

## AS TITLES GO:

In 1979, Billy Preston and Syreeta Wright recorded two songs for the soundtrack of the movie, *Fast Break*. The movie made little impact. The soundtrack didn't sell well. One song, a dance track, was released as a single. But it was the other song that climbed to the top of the American charts and became an International hit.

As titles go, *With you I'm born again*, is perhaps not one of the best. There's something slightly awkward about it and at first, buyers were put off by the phrase 'Born Again' assuming that the song had religious overtones. Carol Connors, who wrote the lyrics, admits that she regretted not having used the first line, 'Come bring me your softness' as the title.

Convinced that his duet with Syreeta should reach a larger audience, Billy Preston brought the song out again but this time, on his own album, *Late at Night*. At the time, perhaps because of its potentially off-putting title, Billy still had no thoughts about releasing *With you I'm Born Again* as a single. But as sales of the album soared, the song began to get airplay. Radio stations throughout America loved it and at the end of 1979 the single was finally released.

I don't remember exactly when I first heard it. I already knew that, in the years before its release, Syreeta had received recognition, mainly through her collaboration with Stevie Wonder, to whom she was briefly married. That collaboration continued well into the 90's but it was the partnership with Billy Preston and that gorgeous duet that captured my heart, and before long, the heart of audiences the world over.

In 1989, when it was announced that they were due to appear together at the Dominion Theatre in London, I was there and perhaps I should remember the names of the other acts that shared the bill but I don't. I only remember that song, those first notes on the piano, Billy's voice - 'Come bring me your softness, comfort me through all this madness' and when Syreeta joined in, that was it. I was done for. I don't cry easily. No one could call me sentimental but that voice, that song, the way it's delivered, every time I hear it, the tears fall.

And though it was recorded forty years ago, to me, *With you I'm born again*, remains one of the most beautiful songs I've ever heard. Watching it on YouTube, I'm back in the Dominion, heart pounding, tears falling, blown away, just as I was all those years ago. And to this day, I don't think any other song will ever move me in quite the same way.