

This week, in the midst of "coronaville pandemicitis, the ongoing story," we have the news of three deaths in the rock n roll hall of fame: not of the virus, curiously.....  
Edwin Hawkins, Betty Wright, and Little Richard.

Ignoring for a moment what carried them all away from this vale of tears we all currently inhabit, it is interesting to note that they were all believers in JESUS Christ, or at least had been raised that way. Only GOD knows who are His, ultimately, but looking at their "fruit" it might be safe to assume a degree of faith in these folk. At least they were brought up by GOD fearing parents, which is a good start, I believe.

I will share some thoughts and memories with you, if I may.

The first of these persons who broke into my life through music, the best way to get to me still is-

was Edwin Hawkins. I remember hearing "O happy day" on the radio when I was living in LA in 1973 in a white house filled with white furniture on stone canyon road, opposite the mansion inhabited by Keith Richard and Anita Pallenberg, while the Stones were in the studio finishing recording "Exile on Main Street".

The sky was always blue, with never a cloud, I had a stretch limousine at the door to take me out of Bel Air down to Rodeo Drive in Hollywood to buy anything my heart desired, a nanny for our baby, a cook, a gardener, ....and yet, my life and soul was empty. When I heard this gospel choir singing about the day JESUS took their sins away, I just longed for this to be ME. It took a whole lot of tears, and years, for the LORD to get me through to the point where I could humble myself enough to make HIM the king of my life, but I thank GOD he led me on from LA to where I am today. GOD bless you, Edwin. Happy days for you, now!

Betty Wright was only a one-song gal for me. Clean-up Woman was rather a sad lament to my mind, but her voice was absolutely marvellous; with all the church-learned gospel influences right at the forefront of her vocals. She bent and thrilled with her voice like Aretha! How I envy that facility with notes and phrasing....but most of all, her soul shines through. Gorgeous girl, shine on.

Little Richard was extraordinary. I read through a few biographies this week; people who had met him, been influenced by his music and his personality. He truly was a one-off. Not afraid to be who he was, when from the beginning of his career he was always going to stand out of the crowd. Whatever it cost, he was real. Makeup and all. He took risks! His music was glorious in its power to thrill and shock and delight. He was a fabulous pianist, who surrounded himself with a great bunch of musicians all the time to perform with consummate energy and ability his amazing, earthy songs. He got us all going, and wouldn't rest till he did!

I met up with him in the flesh, so to speak, at a birthday party for Bobby Keyes, who was playing for the Stones at the time. Bobby had been in Little Richard's band in the early 60s, and they had remained friends. SO this personage arrived, in full make up and glittering clothes, and very LOUD !! He entertained us all at the piano most wonderfully, I remember; but then he came and sat beside me, and proceeded to warmly and quietly tell me what a lovely guitarist my Mick Taylor was. He knew songs, and licks, and obviously was quite genuine in his appreciation of Mick's musical talents and abilities. Which in those days of The Stones were sadly unappreciated and under-used. He then proceeded to give me some makeup tips!

His longtime guitarist, Kelvin, from Muscle Shoals, said that, "Rich loved JESUS", so I look forward to seeing him again!