

RESURRECTING VOICES

The Philadelphia Black Experience

A Podcast By the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Episode 5 — Celebrating Black Music: The Soundwaves of Philadelphia
Featuring guest speaker - Patty Jackson
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Resources at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Archival Material

- Leon Gardiner Collection of American Negro Historical Society records
 - This 16-box and 35 volume collection features administrative records, reports, minutes, speeches, membership lists, portraits, and more items documenting the life of the American Negro Historical Society. The collection also includes materials on the Banneker Institute, Pythian Baseball Club, Lebanon Cemetery, and other Black organizations.
 - [View digitized records from the Leon Gardiner Collection.](#)

- Philadelphia Record Photograph Morgue
 - *The Philadelphia Record*, which was established in 1870 and closed in 1947, was for a time one of the leading newspapers in the United States. *The Philadelphia Record* photograph morgue is comprised of black and white photographs dating primarily from 1920-1945, though some date from as early as 1900. The collection is divided into two series: Subject (approximately 20%) and Alphabetical (approximately 80%) with the former covering events and the latter focusing on individuals and families.

- Justine J. Rector Papers (1943-1989)
 - Justine Rector was born in Philadelphia and educated at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University. She was an active teacher and prolific journalist, and taught at many schools, including at Howard University. Throughout her life, she was involved in promoting civil rights, high standards in journalism, and in documenting and improving race relations, particularly in Philadelphia. This collection consists primarily of materials documenting a range of civic organizations and conferences, Rector's professional activities, and her research on Black history. Included are correspondence, research files, publications, clippings, and conference materials.

- Stiefel Family Papers
 - In 1903, members of the Stiefel family set up a movie theater in Philadelphia, the Fairyland on Market Street. In the following years, they opened other theaters in Philadelphia, elsewhere in Pennsylvania, and in Baltimore, New York, Washington DC, and California. The Stiefels were also in the film distribution business and produced live shows and at least one film. Run by the Stiefels, the Uptown Theatre in Philadelphia, was part of the so-called "Chitlin Circuit" and gave starts to many Black entertainers whose music later appealed to a wider audience.

- Patrick Stanton Papers
 - Patrick Stanton was born in County Cork, Ireland and came to Philadelphia in 1912. In 1926 he began working as an announcer at radio station WIAD (which later became WELK), where he created the "Irish Hour," which he broadcasted on a succession of stations for nearly 50 years. From 1948 to 1965 Stanton owned radio station WJMJ. Stanton served as press secretary to Philadelphia Mayor James Tate from 1968 to 1971. The bulk of the collection documents Stanton's radio, film and charitable activities in regard to Ireland and the Irish-American community.

Published Material

- *A House on Fire: The Rise and Fall of Philadelphia Soul* by John A. Jackson (2004)
- *Joy Ride! : The Stars and Stories of Philly's Famous Uptown Theater* by Kimberly C. Roberts (2013)
- *Philadelphia: City of Music* by James Rosin (2006)
- *Georgie Woods: I'm Only a Man: The Life Story of a Mass Communicator, Promoter, Civil Rights Activist* by James Spady (1992)
- *The Nicest Kids in Town: American Bandstand, Rock 'n' Roll, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in 1950s Philadelphia* by Matthew Delmont (2012)

Resources at the Library of Congress

- Black History Collection, 1623-2008
 - The Black History Collection spans 1623-2008, though it primarily concentrates on the period between 1800 to 1865. Materials in this collection include correspondence, financial documents, court records, slave deeds, family papers, military records, birth records, and more. Please note that this collection is not available to view digitally, but is open to researchers at the Library's Manuscript Reading Room.

- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers
 - Chronicling America features millions of newspaper pages from across the United States published through 1963. Researchers can search these newspapers by state, ethnicity, and language.
 - [View African American newspapers published in English in Pennsylvania.](#)

- Civil Rights History Project
 - This project, authorized in 2009, directed the Library of Congress (LOC) and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) to conduct a national survey of existing oral history collections with relevance to the Civil Rights movement to obtain justice, freedom and equality for African Americans and to record and make widely accessible new interviews with people who participated in the struggle.

Additional Resources

- WDASHistory.org

- WHYY
 - [*The Uptown Theater: Movies, Music & Memories*](#)
 - Special on the history of Philadelphia hospitals founded by the Black community.

- Temple University
 - [Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection](#)

 - [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Philadelphia Branch records, 1943-2016](#)

Glossary (in order of mention)

WDAS FM - Popular Adult R&B contemporary radio station in Philadelphia.

Patrick Stanton - Former Program Director and Vice President of WDAS. He left the station in 1946 to launch his own station, WJMJ.

Rod Carson - Veteran radio personality whose career spanned over 50 years.

Bob Kline - Former General Manager of WDAS. During his tenure, he brought on popular radio personalities including Georgie Woods, Joe “Butterball” Tamburo, and Louise “Weezy” Williams.

Georgie Woods - Past on-air host of WDAS and WHAT, concert promoter, and civil rights activist.

Joe “Butterball” Tamburo - Longtime Program Director and DJ at WDAS. Known for his Sunday show, “Wide Wonderful World of Butter,” which is now hosted by Patty Jackson.

The Philadelphia Sound (TSOP) - Musical genre created by Philadelphia International Records.

Philadelphia International Records - Founded in 1971 by songwriters and producers Kenneth Gamble and Leon Huff. During its tenure, Philadelphia International produced over 100 chart topping songs and albums.

The O’Jays - Musical group known for its soul music. Originally from Ohio, signed with Philadelphia International in 1972. Produced hits “Love Train” and “I Love Music.”

Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes - Philadelphia-based R&B soul group. One of the most popular Philadelphia Soul groups of the 1970s. Signed with Philadelphia International in 1972.

Teddy Pendergrass - Soul and R&B artist. Originally the drummer for Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, Pendergrass soon rose to lead singer. Had a successful career as a solo artist with hits like “Love TKO” and “Turn Off the Lights.”

MFSB - Mother Father Sister Brother, known more commonly as MFSB, was the house band of musicians for Philadelphia International.

Thom Bell - Famed songwriter and producer of some of Philadelphia International’s biggest hits.

Jill Scott - Singer, songwriter, and native Philadelphian. One of the leaders of the neo-soul movement.

Neo-Soul - Music genre that emerged in the mid-1990s that combined styles of contemporary R&B, 70s funk and soul, and jazz. Forerunners of the sound include Erykah Badu, Maxwell, Jill Scott, and D’Angelo.

The Roots - Rap and live instrumental band from Philadelphia that was part of a subsect of the neo-soul movement called The Soulquarians. They have been the house band for both of Jimmy Fallon’s late night shows since 2009.

Soul Train - Popular syndicated TV show highlighting famous and up-and-coming Black R&B and soul acts. Created by Don Cornelius. Ran from 1971 to 2006.

American Bandstand - Philadelphia-based music TV show that ran from 1952 to 1989. Featured performances from the biggest acts in pop and rock’n’roll. Dick Clark served as its host from 1956 through 1989. The show moved production to Los Angeles in 1964.

Motown Records - Founded in 1959 in Detroit by Berry Gordy, it is one of the most successful record labels of all time. Home to acts like The Temptations, The Supremes, and Smokey Robinson.

Stax Records - Founded in 1957, this label had acts that included Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, and the Staple Singers.

Berry Gordy - Former record executive and producer. Founder of Motown Records.

Girard College - Boarding school in Philadelphia endowed by Stephen Girard in 1831. Desegregated in the 1960s. Black students now comprise approximately 80% of the student population.

Uptown Theater - Music hall in North Philadelphia that served as a major stop on the "Chitlin Circuit.". Georgie Woods produced its shows from 1957 to 1972.

Steifel Family - Former owners of Uptown Theater, as well as the Howard Theater in Washington, DC and Royal Theater in Baltimore.

James Brown -Soul and funk singer nicknamed "The Hardest Working Man in Show Business." Credited as a founder of the genre of funk music.

Marvin Gaye - Soul and R&B singer nicknamed "The Prince of Motown."

Mary Wilson - Member of female Motown group The Supremes.

Dell Music Center - Outdoor music pavilion in North Philadelphia. Frequently hosts R&B and soul concerts.

Jeffrey Osborne - Singer and songwriter. Former lead singer of musical group LTD.

The Roots Picnic - Launched in 2008, a music festival organized by The Roots to celebrate Black music.

Tony Brown - Longtime host of WDAS's show, The Quiet Storm.

Mimi Brown - Radio host and first female Assistant Program Director at WDAS.

Tiffany Bacon - Radio host, best known for her show “Inner City” on Power 99 radio station.

Golden Girl - Former Power 99 nighttime radio host best known for her “Lockdown Love Dedication” segment that offered those incarcerated to send or receive love letters and dedicate songs.

Motown 25 - The 1983 televised celebration of Motown Records’ 25th anniversary. This taping was the first time Michael Jackson moonwalked on television.

Dionne Warwick - Artist who shot to fame with her first solo single “Don’t Make Me Over” in 1962. With 69 singles to reach the Billboard 100, Warwick is the second most charted female artist in history.

Jerry Blavat - Pioneering Philadelphia radio disc jockey whose career began as a teen dancer on American Bandstand. Blavat helped many artists of all genres including Hall & Oates and the Isley Brothers rise to stardom.

Lionel Richie - Founding member of popular R&B band The Commodores. Achieved international fame as a solo artist with songs like “All Night Long” and “Hello.”

Victoria Monet - R&B singer/songwriter that won the Best New Artist at the 2024 Grammy Awards.

CoCo Jones - Disney child star turned successful R&B singer and actress. Her single “ICU” was on the Billboard Hot 100 for 20 weeks.

SZA - Chart topping R&B artist that broke the record for the most weeks at #1 on the Billboard charts in 2023.

Kanya Vaun - Philadelphia-based R&B singer.

October London - Contemporary R&B singer that is often referred to as “the second coming of Marvin Gaye.”

Eric B. & Rakim - Hip-hop duo that formed in Long Island in 1986.

The Five Spot - Lounge formerly located in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia. Hosted open mic nights leading to the founding of the “neo soul” sound. Artists like Jill Scott, Musiq, Kindred the Family Soul, India Arie and Floetry were discovered at these weekly events.

Full Transcript

Selena Bemak: Welcome back to *Resurrecting Voices: the Philadelphia Black Experience*, a podcast brought to you by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and funded by the Library of Congress. Founded in 1824, this year marks the 200th anniversary of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Since our founding, HSP has collected an astonishing array of documents that bring people of the past into conversation with us today. Alongside the collections at the Library of Congress, these records serve as the basis for this podcast.

I'm your host, Selena Bemak, and I'm thrilled to be your guide as we embark on a journey through these narratives of 19th and 20th century Black Philadelphia. Join us and our guest speakers to uncover the stories, resilient voices, and vibrant culture that shaped this pivotal period in history.

Today we are joined by guest speaker, Patty Jackson, genealogist, Katy Bodenhorn-Barnes and our project advisor, Stephanye Watts. As a pillar in Philadelphia culture and a radio professional for over 40 years, Patty has been witness to many iconic moments in music and Black culture in our city, touching several generations. A South Philly native, she began her career in broadcasting at WSSJ in Camden, New Jersey. From WSSJ, Patty went to Philadelphia's country station, WXTU, then to WUSL.

And in 1987, she became a part of the WDAS family where she remains today. Whether she's playing her favorite songs of the past and present on her daily radio show, hosting the hottest concerts in the city, or co-hosting her podcast, *Patty and the Millennials*, Patty Jackson's presence is felt all across the greater Philadelphia region.

So Ms. Patty, we are so excited to have you on our podcast today. As you can tell, I think we're all fans of your work and have been fans for quite some time. And now we're moving deeper into the 20th century with our podcast, so it would be impossible not to discuss the widespread cultural impact that Philadelphia has had on music, particularly with Black musicians and their work. And you were there for some of this, and have borne witness to it, and have promoted it on your show. Can you walk us through your journey in radio?

Patty Jackson: Well, I also worked at Q102, so I did pop radio for a minute. But starting in this business 42 years ago, I can't believe that I'm still here because I'm like the girl who loves what she does. And I just, I just do it. I don't think about, "Wow, it's been 42 years." It's been 42 years of fun.

Selena: Oh, that's so sweet. 42 years of fun. Has it changed a lot in your, in your time?

Patty: Oh my gosh. Yes, it has. Welcome to the internet. Radio is so different. I actually feel like I work harder now than I did in the beginning, because you have to work just as hard on the radio as social media to get your presence. It's another audience.

It's funny. I'm a YouTube blogger. And it's funny, people are like, where'd you come from? I'm like, "I'm a radio girl in Philadelphia. I do this for fun." But radio is my life. Being a more well-rounded media personality, it's more work, but you have to keep expanding your audience.

Selena: So Ms. Patty, in doing research for this episode, I was looking at historic newspapers from the '60s that we have in the collection at HSP. And there was one called *The Night Owl*, which was targeting a Black audience in Philadelphia. And it was actually printed out of an apartment building on Girard Avenue. So this newspaper has all of these incredible advertisements, and they are promoting different clubs, saying like, oh, this singer is going to be here, and this songwriter is going to be there. So it's a different landscape than it once was. You're promoting things now a lot differently than they once were.

I also pulled a couple of things from the archives that I just thought were interesting related to WDAS history in the 1930s and '40s. Right here is a picture of a radio host for WDAS named Patrick Stanton who left the station and founded his own one eventually.

I'm also presenting you with another photograph of a music group called the Pop Johnsons because the WDAS radio station used to play folk music. and this is very clearly a folk group. And I will include links to both of these images in our show notes so folks can look at Mr. Stanton and the Pop Johnsons. But for so long, WDAS has been known as an R&B station in the city, but clearly that was not always the case.

Stephanye: Speaking to that, I have a really cool tidbit for you all that I found in my great-grandmother's obituary. And this is my grandfather's mother.

“Alethea, being a devout Christian, soon joined the late Lottie Miller's tabernacle. She became a member of the Usher Board, prayer band, pastor's aid, hospitality club, and gospel choir. As a Christian crusader for the less fortunate, she recognized the need to spread the gospel to more people. With this in mind, she initiated a radio fund rally. It was successful, and on each Sunday evening at six o'clock, there was a live broadcast program directly from the church. In 1937, she gained the distinction of becoming the first Black woman radio announcer for a church in a major city on a major network.”

And that station was and still is known today as WDAS. Isn't that crazy, y'all?

Selena: That is absolutely insane. Like what a coincidence, what a small world, the first Black woman radio announcer and it was on WDAS, that's incredible. Like Stephanye, I mean, I know that you are so ingrained in this community, but it's obviously an ancestral thing too, if your great grandmother was the first Black woman radio announcer for a church in this city. That's crazy!

Patty: It was also, throwing back to Rod Carson and his rock days. WDAS was a rock music station. It wasn't until the later 60s that the owner, Bob Clyde, decided to move the Black music that was heard on AM to FM. And it was very different. And it was like, “Well, how do we navigate this? How do we do this?”

And it became a life of its own. And also, a station for the streets and the community. You got to think that era of the late sixties, the civil rights movement, Vietnam...

[Excerpt plays from A Time For Freedom; Randolph, A. Philip, Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin, Martin Luther King, Harry Belafonte, Mahalia Jackson, Mordecai W Johnson, et al. A Time for Freedom. 1957. Video. [https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs01856600/.](https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs01856600/)]

“We will by the power of our vote, write the law on the statute books of the South”
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

...the world was changing as we see it. And the jocks, Georgie Woods, Butterball, they were very immersed in the streets. Dr. King would come to a WDAS to calm the community. Malcolm X would come. So, it was music, and it was community. And that's what made the station stand out.

Selena: And you can tell based on everything that I've read from it, even from times that come before me, I feel like you get a sense of WDAS and all of the DJs that were on there, especially ones that have since passed. I would come across their obituaries in doing my research, and everybody is a legend. They're legendary. They are so legendary. I think every music enthusiast, regardless of age too, looks to Philly Sound.

To give some context on Black Philly music in the mid-twentieth century, a genre called Philadelphia Soul, also known as Philly sound, emerged in the 1960s, combining elements of R&B, funk, gospel, and pop.

One of the defining characteristics of Philadelphia Soul was the influence of key record labels and producers, most notably Gamble and Huff's Philadelphia International Records. Founded by Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff in 1971, Philadelphia International Records became synonymous with Philly Sound. Their roster included iconic artists such as The O'Jays, Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes, Teddy Pendergrass, and MFSB also known as Mother Father Sister Brother, the label's house band. These artists produced a string of hits that dominated the charts and shaped the sound of the era.

Another influential figure in the Philly soul was Thom Bell, a songwriter, arranger, and producer who worked closely with Gamble and Huff. Bell's distinctive production style, characterized by unique orchestration and intricate arrangements, helped define the Philadelphia Sound. Artists like The Stylistics, The Delfonics, and The Spinners benefited from Bell's creative genius, producing some of the most memorable hits of the era. Philadelphia Soul music was known for its socially conscious lyrics, addressing themes of love, empowerment, and social justice. Songs like "Love Train" by The O'Jays and "Wake Up Everybody" by Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes became anthems of unity and hope during a time of social and political upheaval.

Despite the decline of the genre's mainstream popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Philadelphia Soul continued to influence artists across various genres. Its impact can be heard in the music of contemporary artists such as Jill Scott and The Roots, who have kept the spirit of Philadelphia Soul alive while infusing it with a modern twist.

Can you share with us what that time in the city with that type of music on the radio would have felt like?

Patty: It was exciting because you would see a Teddy Pendergrass in Center City or the O'Jays. So to have this incredible sound of Gamble and Huff, you felt a sense of pride. You know, you'd watch *Soul Train* or even *American Bandstand* and be like, "They're Philly. That's the Sound of Philly."

So coming out of Motown and the Stax era, Gamble and Huff really admired what Barry Gordy put together. And they were really into live musicians. When you listen to a "Backstabbers," that is 38 seconds of instrumentation that is unbelievable because they had an orchestra that was behind all of these singers.

So they wanted to carve out their own way, modeling after Stax, which was all that Memphis sound, Al Green, Stapleton singers, what Motown brought to the table. And it was also a very important time because music had changed. It went from being poppy, poppy, "I'm in love," to an Edwin Starr singing "War." And all the Motown artists rebelled. "We want to sing about life and what's going on in our country and Vietnam." It was about war. It was about politics.

So when Gamble and Huff came on with the Sound of Philadelphia, it was a natural lane for them to sing a "Wake Up, Everybody," no more sleeping in bed. It was great music, obviously, but there was a message in the music.

Selena: Yeah, it was different. It wasn't all love songs.

Patty: It wasn't all love songs.

Selena: And when researching for this episode, I read a lot of things about how Philadelphia came second to Detroit in terms of the music scene at this time. But so many people were coming out of the Philadelphia Sound movement. I might be jumping forward a little bit and Stephanye, you can pull me back if we need to, but I'd love to talk about Georgie Woods and his role. I think he's a really fascinating person.

I was reading this oral history that James Beatty, who's a Black historian, conducted with Georgie Woods. This was in the 90s or so. Kenny Gamble wrote the introduction for this oral history. And there's a quote in the beginning where he talks about how Georgie Woods is Philadelphia. And it's funny to me because Georgie Woods himself was not from this city, but he's a product of the Great Migration, which is relevant to our last episode. But Georgie Woods was born in Georgia. He made his way to Harlem, New York as a young boy, where he grew up.

And then he really launched his career in Philadelphia. But he's so much more than a disc jockey. He is this community. He produced shows at the Uptown Theater, and we'll talk about the Uptown a little bit today. And he was also an activist. I mean, he was at Girard College protesting and was taking part in demonstrations promoting the desegregation of Girard College. He met with Martin Luther King Jr. He met with Malcolm X. He met with all of these great leaders.

And so this is fascinating, because the oral history that I was reading is a look at his life through his words. And I'll let you see it if you haven't yet. But this is from the collection.

So if you can just share some words about your experience with Georgie Woods, who he was, how you might have worked with him. I think our listeners would really like to get to know him more.

Patty: The first time I was on the radio and I looked over, because you could look into the AM Studio. And I was like, "I can't believe that's Georgie Woods." And he was so nice, so very nice to me. He was an incredibly good looking man, which can get you in the door real quick, but he was charismatic. I mean, he was good looking. He walked in, you'd be like, you know, you just like, and he was very charismatic, but he was about his business, whether it was music, whether it was activism, whether it was selling a commercial, you know, getting you to buy a car.

He knew how to relate. Radio is theater of the mind. And if you can captivate someone just by them listening to the sound of your voice and they feel like, “I know them. You're my friend, I trust you, and you're gonna keep me informed,” that's the kind of radio that is missing today.

Selena: Can you say more about that? Is that part of the changing landscape of radio, missing personalities like that?

Patty: Yeah. Bosses never want you to be bigger than the station, no matter where you are. Number two, a lot of young people aren't taught how to be a personality. You can get on the radio, but if you don't know how to read a commercial, you're not going to go far. And they think, “I don't need a little commercial.” Yes, you do, because commercials, they keep the lights on. So you got to know how to do a commercial. So that's very important. But a lot of people are not really taught how to use the microphone, how to be an effective communicator. Some people, they just come and go, but some people, you find yourself listening like, “Wow.”

Because during the end of his radio career, Georgie Woods was a talk show host. And I remember being a little girl, Jimmy Carter was running for president and he would play this song. “If a peanut farmer can do it, so can I.” He was just about educating the audience. When he took off, you hated it. Because they would put someone on and it'd be like, “Who is this? Where's Georgie? When is he, when is he coming back from vacation?” He was a great communicator.

Selena: That's great. And he just feels like someone very involved and ingrained in the community.

Patty: M-hm.

Selena: I read a lot about his work producing shows at the Uptown Theater.

Patty: Yes.

Selena: And the Uptown Theater was, for so many years, a Philadelphia staple. In our collection here at HSP, we have the Stiefel family papers. The Stiefel family was the first family to own the Uptown Theater. Despite being owned by a white family though, the Uptown holds a special place in Black Philadelphia history and culture.

So a little bit of backstory on the Uptown Theater. Located on North Broad Street, the Uptown was originally built in the 1920s as a movie theater during the era of segregation, and it provided a venue for Black Philadelphians to enjoy films and live performances.

In the 1950s, the Uptown Theater was purchased by the Stiefel family and became a part of what's known as the “chitlin circuit,” which was a network of venues that primarily catered to Black audiences during the era of racial segregation in the United States. Also during this time, the theater truly came into its own as a hub for Black entertainment, becoming a premier venue for live performances by some of the biggest names in music.

The Uptown Theater gained legendary status as it hosted iconic acts such as James Brown, Aretha Franklin, The Temptations, The Supremes, and countless others. These performers, along with many

others, graced the stage of the Uptown, captivating audiences with their electrifying performances and contributing to the theater's reputation as a must-visit destination for fans of R&B, soul, and gospel music, and of course, the Sound of Philly, which we mentioned earlier.

Disc jockey Georgie Woods, who we've been talking about, also produced shows at the Uptown. He would often host what he called "freedom shows," in which the artists promoted civil rights. Cecil B. Moore, the former president of the Philadelphia NAACP chapter, often assisted in the production of these shows.

So in addition to its role as a concert venue, the Uptown Theater also served as a vital community center for the Black community in Philadelphia. It provided a space for cultural events, talent showcases, community gatherings, and it fostered a sense of pride and unity among residents of the Uptown neighborhood and beyond.

Despite its cultural significance and historical importance, the Uptown Theater faced challenges in the latter half of the 20th century. Like many other historic theaters, it struggled to compete with the rise of multiplex cinemas, changing environment, and changing entertainment trends. The theater eventually closed its doors in the 1970s, falling into disrepair and facing the threat of demolition, though the building is still there today on North Broad Street.

Patty: If you were a major artist, you performed at the Uptown Theater.

Selena: Right. And it was not just a theater where people performed, it was a beautiful space. The architecture with a terracotta building on the outside, and it's just so elegant on the inside. The bathrooms were even beautiful, everything.

When researching Philadelphia music in the 20th century, I kept coming across the Uptown Theater, because it was the place to be. You went and saw people there, you saw the big acts and people who came out of Philadelphia Sound, too. And Georgie Woods was at Uptown.

Patty: It was such a magical time, they knew these artists. Like they had personal relationships with a James Brown, with a Marvin Gaye. You know, Butter used to date Mary Wilson of the Supremes. It was, they just had this history with these major stars. So, they were right there and just playing the music, and it was a special, it was a certain kind of magic that I don't think could be duplicated.

Katy Bodenhorn-Barnes: That was going to be my question. Do you feel like there's any place in Philly today that has any kind of that same magic?

Patty: The Dell Music Center, which is a hidden treasure in Philadelphia. It's 33rd and Ridge. I liken it to the Apollo outside. Because when you come, like I remember the first time Jeffrey Osborne came and he was, if they're used to doing Vegas, they look at the Dell like, "Where are we?" But they see that love in the audience, and it makes them want to perform, and it makes them want to come back. They see the love. They're like, "Wow." People singing those songs word for word, giving these artists love. So, I would say the Dell. It's a hidden treasure. Really is.

Selena: That's really interesting. I've never heard of it until now. Yeah.

Patty: Oh, my gosh! You're going to have to come down to a show.

Selena: You're going to catch me at the Dell this summer.

Stephanye: I was raised at the Dell. I remember being in fourth grade and my mom was dragging me to see Rachel Pharrell, the Whispers, all the legends. I will never forget that. I still go to the Dell this day, though. Every Thursday in July and August, me and my friends, or me and my mom are down there.

Patty: It is, it's hidden, that more people don't really know more about it, but Thursday nights in July and August, it's a whole mood.

Stephanye: And you know what's really interesting about the Dell is my mom will always talk about how she goes to the uptown and see like five acts for a quarter. And now 50 plus years later, I can go to the Dell and see five of my favorite R&B artists still today, and it'll be like \$50. So it really is inflation, but pretty much the same kind of concept. And I think that's really cool.

Patty: Yeah, the price is good. And some good acts have come through the Dell Music Center. M-hm.

Selena: That's good to know. I mean, I've always known and gone to the Mann Music Center. And I've heard about the Roots Festival, but the **Dell** must be close to that.

Patty: We're right down the road.

Selena: Right down the road. Okay. We'll have to add to that. We'll be there this summer.

Katy: Field trip.

Selena: Yep.

Stephanye: I wanted to talk a little more about what you said about stations not wanting their personalities to become bigger than the actual station. But DAS has always had the best hosts from Butterball to Tony Brown. Could you talk a little bit about the hosts at WDAS?

Patty: Well, they kind of let you be you, which is great, because a lot of stations don't. Tony was so legendary in the way that he did the Quiet Storm. And Tony was just unique. He thought he was the Black Captain Kirk. Literally everything was Star Trek and he was Captain Kirk and he had that studio completely dark with just the lights, and watching him work. I was like, "Wow, he really thinks he's Captain Kirk, playing music," but he knew how to touch people through song.

But through the years, some of the greatest personalities have come out. And that's the one great thing about the radio station. They let you be a personality. You know, like be you and be that companion to people. You know, now things we have a thousand other things we could listen to, but they always come back to us. Some people say, I don't believe someone died until you say it.

Selena: Wow.

Patty: And that's a compliment. That's a compliment. My boss always told me, "Don't be first. Be the most correct."

Selena: Those are words to live by, especially for a historical society.

Patty: You're right. Everybody wants to be first and they're wrong. You know, they'll put out misinformation. Don't just put a story up that someone died and they clearly are still living. Call me, text me, but don't just put it out there. But we live in a society where everyone wants to post first. And that's a downside of life.

Katy: Well, this is interesting to me because there's a theme I feel like we've talked about through a lot of our podcast episodes, which is these different institutions that become reliable cultural centers to the Black community. Historically, at various points, it was the church, still is, but.

It's interesting that in this information age that people are still coming to the radio with a trustworthy person to get accurate information that they can rely on, that there is that trust still. And that's encouraging to hear, you know, there's not a lot of trust going on in a lot of institutions these days.

Patty: No, there's not. No, there's not. And thank God we, we gear more 25, 54 and older. So thank God for that. They still hold on to the radio. They love the specialty, because you can listen to a Pandora or Sirius all day, but you won't know what the hell is going on. You'll get out of your car, wherever you're listening, find out someone died and be like, really? Because when you just listen to music all day, you're not listening to any kind of information. You need information. You need to know what's going on.

Selena: Can you talk a little bit about how your career in journalism, and media, and the radio has changed over time?

Patty: Well, now it's so different because I built such a platform and it was kind of like a dare. It was a program director who considered DAS the old blacks and he said, "They won't get it."

And I sat there and said, "Who is he talking to?" And this girl from Power 99, she said, I said, "I'm not doing it." She said, "I'm going to teach you. I'm going to teach you." And she did. And I took off. I just took off. I've never had to pay for followers or, nope. I have built a social media presence just being me. I love pop culture, entertainment. I love food. I put my Gator gumbo up today. It's me. It's what you see on my social media. It's me. It's family. I've got a son, my eight-year-old niece, us doing fun things, but just being natural and being me.

Selena: It probably adds to the trustworthiness too, that you're not putting up a facade.

Patty: You're right, yep.

Selena: You're just who you are. And people love that and they relate to you.

Patty: Yeah. I'm going to tell you like what's going on. You know, funny story. This is happening or, it's amazing to me that I've been able to build it. But when that man said that it did something to me, I was like, "Who was he talking to? Who was he talking about? He talking about us?" We're older. And I taught Tony Brown and his wife because Tony's like, "Patty, I'm not doing all that." "Tony, the world is changing. We have

to. So I'm gonna teach you." That young girl taught me, I taught him. And we both became a force on social media.

Selena: And do you use that as a way to connect with your audience too?

Patty: Yeah. Yeah. That's the way I would do on the radio. I said, "All I can do is be me. Just be me."

Stephanye: About that, let's talk about your podcast, *Patty and the Millennials*. You know we love you Ms Patty. You literally raised us!

Patty: I love good conversation. I wanted to bring together young people, millennials, and I brought in Gen X. I mixed it men and women. What I love about the podcast, sometimes millennials and baby boomers will be at each other's throat. "You're the problem." "No, you're the problem." And I just wanted to bring it together. I say "We can agree to disagree. I'm not going to be nasty. We're going to agree to disagree, but we're going to have a discussion."

I remember we had this girl on, she was bragging about not voting. Child, my hair stood up, the lashes stood up. I was like, "What? You're not," you know, and I said, "We need to have this conversation. And I'll tell you why it's important to vote." And she would tell me why she doesn't vote. So I like the conversation and the dialogue, and I've been doing it.

I was so new to podcasting. I'm a stroke survivor and they told me I had to do it when I was in rehab. And I was like, what's a podcast? Again, my favorite line, "I ain't doing that." I was like, I didn't know anything about it. So then I immersed myself, and I took everything that I didn't like in a podcast. People taking too long, clowning. I was like, what are you talking about? You know, you want to be in and out, make your point, you know, just make it clean. So when I started it, I fell in love with it.

Selena: Well, you're a natural podcaster, I can tell you that. But I love bridging the gap between those two audiences though too. And I think we try to reach a lot of people here and you can't reach every audience all the time. But I love the direction that you take with that. *Patty and the Millennials*.

Patty: Yes, and we connect and we talk. It is really, it's conversation.

Selena: That's great. So we're going to take a quick break, but stay tuned for more Philly radio history when we come back.

[BREAK]

Selena: Welcome back to *Resurrecting Voices*. We're here with Ms. Patty Jackson, Philadelphia radio legend.

Stephanye: Taking it back to your connection to millennials, your impact isn't just felt within Philly's musical landscape, but also in terms of being a possibility model for young women. Between women like you and Mimi Brown on DAS, or Tiffany Bacon and Golden Girl on Power 99, you all made us wanna go into radio.

Patty: Well, I always think of someone reached out their hand to help me. So I always like to reach out my hand to help another young woman. Like, even if she doesn't get into broadcasting, just learning how to navigate this thing called life.

Selena: That's great. And I think many of the broadcast pioneers were men, but now we're seeing so many women in radio.

Patty: So many women coming forward and making their voices heard.

Katy: This is obviously a history podcast.

Patty: M-hm.

Katy: So I did want to ask about your personal history just a little bit. You know, where in South Philly you grew up, what did your parents listen to growing up? What music was playing in your house?

Patty: Well, lots of Marvin Gaye and Lou Rawls. Motown. They loved music. *Soul Train* was a staple. Saturdays at 5, where was everybody? Watching *Soul Train* for the fashions, for the music, and my mom was into the Steel Pier, and then we were watching *American Bandstand*. So I just had this knowledge and plethora of music. My brother, who was 10 years older than me, was all into the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. So I was exposed to so much music that I fell in love with.

But music was just a part of our lives. When Michael Jackson moonwalked, it was a family event. He did Motown 25, and we were just one of those, just gathered around like, "Oh my gosh! Look at him! What is that?" Yeah,-we were just so all musically together.

Katy: And you've got a street named after you, right?

Patty: Yes! I'm at 23rd and Ellsworth where I grew up, spent 40 years of my life. There's a street name, it's Patty Jackson Way. Last year, I became a part of the Philadelphia Music Alliance. Broad and Pine, Patty Jackson is right there amongst legends.

Selena: Congratulations, that's because you are a living legend.

Katy: You are Philly history now. We will be talking about you, well, somebody will, 100 years in the future at HSP, whatever comes after a podcast here.

Selena: Well, I think that came up too when Stephanye said, we're doing this Black History podcast. We hired Stephanye for all of her knowledge and connection to the Philadelphia community. So when we were brainstorming different topics for each episode, she said, what about Patty Jackson as a guest speaker? And I was like, well, that's really interesting because so often we're thinking of the scholars and the people who are doing research, but we can't really come into the present day without lived memory.

So bringing a living legend into the studio and talking about this, I think this is what leads us into the future too. So that said, do you ever interact with the artists that you play on your show?

Patty: All the time. All the time. Usher is on the cover of People Magazine. 22 years ago, he dated Chili from TLC. 22 years ago, I had my son. I was broadcasting from home. I was interviewing Usher because he was like, "Where are you?" "I'm like, I'm broadcasting from home because I just had a baby." And I asked him about Chili. He said, "How do you know I'm dating Chili?" I said, "Usher, I know everything." You know me, and I'm loud. So he's on the cover of People Magazine talking about how Chili broke his heart. She turned down his marriage proposal!

Katy: And you heard it first.

Patty: Yeah. My meeting Donna Summer, she invited me to have dinner and I was just in awe because as a little girl, I wanted to be her. I just loved her, and she was just as nice as I wanted her to be.

You know, the greats, the Dionne Warwick. We clashed at first because I asked her about the psychic network. And I said, "She didn't get involved with those psychics." I said, "It's not good." She cussed me out. She did! She said, "I gotta make money!" Da-da-da-da-da.

Flash forward a few years, some rhythm and blues thing. I apologized. I said, "I want you to know, I'm not a getcha person, or gotcha. And I did not mean to offend you. I just know that to me, psychics was like, I don't want to be doing that." And I apologized. I said, "We got off on the wrong foot. I love you from the Bert Bacharach days, *Solid Gold* days. I am a fan. So I want to apologize." And she accepted it. And this is funny, at Jerry Blavat's funeral, I was sitting behind her. She turned around and said, "I love you." I was like.

So I do, I get to interact. Some may not be great. Lionel Richie was great. I tell people he's my cousin. "Why do you say that?" Because we were backstage and there was a security guard being extremely mean. I mean, it was like, dude, why are you so nasty? And I saw Lionel walk away and I said "It's me!" My boss was mortified when I got his attention and he jumped back and said, "Oh, it's my family!" Because I'd been interviewing Lionel Richie for years, but we never met. And he said, out of his mouth, "That's my family." And me, South Philly, said, "Told you." So I always say that. My boss was mortified, he's like "You were so loud."

Selena: That's your cousin now!

Patty: I said, "Let me be loud."

Selena: Ms. Patty, I'm really curious about what inspires you. What inspires you to play the music that you do now on the radio, but also what inspired you in the first place to get into radio?

Patty: I love pop culture, and I love music, and I love telling a story. I really do. I was like this as a kid. Adults would sit and be like, "I can't believe I'm sitting here with this kid." But, I've always loved pop culture. And I just grew up doing what I loved as a kid.

Selena: Do you view yourself as a storyteller?

Patty: I do. I dream of doing a Ted Talk, and I am going to write a book. I am going to write a book.

Selena: Is that the Patty Jackson exclusive?

Patty: Yeah, because I don't really talk about it a lot. You know how people say, "Don't just tell your dreams. Keep it to yourself until you do it." But I do want to write a book. My life has been incredible, particularly after I had my stroke. I'm an eight-year stroke survivor. I couldn't walk. I lost my vision. It was a mess. I was a mess. But God built me up, and he put me in a whole other direction. And I'm learning how to accept when a "no" comes. Accept it. There's a reason why this is not happening right now. A delay is never a denial.

So, the stroke really changed me for the better, even though it was awful, you know, having to learn how to walk again and—but it changed my life for the better. Because God said, "Now you're going to go down this path." I never thought I'd be doing videos. Never. I never thought. I don't even talk about my YouTube channel a lot.

My boss was like, "When did you get a YouTube channel?" I was like, "During the pandemic." I said, "I like to tell stories." So, someone said, "Put your phone up, tell a story, talk about what's going on." And I did it, and I'm at 74,000. We're marching towards 100,000.

Selena: Wow. Hopefully you get there soon.

Patty: Yeah.

Stephanye: Yeah, so me and my friends talk about this all the time, how Urban AC is really the only place where younger R&B artists can get their music heard, because the rhythmic stations don't play R&B that much, at least not as much as what they played when we were coming up. So it's really funny how, like my mom who is in her 70s will know all these young artists and can talk to me about artists SZA and Summer Walker.

Before this change in radio, generations were pretty silo'd in who they'd listen to and it was usually artists their age. But now, it seems like Gen X and Boomers are more hip to younger artists than millennials! So with that, what are some artists or some songs from younger artists that you're listening to, that you like playing on WDAS.

Patty: Victoria Monet. I really like her, she just won a Grammy. I love Coco Jones. Never met SZA. I play SZA a lot. There's a new girl from Norristown, Summer Vaughan. I love October London. You know, he sounds so much like Marvin Gaye. I love his music.

You know, I don't understand today's hip hop. I am an old school hip hopper. I don't know what Travis Scott was doing at the Grammys. I was like, what's he doing? What are you throwing chairs for? You know, I'm older. I'm like, what are you doing? You're supposed to get up there and be a lyricist. So I don't really understand a lot of today's hip hop. But I love old school hip hop. And Eric B. & Rakim is up for getting into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Selena: Can we talk about old school for a minute, and the types of music WDAS used to play? I guess still does some with the Butterball Hour.

Patty: Yeah, I took over his show. I play oldies. Yes. We must never forget. Okay. I don't play anything from the fifties. Had a man screaming at me at ACME. "You don't play any doo-wop." I said, "Sir, I'm not, my bosses are younger than me. It's 60s, 70s, and 80s. And 80s to 1985."

And it's because we must never forget our music. Can't turn our back on James Brown, and the Supremes, and Motown, and the Memphis Sound, and the Sound of Philadelphia. That's great music that we should not give away to anybody else and let them play. It is our duty to never forget that era.

Selena: I think you're speaking volumes too about the historical record, and what we try to do with the preservation of records here, but also at other institutions.

Patty: Yeah.

Selena: So for example, researching Black music and radio, the Temple Urban Archives just is so much. And I don't know if you knew Charles Blockson, but of course with our podcast, he has come up before because you can't do a Black History podcast without talking about Charles Blockson. He actually was really instrumental in the preservation of some of our Black history records here at HSP. And it's so important that we save this type of music and its legacy by continuing to play it on the radio.

Patty: Yeah. Can't give it away. We can't. So, at first, it was very intimidating. But then I kind of grew into it. I wasn't ready to take over. I wasn't ready for Butter to die, you know, and me take over, because they gave me hell, because I'm a woman. They said, "You're too young. You're a woman." And I was like, "Why are y'all so mean?"

Yeah, it was something, because I had just, just turned 50. And they were telling me I was too young. But there was the woman quotes. "You know, you can't do it because you're a woman." Really? We still doing this? Yeah. So those kinds of things got to me because it was just men doing it. And here I was.

Selena: And you did it anyway. That's really incredible. I'd love to hear more about how early in your career, you were playing country music.

Patty: I fell in love with it. I knew I couldn't go to any other level. I'd be a fool to say, "I don't like country music. I'm not going to play it." No. I embraced it, because they gave me my first start in Philadelphia, WXTU. They gave me my first start, because they could have cut me because I was playing, it was somewhat a rhythmic station that didn't last, but they could have said, "Well, you're Black. We're not going to keep you."

But they liked me and they didn't see the color, they liked the voice, so they kept me on. And I learned so much playing country music. I became a better announcer playing country music. You had 13 seconds to do the weather because you had to do it inside this jingle. You know, that said, WXTU and this little jingle. You got to do the weather in 13 seconds, and get back into the music.

Selena: How was it different moving from that experience into playing pop and R&B on the radio?

Patty: Well, this was funny. Went to Power 99 and hip hop, and I wasn't used to playing this type of music. And they would make the comments, "Oh, you sound like a white girl." And I would just, because I didn't I didn't have that sound, and coming out of country was different.

And I had a program director. I would say the new addition. He would call me in the middle of the night, "Patty, it's just a new addition." In the middle of the night, I'm like, "What's up? Why aren't you sleeping?" Nope, he had to tell me that I was saying new addition all wrong.

So it was different because it was like, wow, for the first time, I'm playing music that I listened to, and I wasn't used to it. I played pop music, Sinatra, Elvis. I worked at a radio station and the program director, or the general manager, he loved Sinatra and Elvis. And my friends would say, "How do you know this?" I said, "Because I used to play it." I wanted a job. So you want me to play Elvis? Okay.

Selena: Can you think of any other instrumental venues to this music scene?

Patty: Academy of Music, of course, Vets Stadium would do shows, you know before tearing down. The Wells Fargo Center, which used to be CoreStates, which used to be The Spectrum where I saw the Beastie Boys, and Run-DMC, and Prince, and Madonna, where we would dress up as the artists and go to concerts. So, the Spectrum.

The Five Spot, when Neo Soul had just started to emerge, you'd see the underground of a Jill Scott before they all became famous. Yeah. It was on Bank Street.

Stephanye: Ms. Patty, could you talk a little bit more about that era because when we talk about the Philadelphia sound that's really more so set in the 60s and 70s, but there was that second wave called Neo Soul that I also considered a Philadelphia sound because Philly was at the nucleus of the entire era. Everybody came through the Five Spot.

Patty: M-hm.

Stephanye: Jill Scott, Musiq, Floetry, India Arie, Bilal, Kindred. I remember Five Spot was popping when I was in high school

Patty: It was exciting. It was. To see these artists emerge and real music and, you know, real instruments. It was exciting, and that Philadelphia was producing all of these acts that would literally change that music scene in the nineties. It was with a sense of pride. You know, so many people would look at Jill Scott and they would remember when she first started and wasn't a big star.

But it was good. It was very exciting to play this type of music. And it's music that we still kind of like, hold onto at least a DAS. We didn't treat it like, "Well, it was fad." No, you can still hear some great music.

Selena: Before we wrap, do you have anything else to say about the legacy or history of Black music and radio in Philadelphia in the past 40 years or so or even beyond that?

Patty: Love what you do, don't let anybody take our history. You know, no matter what it is, you don't even have to be in broadcasting. Be consistent. Be consistent on what you do. And be kind. I've seen those go

up. I've seen those go down. I thank God, 42 years, I've never been fired. I've left, but I've never been fired. That's an anomaly. It really is. I've never been.

And to just work consistently, various formats, and bosses, and music. And I still treat it like I did the first day I was ever on the radio trudging through the snow. "I'm going to be on the radio and I'm gonna have me a good time." And I still treat it to this day, the same way. I have the same attitude.

Selena: Thank you so much, Ms. Patty. This was incredible and thank you for joining us today and speaking about your career and your life and your experiences. Hearing about it has been so wonderful.

You can listen to Patty Jackson on WDAS 105.3 on weekdays from 10 to 3 during the day and Sundays from 8 to noon. Catch Patty's oldies show "The Wide Wonderful World of Butter" on Sunday nights from 7 pm to 12 midnight, and check out her podcast, *Patty and the Millennials*. You can also follow her on social media at @wdaspatty.

A special thank you to Stephanye, Katy, and Bella, our audio technician, and of course, the Library of Congress for bringing this podcast to life. If you are interested in learning more about what you heard today, make an appointment, submit questions to our librarians, and more at hsp.org. For updates on HSP, follow us on social media @historicalpa.

Thank you for tuning in to *Resurrecting Voices, the Philadelphia Black Experience*. It has been an incredible journey, and we are glad that you took it with us. Signing off, I'm Selena Bemak with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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