

HAROLD MELVIN and THE BLUE NOTES BIO

Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes were another charismatic Philly band whose roots dated back to long before their leap into stardom during the 70 s. Behind lead singer Melvin, and the immensely popular Teddy Pendergrass, the group enjoyed the same tremendous success as their contemporaries featured on the 70 s Soul Jam Tour.

Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes were formed by Melvin in Philadelphia in 1954, and not surprisingly, they would endure a long road characterized of modest success before reaching national stardom. The group, which featured Melvin, Donald Broody, and Bernard Williams, signed with the small, New York-based Josie Records in 1954. In 1960 under the Valley Vue label, they went onto record their first hit to reach the R&B charts with the single *My Hero* .

In 1970, it was the apparently unassuming addition of Pendergrass as their drummer that set off a series of pivotal events that led to the group s jump into national prominence. In 1972, the group collaborated with producers/songwriters Leon Huff and Kenny Gamble, the same duo that worked with the distinguished soul band, The O Jays, and signed with their Philadelphia International label. Melvin and Gamble & Huff agreed Pendergrass was best suited in the role of lead singer, a decision that would prove to be ingenious in the coming years.

With Pendergrass in his new role and Gamble & Huff s influence, Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes reeled off a series of hits off of their 1973 self-titled album, including *If You Don t Know Me By Now* , and *The Love I Lost* , which reached No. 3 and No. 7 on the Billboard pop charts respectively. The new-look lineup featured Pendergrass s refreshingly emotional vocals on ballads, which truly appealed to the masses. Their success continued in 1975, with their *To Be True* album.

They released three Top 40 R&B hits off the album, *Where Are All My Friends* , the No. 15 Billboard pop song, *Bad Luck* and the No. 1 R&B single, *Hope That We Can Be Together Soon* , which was a silky smooth duet that featured Melvin and R&B singer and current group member Sharon Paige.

In 1975, the group released another smash-hit album entitled, *Wake Up Everybody* , which featured only two singles, including the title track, and uplifting, socially motivated number that reached No.12 on the Billboard Pop Charts. *Wake Up Everybody* , turned out to be Pendergrass s final album with the group, as he went on to pursue a successful career. Still, the group responded with their 1977 hit single, *Reaching for the World* , with David Ebbo as their new lead singer, who sounded strikingly similar to Pendergrass. The song climbed to No. 6 on the Billboard R&B Charts.

The group went onto release seven more albums, including four compilation albums, but more significant was their role as one of the three original featured bands on the 70 s Soul Jam tour in 1986. Unfortunately the man most responsible for their success Harold Melvin, died in 1997 but his spirit and legacy lives on, as the group which now consists of Donnell Gillespie, Rufus Thorn, Anthony Brooks, John Morris and features Sharon Paige, continue to tour and dazzle crowds with the same array of groovy rhythms and soulful ballads that was the foundation for a young, ambitious Philadelphia soul band in 1954.