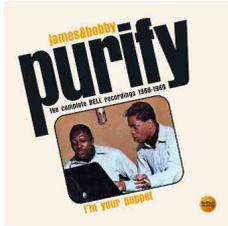


JAMES AND BOBBY PURIFY: I'm Your Puppet (SoulMusic Records)

Written by Bill B

Thursday, 06 June 2019 15:33 - Last Updated Thursday, 06 June 2019 15:45



In many soul histories James and Bobby Purify are often dismissed as "the poor man's Sam and Dave". True they didn't enjoy as high a profile as the Stax/Atlantic duo but (in various pairings) the Purifys enjoyed a decent run of hits – most whilst pacted to Bell Records. As testament to what they achieved, SoulMusic Records have here collected all their Bell recordings – 38 tracks, across two CDs, spanning the years 1966 – '69.

Like many modern pop groups, "James and Bobby Purify" were the creation of a music biz svengali... in this case Florida's Don Schroeder. In 1965 he paired singer James Purify with singer/guitarist Robert Dickey (who was Purify's cousin) in an attempt to cash in on the success of soul duos – Sam and Dave, Mel and Tim. The Sims Twins, the Knight Brothers, Maurice and Mac et al. He dubbed his pairing James and Bobby Purify and took them down to FAME studios in Muscle Shoals. The first fruit of the sessions – the Southern classic 'I'm Your Puppet' - became an instant smash hit. Oddly, though, we're told that despite selling over a million copies, James and Bobby hated the song!

Whatever, it kick started their career and more hits followed – a cover of 'Shake A Tail Feather' and 'Let Love Come Between Us' amongst them. A hit act had to have back up albums and Bell had them in the studio on a regular basis and you can enjoy all that output here.

Amongst this set's 38 cuts there's all the hits and plenty of classic 60s southern flavoured soul. To fill out the albums Schroeder had his charges cover plenty of soul and pop hits, including several from Sam and Dave's back catalogue and the Purify's versions stand up well in their own right. Amongst the highlights are covers of the Tams' 'Untie Me', Sam Cooke's 'Soothe Me' and the outstanding take on Barbara and the Browns' ballad 'I Don't Wanna Have To Wait'.

The Purifys' last single on Bell was the oddly named 'Section C' on which "Bobby Purify" was actually Buddy Grubbs. Dickey had left for health reasons but very quickly Grubbs was replaced by Ben Moore. The Purify's best days though were over; but a re-recorded version of 'Puppet' became a 1976 UK hit. Despite that the group soon folded and sadly in the 80s James Purify was jailed for sexual offences. He is thought to be still alive. Robert Dickey died in 2012 while

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Ben Moore is now a member of the Blind Boys of Alabama.

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