

ROBERT GORDON: STILL FABULOUS AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

By: John M. Toothman

Robert Gordon's amazing vocals and style captivated me as a fan from the very first time I saw him perform with Link Wray in New York City during the Rockabilly revival era that included such groups as the Stray Cats and the Rockacats. Gordon was by far the coolest and most talented of the bunch. So many years have passed since I last witnessed Robert perform his magic in a nightclub called Tramps in New York. There I stood in a packed house with my wife, Rocky, at the bar when Chris Spedding strolled up to watch his old friend perform. What a night to remember!

Throughout all these years, Robert Gordon has been a mainstay to my listening pleasure. At this moment he sings with the likes of Bob Dylan, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Tom Rush, Johnny Cash, and Percy Sledge in my car's CD rotating selections--all talented and pleasing to my eclectic choice in music. However, each time I listen to Robert Gordon, I cannot help but think that he is without a doubt one of the most talented singers to come along in decades.

Gordon's voice, style, and music interpretation resonate deeply, and I could not figure out why he had not attained in the music world the pinnacle of success as, say, Eddie Cochran, Conway Twitty, or even Elvis. Using my layman's analysis, I assumed that it was the lack of a Colonel Parker "go-get-em" agent, politics of the recording industry, or some possible character flaw in Robert that kept him from the illusive fame that he deserved. For my own well-being, I just let it go and decided I would become a part of the developing cult status that surrounded Robert Gordon

My wife and I have remained devoted and loyal fans. We could identify his unique sound anywhere. Case in point, one day we were strolling down a street in Pacific Beach, California when we heard Robert's deep, distinct voice blasting out of a speaker located in a "vintage" store for the young and hip of California. We naturally went in and were informed by the manager that her husband was a avid Robert Gordon devotee. Of course, we boasted of our knowledge and became instant celebrities for having seen Robert Gordon perform live.

The years passed by in the nineties, and we often looked for Robert in the New York area only to find out that he had left and was playing in the Washington, D.C. area. We often thought of going to see him, but never were able to make it happen. A couple of years ago, I found Robert on the net and found out that he had established a thriving career in Europe. His web page was well done, and Robert seemed to have found an audience that appreciated and loved his style of music. Finally, he was getting some of the recognition that he deserved.

A few months ago, I purchased his new CD entitled Satisfied Mind with the expectation that it would be at the same quality level that I had come to expect from Robert. To my delight, it far exceeded my expectations. His version of Porter Wagner's "Satisfied Mind" belonged on the charts, and certainly in Nashville. Again, I pondered the question, What was keeping Robert Gordon with his date with destiny--his elusive fame? Once again, I conjured up all kinds of

scenarios. I would have made a DVD in faded black and white with Robert wearing tuxedo pants, an understated sequenced white shirt, and black and white wing-tips while singing into a big 1940's microphone. I thought that there would be no way this version of "Satisfied Mind" could miss on the CMT network. I am sure Robert's imagination would have this scenario and so many others. So why is he still unknown to so many?

My wife Rocky and I wanted to see Robert again, so I checked his web site constantly to check out his touring schedule. Then a little miracle happened. I found out that he would be performing at the Sherman Theater in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania on March 10, the day after my birthday. Immediately, I called and reserved two VIP seats. Rocky and I were elated. We arrived at the Sherman around 7 p.m. and were escorted to our VIP seats which were located in a private box next to the stage.

The opening band, The Jessie Wade Gang, was quite good. We enjoyed the music, but our anticipation for Robert Gordon was palpable. As we sat in our box, we would peek around the corner to see the audience. To our dismay, and I am sure to everyone's, the audience remained small in number and never grew to the size we expected and Robert deserved.

Finally, after so many years, Robert's New York band walked out and then the man himself, Robert Gordon wearing a tuxedo and looking every bit the cool, charismatic star, grabbed the microphone and belted out his first of many great songs. Truly, the auditorium was filled with a heightened energy and excitement. Rocky and I jumped to our feet and the entire audience was clapping and cheering. We could not wipe the smile off our faces. Even though the audience was small, and I am sure a disappointment to Robert, he gave it his all and proceeded to entertain us like no other can. Robert's voice was still strong, vital, and full of all the subtleties that makes him a master of his trade. We saw something new in Robert, a balance and maturity in his music. His experiences, whether good or bad, had helped him take his musical interpretation to another level. Rocky and I were totally mesmerized and enjoyed every single moment of his performance. Rocky made sure that Robert felt this joy by clapping, whistling, and cheering enough for ten people.

Robert's performance was a pure work of art. He left no doubt that he had self-actualized himself to that cult status that he deserved. We knew then and we know now that we were in the presence of probably one of the greatest song stylists of the modern decade. We, as well as the entire audience, did everything we could to convey this fact to Robert.

After the concert, we waited with many audience members for Robert to come out and sign his CD's. Robert's lovely and spirited wife came out with a new box of his CD's. She was so open, kind, and giving. She told us that she remembered us from New York and that she especially remembered my beautiful wife. She was so genuine in her compliments. She helped us to connect to someone she obviously loved and respected dearly. Rocky and I enjoyed her company so much. After about 15 minutes, she had to inform us that Robert would not be coming out. Naturally, we were all disappointed, but deep-down we understood because she told us that Robert was "dealing with management." We knew that hopefully we would get another chance for an autograph and a picture of RG in the future when we could tell him in person that

his fans are with him, and we know greatness when we see it. Rocky and I gave his wife a hug and wished her and Robert a safe trip back to Europe.

We purchased a limited edition copy of The Reunion Tour that reunited Robert and Chris Spedding after a 13 year separation. On our two-hour ride home that night, Rocky and I listened to our new CD and were delighted when we realized that Robert had just sung almost every song on the CD. All we can say is that we hope Robert keeps doing what he does so well and that we will see him down the road.

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