



Soul Days: Dobie Gray and the TLM 103

December 1999 by Jonnie Barnett

About a year ago I got a call from a Beach Music record label, RIPETE RECORDS, waking me up (at 1PM) and wanting to know about a song I sent them. The song, "SOUL DAYS" was always one of my favorites. I wrote it by myself and it was about growing up in the 60's and the effect Soul Music had on me, then and now. That music is what pulled me into Show Business, and has enabled me to enjoy the incredible success I now have, which affords me such luxuries as matching shoes.



Marion Carter, the owner of RIPETE RECORDS, wanted to include "SOUL DAYS" on his new Box Set of Beach Music. The first Box Set had sold extremely well, over 50,000 units. I was bold enough to ask him if I could produce it myself in my home studio. I explained to Marion that the original demo, sung by CHIP MILLER, was cut on an 8 track cassette deck. Even on that primitive system it sounded great and Chip really sang fantastic on it, but I told Marion Carter that I had a digital recording studio now and that I wanted to produce this myself in my studio, and not have them do the recording in South Carolina. "SOUL DAYS" was going to be the first record that I wrote and produced myself. The artist that he wanted to sing on it couldn't get a release from his record company so I was able to get my first choice, which was DOBIE GRAY. DOBIE GRAY has had major hit records in the past like "DRIFT AWAY", "LOVING ARMS", and "THE IN CROWD". When I wrote "SOUL DAYS" I actually had Dobie in mind to sing it, so this was a dream come true for me.

I had the PRO TOOLS SESSIONS 8 system. I was using a MAC 7100 Nubus computer. All I had was 8 audio tracks and no TDM plugins, but I had a great song and a truly legendary singer to sing it. I programmed the drums myself on my sequencer. I hired the same musicians that played on the demo to come back in to record the record. The line-up was MIKE SEVERS on guitar, who is the most soulful guitar player I've heard. BUTCH DILLON, played bass and also helped out with the production. Butch is probably the best R&B and Jazz bass player in Nashville. DARRYL DYBKA played keyboards. He's played for years with CHET ATKINS and EARL KLUGH and I had hired WAYNE JACKSON, from the MEMPHIS HORNS, along with DOUG MOFFIT on sax. I was really worried about how this was going to sound, because I really hyped my ability and the sound that my studio got to RIPETE RECORDS. I knew that I needed a great microphone. The recording engineer, who I use on everything, FRANK MACEK recommended the NEUMANN TLM 103. I was able to squeeze some extra money out of RIPETE RECORDS and I bought it. The TLM 103 arrived one day before the recording session. It was real hot in Nashville and my studio is upstairs. I had to turn the window air conditioner off when we were recording anything through the microphone, which made my studio turn into the kind of sweat shop that is usually associated with KATHY LEE GIFFORD. Knowing this and all of the other pressures I was feeling made the situation for me extremely edgy. I knew DOBIE GRAY was going to come over to do his next record in someone's house, not a major studio on MUSIC ROW, and that it was going to be HOTTER THAN HELL!!!! Not exactly what he had in mind.

About 30 minutes before the musicians arrived, I was setting up the TLM 103 and accidentally dropped it from about 5 feet high. It hit my wooden floor with a BANG that was so LOUD that I now wish that I had a sample of that to use in my drum samples for those BIG AGGRESSIVE beats. The TLM 103 had a major dent in the wire screen. I just knew that the microphone was cracked and ruined, which meant that my big recording session was not going to happen and that my life was not going to suddenly change for the better on account of the obvious hit record I was about to produce, and that my dreams of fame and fortune, or even paying the rent on time, were going to have to be postponed indefinitely. To look at the TLM 103, all beat up, only made matters worse, because I could still hear the loud noise, when it hit the floor, ringing in my ears. At that moment the players arrived. FRANK MACEK, the engineer, tested the TLM 103 out and IT WORKED!!!! WAYNE JACKSON said that you could use any NEUMANN MICROPHONE as a hammer to build a house and that it would still sound fine. Some day I'm gonna try that out to see if he was really telling me the truth.

The recording session was great. RIPETE RECORDS loved the track and it came out on their 4 CD Box Set in early June 1999. THE RHYTHM 'N BEACH TOP 40 radio stations picked up on "SOUL DAYS" and it has been in the TOP 25 all summer long and is still at #24, which is amazing because it is not a single and has gotten no promotion and is on a \$60.00 box set. The DJ's found this themselves and have kept playing "SOUL DAYS" on the radio and in the SHAG CLUBS. It has made it by popular requests alone, and has competed with all of the other records that get the "I don't want to have to testify in court" kind of promotional encouragements. The Box Set "BEACH MUSIC ANTHOLOGY VOL. 2" has been #1 on that chart all summer long and "SOUL DAYS" is now on it's way to becoming a Beach Music Classic.

I've got the PRO TOOLS 3 CORE system now, with all the cool TDM plugins. DUTCH DILLON and DOBIE GRAY and myself are producing an entire CD on DOBIE GRAY, in my home studio. We've cut 5 more songs and they sound fantastic. We'll be shopping for a record deal soon, so get ready. If anyone reading this wants to buy a copy of "SOUL DAYS" You can order it at any record store or internet site. It is on RIPETE RECORD's BEACH MUSIC ANTHOLOGY VOL. #2, or you can contact me, JONNIE BARNETT, at my E-mail address jbbk@earthlink.net, and I'll be glad to sell you a bootlegged copy, because as you know, next month's rent is always due.