

What
is
soul?
Randy
Crawford



Photo by William West

"It's not going to work. I think the batteries are dead." Randy Crawford is examining the *Rip It Up* cassette recorder while I sheepishly search my pockets for pen and paper.

"You've got a noisy camera too." She grins at our photographer (who thought he was being unobtrusive).

This interview does not seem to be starting well but Miss Crawford is patient. Her gentle, obliging manner is particularly welcome considering she's lacking sleep after fifteen hours of flight delays before reaching New Zealand. She has only an hour or so before catching another plane to Dunedin where she is to tape a guest spot for the Miss NZ Final. Surprisingly, seated in a hotel lounge chair

sipping a fruit juice, she seems both relaxed and attentive.

I ask which songs she'll be performing on the show and groan inwardly when she mentions her new single 'One Hello'. Randy Crawford possesses one of the richest female voices currently recording and this Marvin Hamlisch/Carol Bayer Sager MOR dirge does little to showcase her distinctive powers. However I merely comment that the song seems an unusual choice of single for such a soulful singer.

She looks at me shrewdly. "What is soul? 'One Hello' is so well written. It's words are so true to life and that seems like soul to me."

But in 1977 she made a fine R&B tinged album in Muscle Shoals (called *Miss Randy Crawford*).

"Yes," she smiles, "and that record was totally rejected by my record company."

But why? "I don't know. It's totally baffling to me sometimes how these things are chosen."

I wonder whether she still has problems with her record company over what material to record. I'm thinking about the fact that her two commercial breakthrough albums were produced by Tommy LiPuma, the man behind George Benson's *Breezin'*.

"Well first of all, George Benson was responsible for his breakthrough, no-one else. He's the man with the wonderful talent. And for myself, I'll never sing or record anything that I don't like."

But the LiPuma-produced Benson albums and her own seem to share similar types of song — Leon Russell ballads for instance.

"Well 'Windsong' (the new album's title track) was my choice. Certainly Tommy brings me songs he thinks are good commercially but sometimes maybe I don't want to do them. I think he's a wonderful producer but we've had our disagreements." Her voice is soft, her smile is warm, but I don't doubt her determination.

'One Hello' was her choice of single then?

"Well yes, sort of. I love the song but we also had an agreement with the film company — it's a Neil Simon film theme — to release it with the movie. The film didn't do very well though. But I'm very pleased; it's given me my first personal chart success in the States."

It seems odd that until now Randy Crawford's been relatively unknown in her home market

while becoming a huge star in Europe. In England, for example, she sells albums by the truckload and recently won the British Phonographic Industry Award for the Best Female Singer of 1981. How does she explain this situation?

"I can't. But it doesn't worry me. In America I'm sort of a cult figure and I kind of like that." The smile again. "I sell about the same amount of records as being number one in the UK."

I ask about her jazz background, about the fact that she made her first recordings with Cannonball Adderley and first tasted chart success on the Crusaders' 'Street Life'.

"I don't think I'm a jazz singer. I really don't think so. I don't know what type of singer I am. I grew up singing in church. I listened to Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington. These days I listen to Top 40 radio, Aretha Franklin, Donna Summer, all sorts."

Well with all the success she's now gaining, is there anything that she feels she may be losing?

"Oh yes — time to myself. Just after recording the vocals for *Windsong* I had to go to Japan and leave everything with Tommy. If there's one thing I regret about the album it's that I wasn't around to see it through to the finish. If I had more time I could perhaps be more objective about certain things, stand back and say 'Yes, I'll change that, improve that, subtract that'. Oh yes, more time to myself."

I think she is about to continue when the record company representative interrupts to request that we finish soon because they have to catch a plane.

Crawford grins and holds up her hands. "See what I mean?" Suddenly she asks me a question. What song from the album would I prefer as a single? I give Don Convay's 'Letter Full Of Tears' as my favourite and she nods.

"Oh yes I love that one. I used to love Gladys Knight singing it. But no matter what choice you make there are people who would prefer something else. I've talked on the phone to disc jockeys from all over the United States and they all had different favourites."

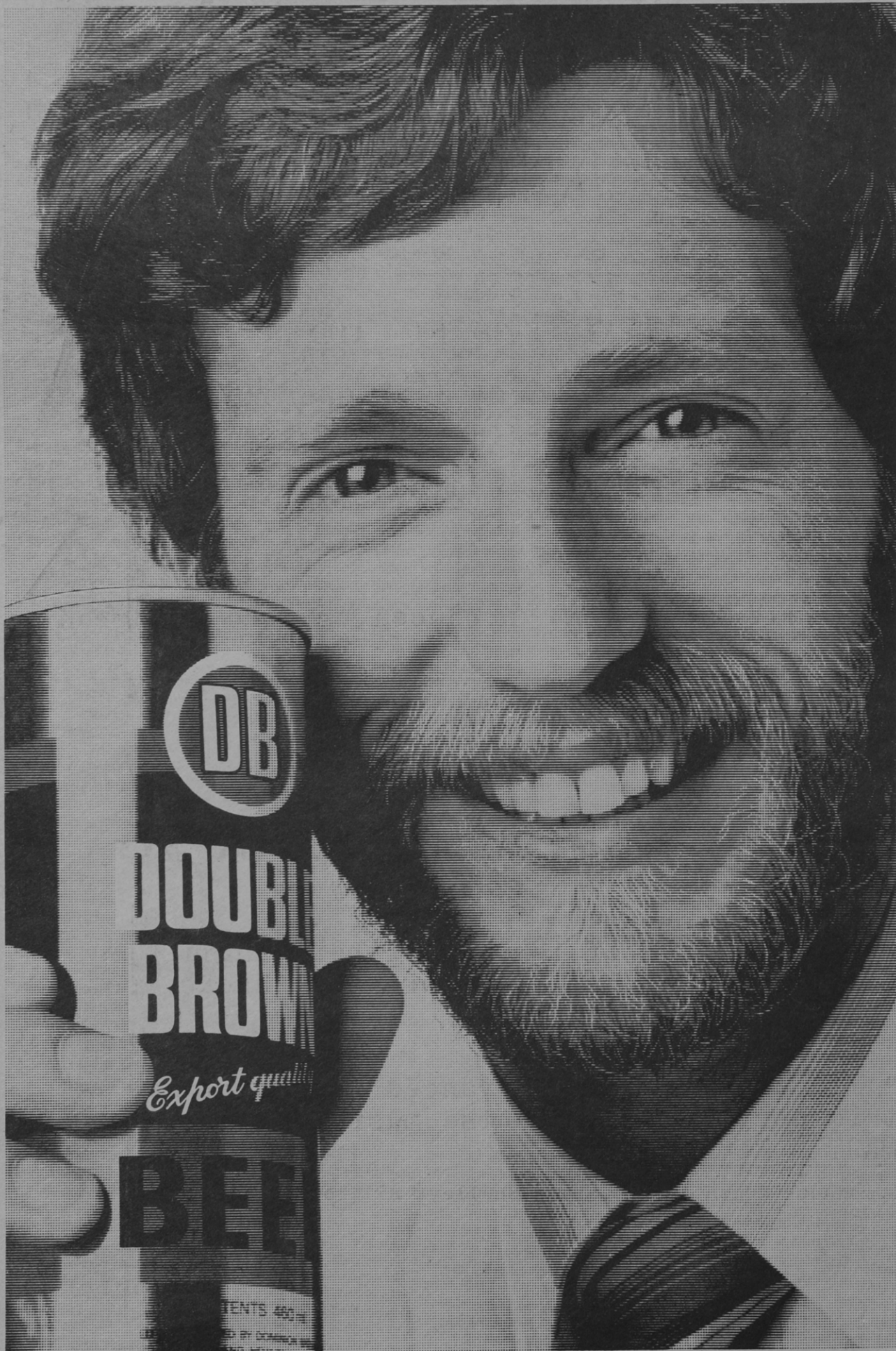
The record company rep is hovering and I rise to go. Still, regardless of Marvin Hamlisch film themes or Tommy LiPuma, Randy Crawford is about the only female singer I'll put on the same cassette as Aretha Franklin.

Peter Thomson

DOUBLE BROWN BECAUSE...

"It's a great drop"

1A3491C



BONGOS
MONOTONY/FALLING single
NORTH ISLAND TOUR Sept. 1982

WATCH LOCAL PAPERS FOR DETAILS...

LONDON ZINE! **ALLEZ OOP!**

BARRACUDAS
BIRTHDAY PARTY
BLURT
DEAD OR ALIVE
DIAGRAM BROTHERS
HAMBI AND THE DANCE
HIGSONS

If you want 'Allez Oop!', send \$2.00 to RIU, Box 5689, Auckland 1.

Name
Address