

BOB JONES Disc & Data

Gladys Knight speaks in pleasing tone so modest that one might not realize that she knows she's one of the shining stars, along with The Pips, of American contemporary music.

One Vegas reviewer said, "if ever a black is beautiful coin is minted, it should certainly have the picture of Gladys Knight. The moment she walks into a room it lights up and her presence is known whether she is on stage or preparing for an interview."

"Actually, when you've been singing for as long as I have, there is nothing else you know or care about doing other than performing," she confesses. "I was only nine-years-old when we made our first tour."

Other things have certainly happened for Gladys Knight and The Pips since they made that first tour when she was only nine; her million selling records for Motown have included such outstanding songs as "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" and the message filled, "Friendship Train," a plea for understanding for all mankind; Gladys Knight and The Pips play at the plush showrooms of the International Hotel and the Flamingo Hotel at least three or four times yearly; and their television appearances include such major shows as The Andy Williams Show and The Ed Sullivan Show.

"We recently finished a three-month concert tour with The Tom Jones Show and with Count Basie Orchestra backing us up we really had a ball. Although we haven't appeared on the This Is Tom Jones Show this season, we collaborated with Tom on an idea for a special which we hope to finalize plans for in the not too distant future," she added with a trace of professional excitement in her voice.

Like most of her other Motown colleagues, Miss Knight and The Pips can trace her singing to gospel music. It was in Atlanta that Gladys, her brother, Merald, along with cousins, Edward Patten and William Guest began touring local churches.

"The only thing I can remember is that we really enjoyed the way the people treated us and the great food they served," she recalls. "There was never any trouble among us. Perhaps we were too young and excited to make any fuss. We did our thing and the people began jumping and shouting."

"If I had it to do all over again, I'd start the same way. Today's music seems to have a lot of freedom, and I think this is what gospel is all about.

"We classify ourselves as soul singers, but don't think for one minute that we can't handle a slow tender ballad.

"I'm not sure that we will find ourselves musically, for we try to keep changing with the times. In this business, we're continuously exploring the technique and the music itself in terms of lyrics and the treatment we give to of song. There are so many different kinds of sounds today."

Miss Knight sees music as the universal language between all mankind. "I think things have changed in this respect," she states. "Black performers are at last being accepted-- I can only speak for the clubs, concerts and television at the moment--as performers and individuals, not just "black acts." One thing I've always noticed in showbusiness is that other performers will reach down and help others who haven't quite made it. Our being a part of the Tom Jones Show got us exposure with audiences that we possibly would have never reached otherwise, he has all of those little old ladies who have never listened to a Top 40 station or an r & b station.

One high point in their career was last Easter Sunday, and a wounded GI sat in a hospital bed in Fitzsimons Army Hospital, Denver, with a Purple Heart and both legs in a cast, but he grinned and wiggled his toes to the beat as Gladys Knight and The Pips sang "Friendship Train" right there in their ward. The throng of servicemen had crowded into the ward to witness the special broadcast of the Ed Sullivan Show and were engrossed by Motown's Gladys Knight and The Pips. For a moment, they could forget their wounded bodies and concentrate on their soul.

"Soul touches people," Gladys says, "it gets to their problems, and how rewarding to know you are reaching your public."

A new hope or another hype?

North Las Vegas has formed a new concept in police community relations. The group consists of seven members -- five civilians and two members of the North Las Vegas Police Department. Their objectives are to promote municipal accord and friendship among all people, stimulate active individual interest in good government, inspire respect for the law and the rights of others, and to aid and encourage the development of youth.

Members of the Police Community Relations Division include people with an understanding of community problems and a desire and capacity to solve these problems.

Program Coordinator, Chief Nick Janise, has thirty years experience on the Police Department. He became chief in 1961. He's married, has three children and seven grandchildren. Chief Janise is by far the most compassionate policeman I have ever met. The chief says, "I believe in law and justice as opposed to law and order -- I'd be happy if I could work out of a job if it would better the world."

Detective Jack Miller is the program's assn't coordinator. He has eleven years of police experience. He has been on the North Las Vegas Police Department for the past four years. He is very definitely a "cop". He has expressed a sense of fair play and concern for the community.

Larry Evans, thirty-two years old, has been married for eight years and has three children. He has lived in North Las Vegas for the past eight and one-half years in the community's West Side. He attended schools in Richland, Washington. Larry says, "I want people to live in peace -- I want civil rights for all people."

Ernestine Feazell came to North Las Vegas from Peoria, Illinois and for the past eighteen months has worked at the Juvenile Office of the North Las Vegas Police Department. She comes from a family of twelve, has a warm sense of humor and a personality that is directed toward the youth of the community.

Freddie Ridley, age twenty-five, married with two children. Fred has lived on the West Side for fourteen years. Before coming to Las Vegas he lived in Seattle, Washington. Freddie has spent a year and a day in the state penitentiary at Carson City. Fred says, "I want to help the minorities of our community."

Kip Lithgow lived in New York City's Greenwich Village for six years, worked with emotionally disturbed children from the ghetto areas of New York, and lived in Haight Ashbury for two years. He has an inside knowledge of drug abuse and addiction. Kip has lived in North Las Vegas for a year and finds it a beautiful place to raise his family which now consists of his wife and a two-month old boy. "I want this community to be a place where people can enjoy the freedoms of our great American Constitution," says Kip.

If anybody is aware of community problems or has solutions to existing problems, we urge you to contact the Police Community Relations Division -- 642-2330, Extension 09.

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