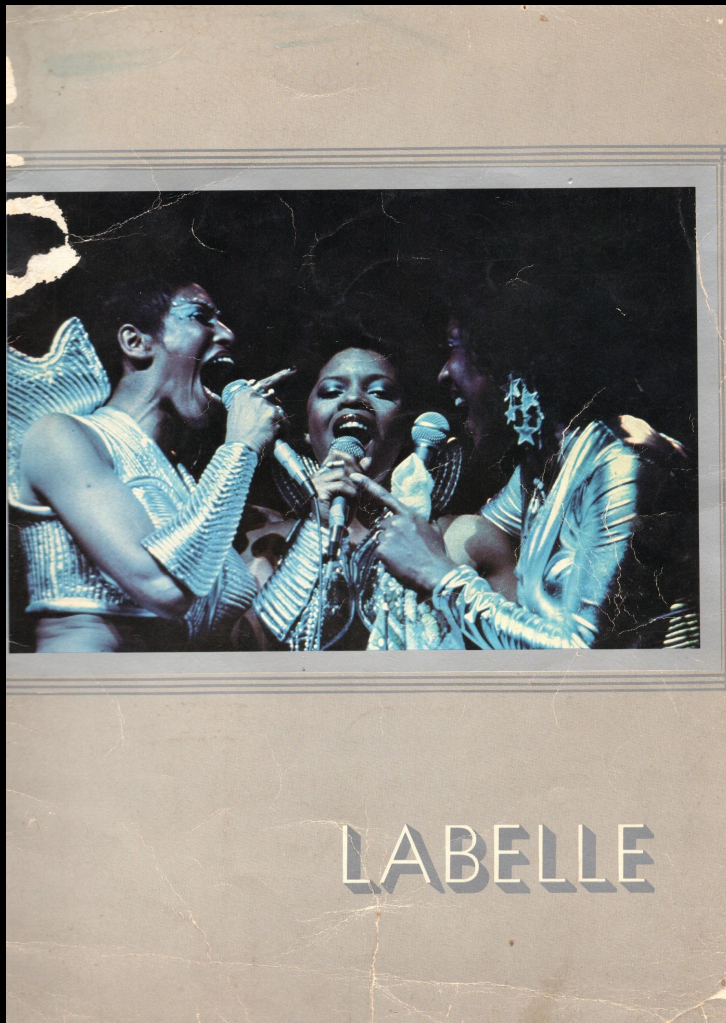


Explore the Archival Materials

The following pages
include additional content
related to select archival
materials on display.



Program for an unidentified Labelle concert, circa 1974. Private collection of Beau McCall.

In 1974, Labelle (Patti LaBelle, Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash) made history as the first contemporary Black music group to perform at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. The event attended by the likes of Cher and Debbie Allen was praised in the press, with John Crittenden of *The Record* newspaper writing, "...they were hot. One has the feeling that Labelle is where hard rock is headed...everybody was dancing in all the boxes." This program isn't from the Met Opera show, but included in its pages are several photos from that performance, along with autographs by Hendryx and Dash.

In 1975, with momentum from their concert still going strong, Labelle became the first Black vocal group on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine.



LABELLE

W



NONA





The Metropolitan Opera House



New York
October 6th,
1974



LABELLE
LABELLE
LABELLE



On-Stage at "The Met"



FEATURES

PATTI LABELLE AT THE FORREST

LABELLE POWER
UNLEASHES
LOTS OF LOVE

"An Evening with Patti LaBelle" at the Forrest Theatre, 1114 Walnut St., through Feb. 28.

By JONATHAN TAKIFF
Daily News Staff Writer

There's hydroelectric power. There's atomic power. And there's Patti LaBelle power — a force of nature as powerful as the torrents of Niagara Falls or the turbines of Three Mile Island.

Unleashed in concert at the Forrest Theatre last night, for an opening night audience as pent-up with enthusiasm and love as the singer herself seemed to be, Patti proved there really is "No Place Like Home" to experience her electrifying sound and personality.

Is there any singer on earth who gives more of herself? Unlikely. From her angling of things to come with "In the Air Tonight" (yes, the Genesis biggie) to her signature finale, "Over the Rainbow," Patti made each number seem like it was the best, the dearest, the only song in the world, and made us believe it, too.

Why, even at the end she refused to quit, continuing to wail on with "Rainbow" after the curtain fell and the house lights came up and the crowd had begun filtering out into the night! To be sure, all who witness this lady's show in the next 2½ weeks will take home some of the music's good spirit and her joyous benedictions.

More intimate than LaBelle's last hometown concert run at the Shubert three years ago, the Forrest gig finds this 25-year singing veteran working simply (and effectively) with her strong eight-piece band conducted by James "Budd" Ellison and backup vocal trio, the Sweeties. Just a couple of flashy costume changes and a laser light effect or two provide the visual enhancements.

No, there isn't a gospel choir, violin section or breakdancers, as the singer employed at the Shubert.

But given the way Earth Mother LaBelle now works her audience into the show — warily luring them to the stage apron with her fluttering outstretched hands and her tears on "You Are My Friend," posing for their pictures to show her "New Attitude," even inviting a few young men up on stage to dance and sing along with her classic "Lady Marmalade" — she doesn't need any extras. For the whole theater is Patti's stage, and everyone in it is a player.

High points are hard to pick out when nearly every song's a full-blown showstopper. But this listener was especially impressed by LaBelle's sublime a cappella harmonies with the Sweeties on the gospel classic "How Great Thou Art." And I was tickled pink by her giddy rock oldies medley of Elvis Presley's "Blue



Patti LaBelle and fan reach toward each other during concert



Woman stands near the poster of LaBelle at the Forrest

Suede Shoes" and Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti."

All of her ballad performances were sublimely dramatic, of course, with Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" and Ashford and Simpson's "There's a Winner in You" best capturing the essence of LaBelle's philosophy about life and music — that a positive attitude and a lot of love makes all the difference, makes anything possible.

I couldn't help noticing that LaBelle did not roll around on the floor or sing flat on her back, as she had in past shows. Perhaps the entertainer felt constricted by her exotically tight, leg-flashing gowns (designed by Tony Chase and Felicia Farrar) or by her bird-like, winged hairdo.

Or has LaBelle finally taken to heart some criticism that her performances topple over the edge from fashionable frenzy into uncontrollable hysteria?

No matter. The bottom line was that everything she sang or touched last night seemed right, seemed full-powered yet in her control. Even when an ardent and slightly witty male admirer refused to leave the stage, Patti kept her sense of humor, never blew her cool, made it all seem part of the master plan.



Philadelphia fans Beau McCall and Saifuddin Muhammad (right) adorn the lobby before the show

Staff Photography by Rick Bowmer

Philadelphia Daily News clipping (digital print), 1987.
From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National
Museum, Archives, & Library.

This is a clipping of the article titled *Patti LaBelle at the Forrest*, used in the collage, *Beau and Saifuddin Muhammad I*.

FEATURES

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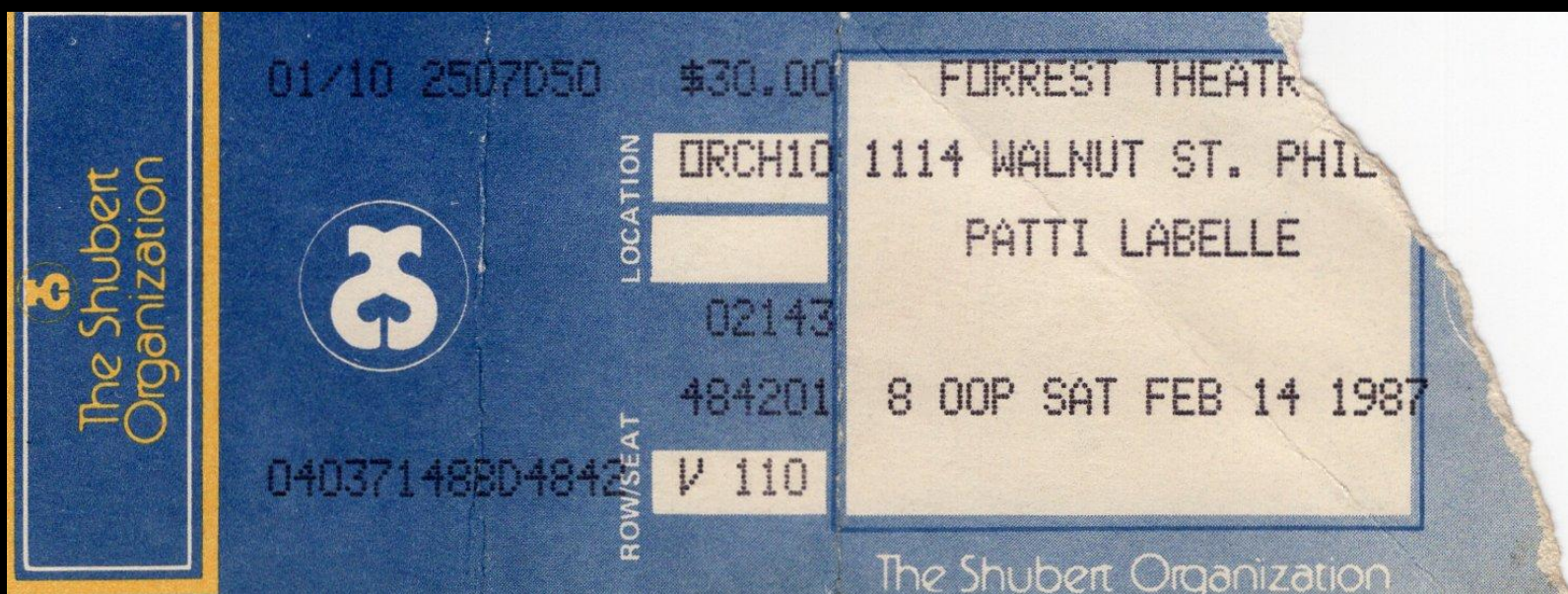


Staff Photography by Rick Bowmer

Woman stands near the poster of LaBelle at the Forrest



Philadelphia fans Beau McCall and Saifuddin Muhammad (right) adorn the lobby before the show



Ticket stub from *An Evening with Patti LaBelle* concert at the Forrest Theatre in Philadelphia, PA 1987. From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, & Library.



PATTI
LABELLE
LOOK TO THE RAINBOW TOUR

Program for Patti LaBelle's *Look to the Rainbow* tour, 1984. Private collection of Beau McCall.

IT ALL STARTED



never knew anything about business. I just knew about singing and looking at the marquee to see who was on the bill with us."



In Church

Born and raised in Philadelphia, PATTI LA BELLE started singing in church choirs and was still a soloist at Beulah Baptist Church when she made her first record with The Bluebells. Patti was only in her teens when she and three other hopefuls first performed in small clubs around Philadelphia. Harold B. Robinson, a Philadelphia car dealer with an interest in music and who was managing several fledgling groups, spotted them there. Another Robinson group split up just as the original Bluebells four-some was about to part company. The remaining members of both groups: Patti La Belle, Cindy Birdsong, Nona Hendryx and Sara Dash, were combined, and so Patti La Belle and the Bluebells were born. They hit the charts like a mighty flock only a year later (1962) with "I Sold My Heart to the Junkman."



On the Road

In the pre-Beatles early-60's, pop music charts were dominated by the "Girl Group" sound. It was a revolution, not only in music, but because it represented an important social shift, as well. It marked the first time that Black artists were heard in significant numbers on "white" radio stations.

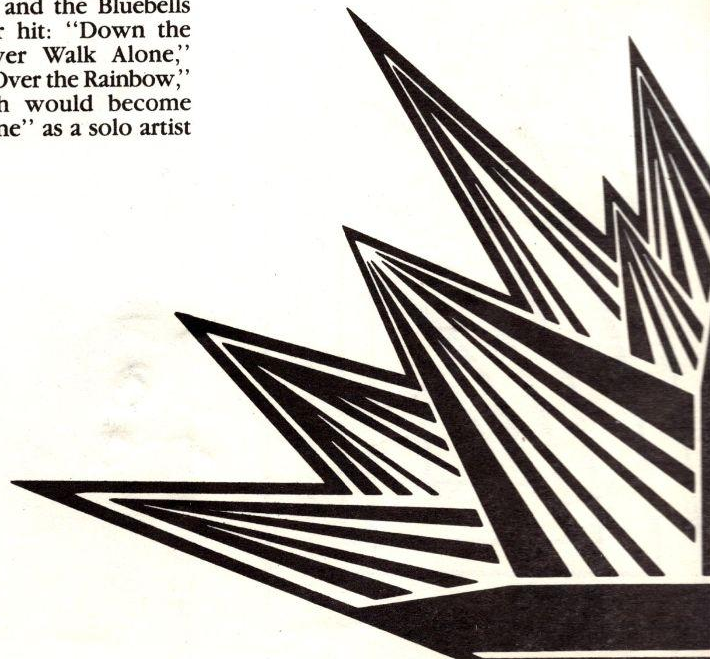
Patti La Belle and the Bluebells were in good company, with The Supremes, Martha and the Vandellas, The Chiffons and scores of others among their contemporaries. These women shared several things in common: youth, talent, naivete about the business, and drive to succeed. It was a period of rough competition, exploitation and exhausting, often rinky-dink, tours.

Much as in the days of Vaudeville, shows featuring a dozen top acts on a single bill, were not uncommon. Patti La Belle and the Bluebells toured with their peers throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Europe, singing their hearts out in a vast variety of venues, from dingy clubs to major halls. Patti La Belle and the Bluebells turned out hit after hit: "Down the Aisle," "You'll Never Walk Alone," "Danny Boy" and "Over the Rainbow," the latter of which would become Patti's "signature tune" as a solo artist years later.

Battling the British

American artists en masse were devastated by The British Invasion which began with the Beatles in 1963 and, with increasing momentum, did not subside until the disco movement of the mid-70's. Many of the Girl Groups were wiped off the charts, never to be heard from again. A few, like The Supremes and Vandellas, held their ground with a handful of other star acts like the Beach Boys, the Four Tops and The Four Seasons.

But only Patti La Belle and the Bluebells had the savvy to learn from the competition. When British artists were touring here, they praised the soul, gospel and rhythm & blues artists who had inspired them. While U.S. audiences were more interested in the English disciples of the American originals, Patti La Belle and the Bluebells worked largely overseas. They played to thousands of appreciative fans and laid the groundwork for victories and innovations yet to come.



Early Days

While they were in England, Patti La Belle and the Bluebells met British producer Vicki Wickham. Wickham was the wiz behind England's most important music program, "Top of the Pops," the prototype for American shows like "Hullabaloo" and "Shindig." She began to re-shape the Bluebells, allowing more of their individual tastes and talents to emerge. She also kept them in the public forefront as they toured with English super-stars like the Rolling Stones and the Who. Patti and her group (now minus Cindy Birdsong, who had left several years earlier to join The Supremes) had already met an up-and-coming English artist, Reginald White. They would later perform and record with this young dynamo (who had played piano for them in British pubs) when he came into his own as Elton John.

Back in the U.S.A.

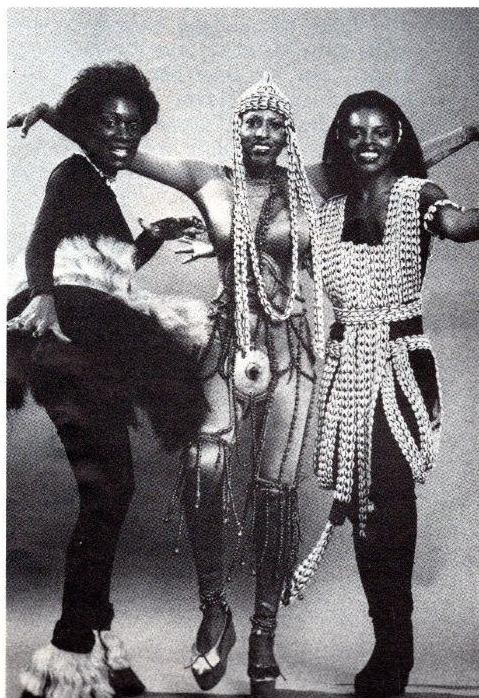
Wickham brought the Bluebells back to the United States transformed into LaBelle. It was late in the 60's and LaBelle was about to become America's first all-woman, all-Black rock group, carrying as much musical power and as much forward vision, as Jimi Hendrix. Like Hendrix, who also found his depth and greater success in England, LaBelle was more than a decade ahead of its time. They had given up their wigs, neat choreography and matching, cutesie dresses, for individual styles and stage movements. Their music was a combination of the best that American and English artists/writers had to offer, as well as some original songs, many of them written by Nona Hendryx.

LaBelle

The First of Many Firsts

Warner Brothers had been quick to sign LaBelle purely on the strength of their talent. Their first album for the label, "LaBelle," still stands as a rock triumph and treasure. "Moon Shadow" followed on the heels of the album LaBelle had made with Laura Nyro and

"LaBelle was very bold. We I love everything we did."



In the earliest days of Patti La Belle and the Bluebells's transformation into LaBelle, the group had a deliberately "ordinary street look" which was calculated by Vicki Wickham. This was in keeping with the do-your-own thing spirit of the mid-60's and visually set LaBelle apart from the still cute-and-coordinated remaining girl groups. As they journeyed further into rock 'n roll, LaBelle began to sport the unique "spacequeen" look they made famous. Designer Lary Le Gaspi created many of these costumes for the group and still designs originals specifically for Patti.

Far right: Elton John was La Belle's piano accompanist in their early days and is seen here with Patti after all of them had reached the top.



LaBelle

without producing a major hit, "Moon Shadow" nonetheless established them as artists of major importance.

RCA took them next and with "Pressure Cookin'" LaBelle made clear their musical and political intentions. On the strength of their still-small but remarkably zealous following, LaBelle became the first rock group to appear at the prestigious Metropolitan Opera House.

had nerve and we took chances.

Making a Miracle

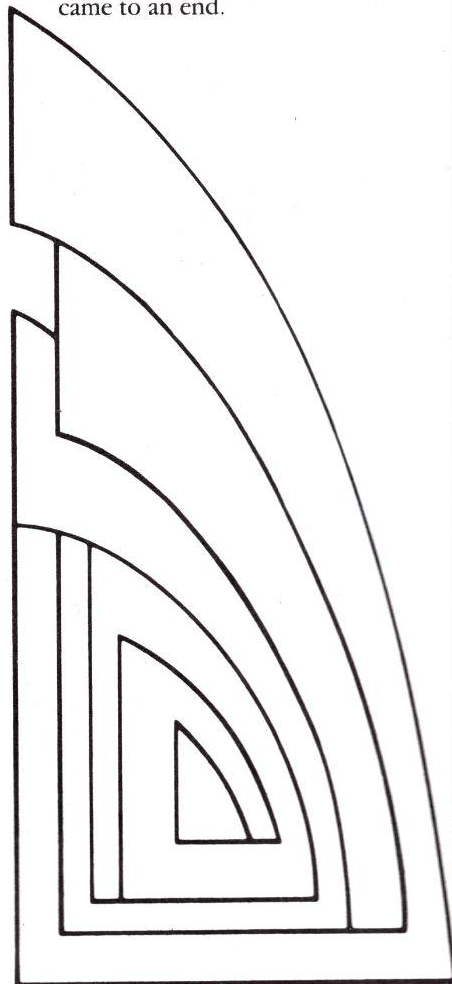
In 1971, Laura Nyro, by then an established performer with a devoted, cultish following, was also a mass-market hit maker, creating songs for the Fifth Dimension and other popular groups. She approached Vicki Wickham about recording with LaBelle. A New York girl who had spent her teens singing on street corners with other kids, mimicking the styles of the soul and Girl Groups they loved, Nyro had been heavily influenced by Patti's unique style. Wickham told LaBelle about

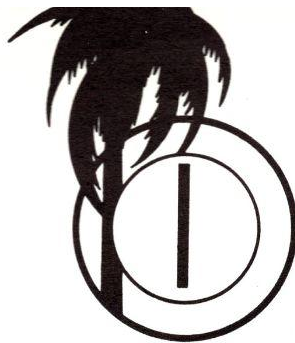
Nyro's request and all agreed to a session. In two short weeks, the four worked in a Philadelphia studio in jam-session style and produced the album "It's Gonna Take a Miracle." At the end of that year, Nyro brought LaBelle onstage during her Christmas concert at Carnegie Hall and from that moment on, LaBelle were super-stars of the first order—without a number-one hit!

Spacequeens

LaBelle's final incarnation came when they tossed off their rugged street clothes in favor of the wild and wondrous outfits that would soon be their trademark. It was their first album for Epic, "Nightbirds," which launched their spacequeen image and gave them their international hit, "Lady Marmalade." They were the first rock group of any sex to bring high fashion to the remnants of psychedelia and the result was a blaze of silver, headdresses and space-cables that would soon be copied by hit makers like Kiss. Their fabulous appearance, however, was icing on the cake. The magic was in their music. And besides making an impact on the charts, they also made history.

After two more albums, "Phoenix" and "Chameleon," LaBelle disbanded. It was 1976 and despite their successes, the pressures of 15 years spent largely on the road and bucking the stubborn and narrow-minded industry had become too much. One of America's most exciting and valiant musical experiments came to an end.





f LaBelle had continued we might have gone to pieces. We quit while we were in love and we're all still good friends today because we made the break at the right time for us."

Out on Her Own

The break-up of the unique and durable LaBelle was amiable—particularly by music business standards. All three are still very close and maintain a warm friendship, while also helping one another with individual music projects. Patti sang with Nona on Hendryx's first solo album for RCA, and whenever one performs, one or both of the other two are never far away. In the years since they disbanded, there has never been a formal LaBelle reunion, but lucky audiences around the country have had the chance to see them joined on a single stage for hugs, kisses and a moment of the old magic, on several, rare occasions.

But the split did demonstrate the different directions in which each woman was moving creatively and why a break-up was inevitable. Sara released several disco singles and Nona went from LaBelle's already hard rock sound into something more akin to heavy metal and punk. Patti's first solo album, "Patti La Belle" (the first of four she would record for Epic), sold almost half a million copies and reaffirmed her clear commitment to ballads, gospel and blues.

In 1973, Patti had given birth to her son, Zuri (Swahili for "beautiful") and for awhile she stayed home, using her new-found freedom to spend more time with her son and husband, Armstead Edwards. But more than a decade on the road can't be stopped "cold turkey." Patti wanted to be on stage again and agreed to the first of three international tours spanning four years. She also released an album each year: "Tasty," "It's Alright With Me," "Released" and "The Spirit's In It" followed "Patti La Belle."

Acknowledged at Last

Despite LaBelle's talents and achievements, the group in general and Patti, in particular, never received the level of radio airplay and mass audience recognition they deserved. Patti La Belle's solo career, however, showed anyone who had had any doubt, that hers was the vocal genius which had cemented LaBelle and paved a clear path for dozens of artists who came after her. Wherever she appeared: the Drury Lane in London, Radio City and the Winter Garden in New York, and in scores of top halls across the U.S., Patti's fans came out in droves.

Patti was a featured artist on the "Rolling Stone Magazine 10th Anniversary" television special, as well as on TV specials honoring Eubie Blake, Duke Ellington and Martin Luther King, Jr. She also demonstrated a flair for acting with her stunning cameo in PBS's production of Studs Turkel's "Working."

But the highlight of Patti's solo career to date is surely her nearly indescribable, bravura performance in the two-year tour of Vinnette Carroll's "Your Arms Too Short to Box With God." Carroll revamped her two-time Broadway hit, creating a special role for Patti. Patti, in turn, took the rousing spiritual musical to Broadway for a third time (with gospel vet Al Green) and played to SRO houses across the country.



"**B**eing on my own, after being with a group for so many years can be lonely and sometimes even a little scary. But it's helped me to get stronger and to change. Music never stands still and if you don't move with it, you're lost."



he audiences for "Your Arms Too Short to Box With God" were a melting pot. They crossed all lines of race and faith because the spirit of music is universal. God is love and music is love and there isn't anybody who isn't touched by love."

Ahead of Her Time Again

Long before Paul McCartney sang with Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson, Patti La Belle knew the creative and common-sense value of musical collaborations. Besides her famous album with Laura Nyro, Patti Had, with LaBelle, sung with Wilson Pickett, Jerry Butler and Chubby Checker—as well as the aforementioned Elton John.

But it was her work with jazz great, Grover Washington, Jr. on the sultry ballad "The Best is Yet to Come" that Patti earned a Grammy nomination. Other collaborative efforts followed, including "Love Has Finally Come At Last" with Bobby Womack and George Benson, as well as a single with the masters of punk, the B-52's. Patti's last album for CBS/Philadelphia International, "I'm In Love Again," was a roaring success and her single, "If Only You Knew," put Patti back where she belongs: into jukeboxes and onto airplay lists nationwide.

Like a fine wine, Patti La Belle stands on her own with enduring style, as well as complimenting any artist she performs with.



Patti and Al Green as they appeared in Vinnette Carroll's "Your Arms too Short to Box With God"

Patti sizzled and swirled in the gospel musical "Your Arms too Short to Box With God"



① ~~Back In The Cen~~ ★★ ★★

Beder

Departing New York City
 Looking Red pretty
 Around About 12 noon
 We hit highway 95th
 Passing through New Brunswick
 Stopped!

By some County hicks
This time his shirt is grey
Well what did he say
Pull over buster, routine inspection
The guns is a toy

An were really gay's
This time the man in Oreg
is gonna take us away
Cause we three can't be real
Dressed in women's spiked high heels
Impersonating females
Now here's the Appeal
Accepted if you will
Were being booked on a bum deal

We note your reflection
on deflection

Complication	Lead me be
Isolation	Set me free
Incrimination	Cony me

① Destination

②

→ Back Back, Back In The Cell

Arriving to the Recinct

In a rush

joined by the cuffs

Being treated Rufft Rough

Please don't ARREST me

Why must you ~~under~~ dress me

Your Eye mist me

Oh shot what now

Bracelets, bracelets I.D. bracelets

An of sudden there's an ink attack

" " " my finger are block

My vision is doubled

Flash cube trouble

Oh no not you

Not another Interview

Is There a chance

I can out on R.O.R.

Can a bit make bail

We note your Reflections

" " " deflection

Complication

Let me be

Isolation

Set me free

Incrimination

Why me

Destination



Music playlist notebook, circa early 1990s-late 1990s. Private collection of Beau McCall.

Included are Beau's handwritten playlists. Some of the playlists were created as fun challenges with his friend Trey to see who could find the most songs on a particular theme. This notebook demonstrates how the two forged a connection through music.

The Friendship Train

Andrew Gold - Theme (From Golden Girls)

- 10 Sylvester - You Are My Friend (Live)
- 5 1 Brandy - Best Friend 1 Dedicated ✓
- 2 Phyllis Hyman - Old Friend 7 ✓
- 3 Lena Horne - Old Friend ✓
- 4 Shaker Bryant - Old Friend 9 ✓
- * 5 Bobby McFerrin - Friends 3 ✓
- 3 6 TLC - What About Your Friends 4
- 1 7 Gladys Knight & The Pips - Friendship Train 4
- 8 Patti LaBelle - You Are My Friend 11 ✓
- 19 9 Bette Midler - You Gotta Have Friends ✓
- * 10 Dionne, Gladys Stevie & Elton - That What Friend Are For
- * 8 11 Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes - Where Are All My Friends
- 4 12 Jody Watley - Friends 4
- * 13 Whodini - Friends 4
- * 14 Kool & The Gang - Friends
- 6 15 Missy & Aliyah - Best Friends ✓
- * 16 Dionne Warwick & Johnny Mathis - Friends In Love ✓
- * 17 Aretha Franklin & BeBe & CeCe Winans - You Got A Friend ✓
- 18 Miki Howard - My Friend 6 ✓
- 19 Denice Williams - That's What Friend Are For ✓
- * 20 ~~Got On The Bus (Soundtrack) Friendship Poem~~ ✓
- 21 Kelly Price - Best Friend ✓
- 22 Lena Horne - Some of my Best Friends Are The Blues
- 23 Bette Midler - True Friend 5 (my one True Friend)
- 24 Blackstreet - Deja's Poem 2
- 2 25 Johnny Gill - Fareweather Friend
- The Temptation - That What Friend Are For 10

Diva Madness

1

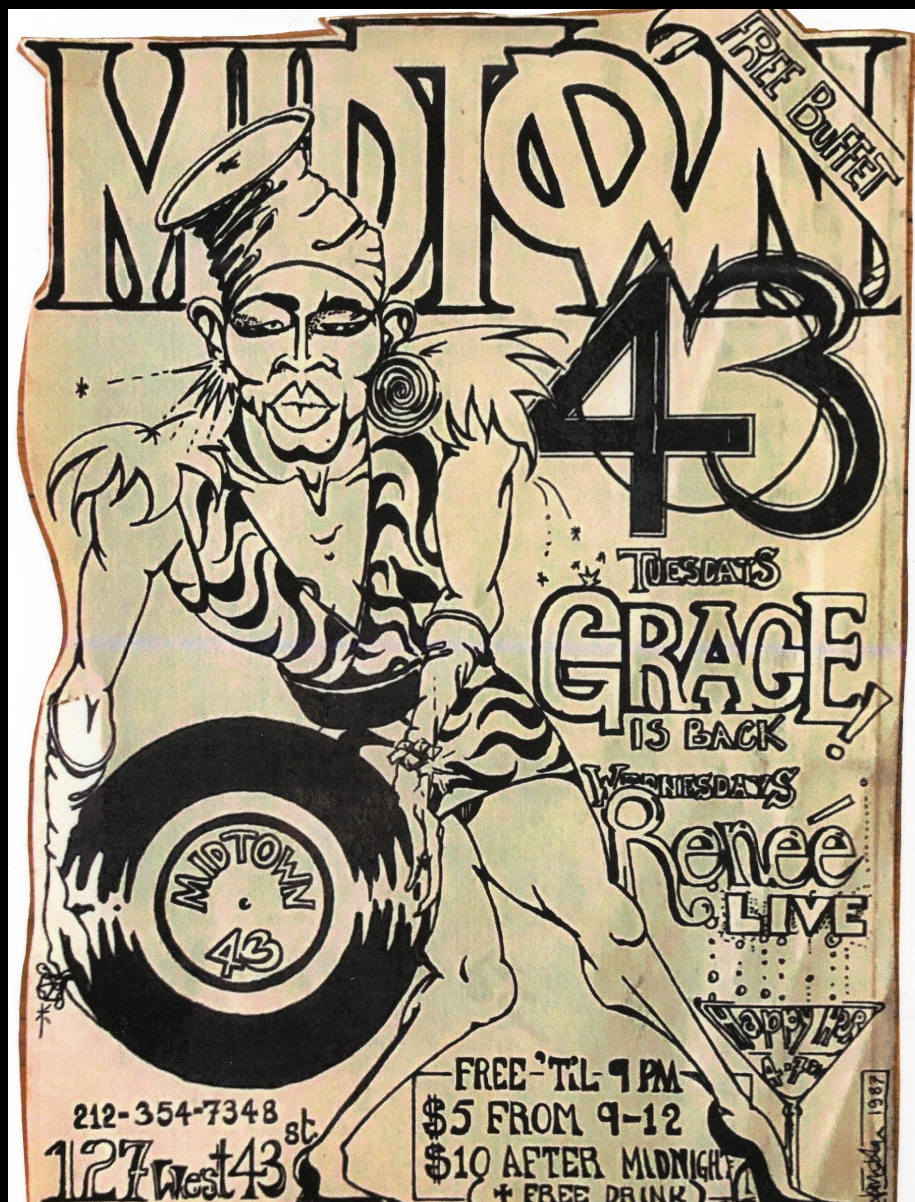
- 10 2 Melba Moore - Stormy Weather
- 2 4 Phyllis Hyman - I A Sentimental Mood
- 9 3 Dee Dee Bridgewater - How High The Moon
- 4 4 Betty Carter + Carmen McRae - Stolen Moments
- 5 Michelle Hendricks - Summertime
- 6 Etta James - Night + Day
- 9 7 Miki Howard - Solitude
- 8 Dionne Warwick - I've Got You Under my Skin
- 7 9 Gladys Knight - Good Morning Heartache
- 1 10 Aretha - The Woman
- 2 11 Davina - My Cryin' Blues
- 8 12 Chaka Khan - Miles Blowing
- 6 13 Jody Watly - After You
- 3 14 FRYKAR Bradu - Child with Blues
- 6 15 Toni Braxton - Brown Baby
- 5 16 ADRIANA EVANS - Lucky Days
- 4 18 Billie Holiday - For All We Know
- 5 19 Bette Midler - Drinking Again
- 2 20 Diana Krall - Baby Baby All The Time
- 7 1 Abby Lincoln - I'm Love
- 1 Etta James - Night + Day
- 8 Natalie Cole - Avalon

Diva Madness

2

- 1 Zakia Hooker - Drowning In Your Love
- 2 Material / Whitney Houston - Memories
- 3 DR Buzzards Original Savannah Band / Corey Day - Hard Times
- 4 Billy Holiday - God Bless The Child
- 5 Lena Horne - Imagination
- 6 ~~EVA Cassidy~~ Blue Skies / K.D. Lang - So In Love
- 7 Michele Hendricks - Summer Times
- 8 Ella Fitzgerald - Flying Home
- 9 Annie Ross - Everything's Coming Up Roses
- 10 Nancy Wilson - Look At You / Something Tells Me I'm Falling
- 11 Patti LaBelle - Lover Man

- 1 EVA Cassidy - Tall Trees In Georgia
- 2 Sade - Send Me Someone To Love
- 3 N'Dea Davenport - Save Your Love For Me
- 4 LAURNEA - ~~Love~~ Gone
- 5 Portia Griffin / Pieces of Dream - Before We Say Hello
- 6 Chaka Khan - Pain
- 7 Jazz Joe Astor - Dream of Jazz
- 8 Brigitte McWilliams - Too Much Woman
- 9 Chelcee Anderson - Jan Green's Groove Conclusion
- 7 Anita Baker - Summertime
- 8 Regina Belle - My Man
- 9 Vesta - I Have To
- 10 Dee Dee Bridgewater - If You Can't Sing It
You'll Have To Swing It (Mr. Paganini)



Midtown 43 promotional flyer, 1987. From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, & Library.

This is the flyer used in the collage. *Moi, Renee V.* Renee performed at Midtown 43, a now-defunct LGBTQ+ club in New York City. Renee is also the singer-songwriter of the cult classic dance song "Miss Honey." The song's co-writers include Andrew Richardson and Count Maurice.

FREE BUFFET

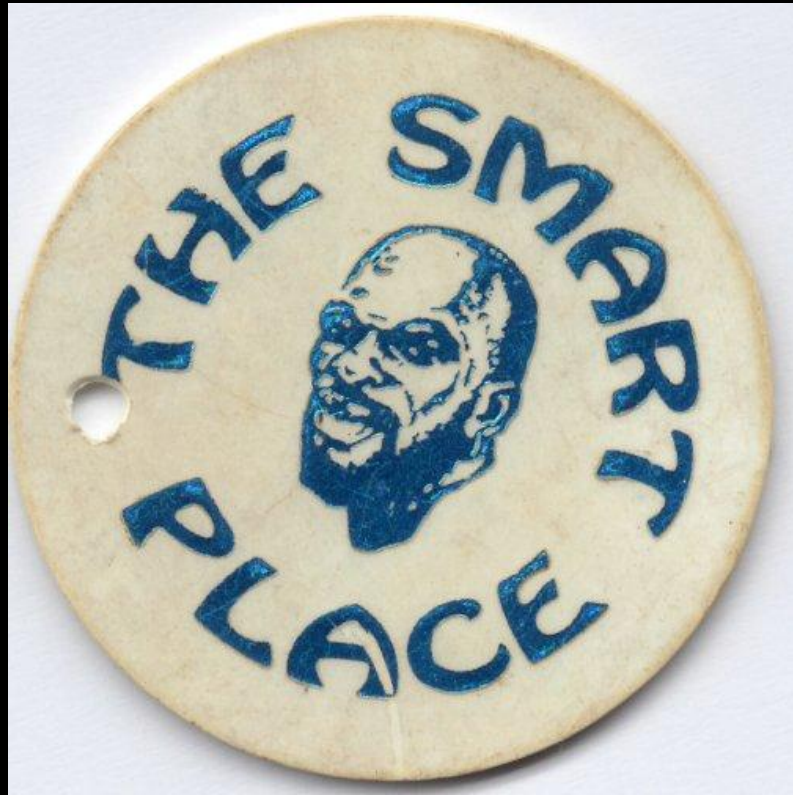


TUESDAYS
GRACE
IS BACK
WEDNESDAYS
Renee
LIVE

212-354-7348
127 West 43rd St

FREE 'TIL 9 PM
\$5 FROM 9-12
\$10 AFTER MIDNIGHT
(+ FREE DRINK)

1987



The Smart Place drink ticket, circa early-mid 1980s. From the Beau McCall Collection, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, & Library.

This is the actual drink ticket used in the collage, *Tony II*. The Smart Place was one of the few Black LGBTQ-friendly bars in Philadelphia, PA.



Front



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Phila., Pa. 19107

(215) 627-8984

Back

**Thank You
for Exploring
the Archival Materials**