

DELANEY & BONNIE & FRIENDS

TO BONNIE FROM DELANEY
SPEAKERS CORNER



"on his motor-cycle ... that's when he hit that peach truck and died"

Delaney & Bonnie were an odd couple – compared to other music stars of the time, that is. Odd in that they offered a unique conglomeration of music. Firstly, because they combined a wide range of genres easily into their art from soul to gospel to blues and even country (a pretty wide bunch there, then) so they didn't fit nicely into any label-managed area. More than that, they attracted a selection of high-powered friends (or Friends, as this album has it) who were more than willing to join in the party.

In many ways, this aspect of the duo's career, being a creative catalyst – and not just for the star names – was most intriguing, but it was also a natural part of the couple's make-up and one that's not often explored. That is, the pair were musically inclusive and generous in how they shared their time and space. I think that this attitude, this sort of "Hey you can hang out with us, no pressure," feeling was very attractive. Especially to rock stars who were too used to being in the increasing white heat of publicity.

As Bonnie herself explained, "It would've been rude for an artist to walk in and you not ask them if they want to play. I mean, people bring their own mouth piece and they walk in with their instruments in a soft case which right away says that it's coming out of the case – they want to play. Anybody that carries an instrument in a soft case plays it. It doesn't sit around a lot. It's not safe – if it's in a soft case – to just sit around. So, you could tell who's who by what case they carried."

But their generosity wasn't restricted, either. "It wasn't exclusive that you had to be a star, you just had to want to play. If you were the young gun in town and you showed up at our concert and you came in and said that you wanted to come in and sit in on the jam song, you were welcome on that stage. Delaney didn't care if it was Eric Clapton or Joe Schmo. It didn't matter to Delaney. He brought that."

And that sense of sharing and camaraderie

was a major part of this album. This 1970 LP release, well mastered by Speakers Corner, was their first release for Atlantic and showed their Rhythm & Blues chops with a host of brilliant performances from Delaney's voice/guitar and Bonnie's Janis Joplin-like delivery. But there's more than that and it is summed up by the above.

The feeling that the journey is the most important thing, that the feeling of the music itself is more significant than any money, marketing or image pressures and that 'we're all here to have a good time'.

You get that when you hear tales of Duane Allman (a resident Friend), "...we got to be best friends," said Delaney, "and if you saw one of us you saw the other. And King Curtis (also on this album) rounded out the trio. I mean, me and Duane and Curtis, we hung together and we made some real good music. You know Duane got little strung out on drugs and I talked to him and asked him before he got any worse if he'd go to the hospital. He said, 'Do you think it would work?' It would have been easy because he wasn't that bad off but he was like me and had a bad temper. He told the nurse, 'I need a little something to calm me down. I'm kind of hurting.' And the nurse yelled, 'Oh all you druggie hippie musicians come here for help and just go back out and do it all again!' It made him mad, so he put his clothes on and got on his motorcycle and took off. And that's when he hit that peach truck and died."

On this LP, also look out for Aretha Franklin backing man, Mike Utle, rock'n'roll legend Little Richard, Derek & The Dominos drummer Jim Gordon plus Bobby Whitlock from the same, Sneaky Pete 'Flying Burrito Brothers' Kleinow plus one of the best guitarists ever to see the light of day but who was taken from us all too early, Charlie Freeman (famed for his appearances with Jerry Lee Lewis, Aretha Franklin, Chuck Berry and Bobby Bland) and legendary producer and keyboard man, Jim Dickinson.

Delaney & Bonnie, boy they knew how to pick 'em. **PR**