the '70s. I had to end the book in 1984 otherwise I'd have been writing forever.'

Asked for the secret to her career longevity, Patricia says: '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.'

'You know, I feel blessed that *Turning Tide* is finally being released. And I feel blessed my voice is still in good shape and that I've still got my health. At this time in my life, it really is a blessing that I can still perform and record.'

● PP Arnold will be performing at the Jersey Opera House on Friday 6 October at 8 pm. For more details, or to book, visit jerseyoperahouse.co.uk.

● For more information on *Turning Tide*, visit pparnold.com.



■ 20-year-old PP Arnold with John Walker of The Walker Brothers in 1967

PP Arnold tracks

Classic Rock magazine recently asked: 'Is PP Arnold the most overlooked soul singer of all time?' Here are some of her finest tracks – all of which are available on YouTube – to help you decide

- The First Cut is the Deepest
- Angel of the Morning
- To Love Somebody
- If You Think You're Groovy
- Born to Be Together
- Bury Me Down by the River
- Come Home Baby (duet with Rod Stewart)
- Understanding (with Primal Scream)