

The Fingerprints of the “5” Royales

Nearly 65 years after forming in Winston-Salem, the “5” Royales’ impact on popular music is evident today. Start tracing the influences of some of today’s biggest acts, then trace the influence of those acts and, in many cases, the trail winds back to the “5” Royales. — Lisa O’Donnell

CLARENCE PAUL

An original member of the Royal Sons, the group that became the “5” Royales, Clarence Paul was the younger brother of Lowman Pauling. He became an executive in the early days of Motown, serving as a mentor and friend to some of the top acts in music history.

STEVIE WONDER

Little Stevie bloomed into a sensation under Paul’s supervision, breaking out with “Fingertips Part II,” co-written by Paul. That’s Paul conducting the band and ushering Stevie to the stage on a highly viewed YouTube clip from an early performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cSjOxqldFs>).

MARVIN GAYE

Paul, Gaye and William “Mickey” Stevenson collaborated on “Hitch Hike,” a 1962 hit for the up-and-coming Gaye on the Tamla label, a subsidiary of Motown. The song’s stuttering intro became a touchstone for a range of bands.

ARETHA FRANKLIN

The Queen of Soul recorded “Until You Come Back to Me (That’s What I’m Gonna Do),” a song Paul co-wrote with Stevie Wonder and Morris Broadnax. Wonder recorded the song in 1967 but it did not appear on any of his albums until his 1977 anthology, *Looking Back*. Franklin made it a No. 3 hit on Billboard’s Top 100 in 1974.

ROLLING STONES

Paul’s influence jumps the Atlantic when The Stones record a version of “Hitch Hike” on their 1965 album *Out of Our Heads*.



APPLE CORPS LTD. PHOTO

BEATLES

The Beatles played around with “Hitch Hike” during their 1969 *Let It Be* sessions, a recording of which is on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGWVKoNnj1s>). Paul McCartney later performed it at the Apollo Theater in 2011. His version also showed up on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJP8sjxr7E>).

SMITHS

Brit-pop faves from the 1980s engaged in their own riff-swiping, lifting the intro from “Hitch Hike” for “There is a Light That Never Goes Out.” Guitarist Johnny Marr told *Select* magazine in 1993 that although the music press believed he was lifting from the Velvet Underground, the true inspiration came from the Rolling Stones’ version of “Hitch Hike” — which points back to the three guys from Detroit: Paul, Gaye and Stevenson.

SONGS

The Royales made a seamless transition from gospel to R&B, recording songs that included elements of doo-wop and pop. The band’s songs, most of which were written by Lowman Pauling, have been recorded by a diverse array of artists. Here’s the path a few of their songs took:

“DEDICATED TO THE ONE I LOVE”

Written by Lowman Pauling and Ralph Bass, it’s the song most associated with the band. Eugene Tanner sang lead vocals while Lowman Pauling’s guitar crackled with classic blues licks.

SHIRELLES

The all-girl group first recorded the song in 1959. A re-released version in 1961 hit No. 3 on Billboard’s Top 100.

MAMAS AND THE PAPAS

The California quartet reworked the song to fit its folk sensibilities, turning it into a Summer of Love smash in 1967. With Michelle Phillips singing lead, the song peaked at No. 2 on Billboard’s Top 100, making it the band’s second-highest-charting single.

TEMPREES

The Memphis soul group amped up the romance, turning it into a bona fide torch song. This version went to No. 93 on Billboard’s Hot 100 in 1972.

“THINK”

A foot-stomping, rave-up, the first five seconds are rock ‘n’ roll perfection, heralding the arrival of Pauling as a major guitar force.

JAMES BROWN

An early champion of the band, James Brown recorded an uptempo version of “Think” that appeared on his landmark *Live at the Apollo* in 1963. An earlier version was the title track for his 1960 album with the Famous Flames.

“TELL THE TRUTH”

With John Tanner on lead vocals, the band dabbled in doo-wop on this infectious tune.



AP PHOTO

RAY CHARLES

In a famous recording session that yielded the smash “What’d I Say,” Charles also recorded his version of “Tell the Truth,” which became a vehicle for the Raelettes. Charles included the song in his live album, *In Person*. It later showed up on the soundtrack to Martin Scorsese’s classic film, “*Raging Bull*.”



JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

MICK JAGGER

The Rolling Stone frontman and James Brown devotee recorded “Think” on his 1990 solo album *Wandering Spirit*.

VOCALS

The Royales explored new terrain in the 1950s, merging the raw emotion of gospel with the smooth R&B harmonies that were popular then. That new sound was embraced most prominently within the black community. Some of those early listeners grew up to put their spin on the Royales’ sound.



TEMPTATIONS

Lowman Pauling’s younger brother, Clarence Paul, collaborated closely with the Temptations, particularly in the early days. Otis Williams, the last living Temptation, said that the influence is most pronounced on “(Talking ‘Bout) Nobody But My Baby,” the B-side of “My Girl.” “When I listened to that song, I thought, ‘If that ain’t ‘5’ Royales, I don’t know what is,’” Williams said.

JACKSON 5

The brothers Jackson emulated the Temptations’ smooth presentation, tight harmonies and choreographed dance moves as early as 1966 when the boys won a talent show in Gary, Ind., performing “My Girl.”

NEW EDITION

The boy wonders of the 1980s, New Edition picked up the mantle from the Jackson 5, bringing the tradition of slick choreography and soaring vocals to a new generation.

BOYZ II MEN

These 1990s chart-toppers named themselves after a New Edition song and are managed by Michael Bivins, a former New Edition member. They, too, are best known for harmony vocals.

JAMES BROWN

Mr. Dynamite patterned his early band, the Famous Flames, after the Royales, fellow Southerners who understood that when the spirit moves you, sometimes you gotta shout. He later recorded his version of “Think” on his landmark *Live at the Apollo* album and produced the Royales near the end of their 20-year career.



AP PHOTO

MICHAEL JACKSON

Jackson learned to command the stage from James Brown, picking up the master’s acute sense of showmanship. “Nobody has influenced me more than this man right here,” Jackson said when presenting Brown with the BET Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003.



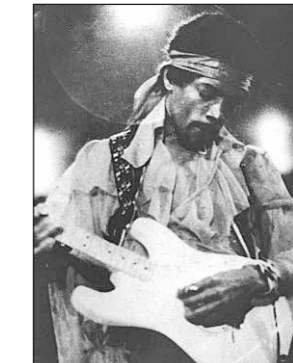
AP PHOTO

BEYONCE

“He was magic. He was what we all strive to be.” Beyoncé said of Jackson upon his death in 2009. Beyoncé inherited Jackson’s drive for pop perfection and his fanatical commitment to execution. She’s the Millennial generation’s transcendent icon.

LOWMAN “PETE” PAULING

In the mid-1950s, Pauling took over the band’s guitar duties, adding a new, explosive dimension to the Royales’ sound. With his guitar slung down to his knees, Pauling electrified crowds with his showmanship and a crackling guitar style that hinted at the instrument’s role in the coming decades.



AP PHOTO

JIMI HENDRIX

The most celebrated of the guitar gods, Hendrix expressed his love of Pauling to Alvis Moore, the son of “5” Royales singer Jimmy Moore, during an interview at Ohio State in the 1960s. “He mentioned Uncle Pete as an inspiration, and that just lit up the interview,” Alvis Moore recalled recently.

ABOUT ANYONE WITH A DESIRE TO PLAY ROCK ‘N’ ROLL



GEFFEN RECORDS PHOTO

SLASH

This former Guns N’ Roses guitar ace told *Esquire* in 2014 that he also has a passion for aggressive playing, an attribute he found in Townshend’s rhythmic style. “As I started to play guitar, I really started paying attention to how he played,” he said. “Everybody’s tried to sound like Pete Townshend at some point or another and failed.”

STEVE CROPPER

This Stax Records stalwart recalled seeing Pauling in Memphis as a teenager. “It was the coolest thing I had ever seen,” Cropper said. His tasteful, piercing licks on “Green Onions” and other classics echo his idol Pauling. Never a guitar god in the classic sense, Cropper is most known for bursts of cool that serve, rather than upstage, the song.

PETE TOWNSHEND

The Who guitarist called Cropper “the most incredible guitarist in history,” in a 1968 *Rolling Stone* interview, saying that Cropper’s aggressive riffs were a big influence.



L.R.S. RECORDS PHOTO

PETER BUCK

In its 2011 listing of rock’s 100 greatest guitarists, *Rolling Stone* quoted this R.E.M. guitarist as calling Cropper “probably my favorite guitarist of all time. You can’t think of a time when he really ripped off a hot solo, but he just plays perfectly.”

COLIN MELOY

Meloy is a guitarist, vocalist and songwriter for the Decemberists. Much of his work, particularly the band’s most recent album, *The King is Dead*, is an homage to R.E.M. and the bright, jingly guitar work that Buck was best known for.

CASSANDRA SHERRILL/JOURNAL