



**The International Fan Club Magazine**

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# The Drifter Wars

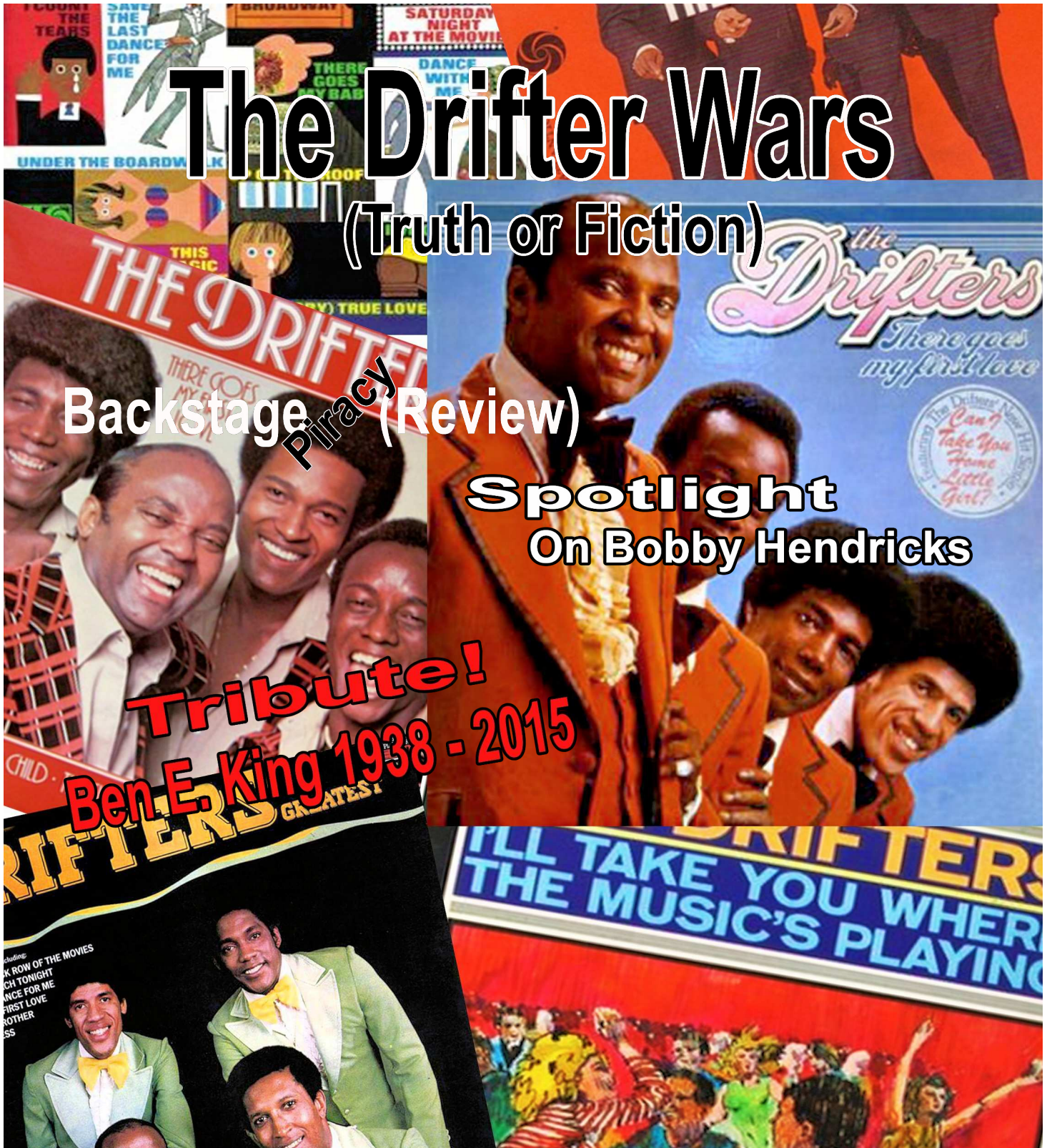
(Truth or Fiction)

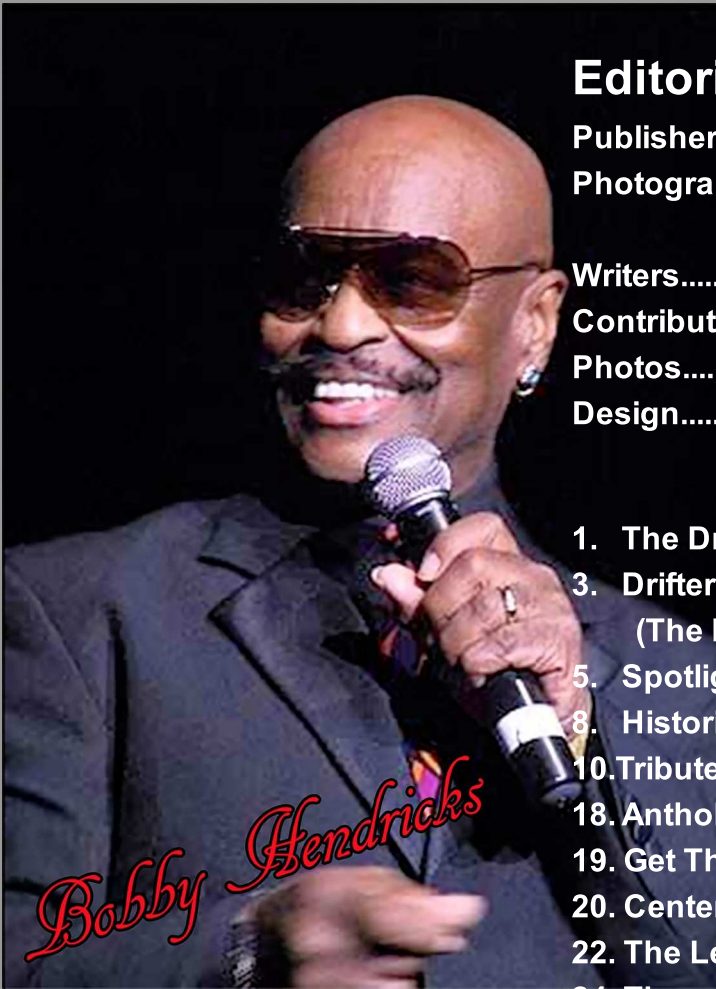
Backstage Piracy (Review)

**Spotlight  
On Bobby Hendricks**

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**Ben E. King 1938 - 2015**





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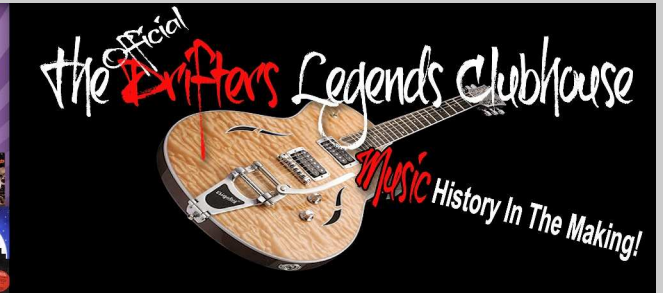
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## The Drifter Wars (Truth or Fiction)



Whether you know it or not. For as long as the 60 year brand has been in existence there has been an ongoing battle in the marketplace with those who would like to excerpt there entitlement to the brands name. This fight so to speak extends to both legitimate and non-legitimate members.

Now every problem has some sort of cause and effect attached to it. This is no different with The Drifter organization with the system of exploitation that was established back in the early 50s by the then management The Drifters Incorporated. Management controlled every aspect of the brand and applied salary based criterion to it's members who owned nothing that was related to the organization and had to sign agreements forbidding any disclosure that they were ever with a group called The Drifters after their term of service with the brand. Now this for the most part in this day in time goes against the legal norms of the music industry and it's federations in the United States. As the federations do not accept third parties when it comes to dealing with it's members. This form of exploitation would eventually create the faction that have risen over the years between would-be Drifter acts trying to survive in an unmerciful music industry. Now in any given day in the year you can see some form of Drifter act performing somewhere in the world. In some cases within a few miles from one another all claiming to have some descend ency from the original line of Drifters from the earlier years. Beginning with legitimate members, that is members who have recorded on Drifter songs and have historical credentials to back up their claim. Then there are the hybrid groups who may have performed with one or more of the original recording members and base their claim to the name on that criteria.



Then we have the outright pirate acts who have no linkage at all. Yet claim to be the real thing. Last but not least are the tribute acts who skate between their tribute status and claiming to be the legitimate article through the use of deceptive advertisement owing to the dwindling status of original members of the group. Unfortunately, this warfare has seriously damaged the Drifters trademark status and continues to do so as would be acts fight for supremacy in the marketplace. Call it what you may! But the Drifter wars have been going on for as long as the name Atlantic Drifters have been in existence. Not long after 1958, bill Pinkney was having much displeasure with the Treadwell management with disputes over money issues. The disputes eventually would lead to a breakup and formation of splinter groups which have plagued the organization ever since. The Drifters, for the most part, became one of the most unstable outfits in showbiz history. Yet this change of personnel over the years became somewhat the hallmark of success but sadly has been destructive to it's members through infighting. Pinkney as road manager had a better grasp of the financial situation than any other member of the group and was always fighting with management for more money for the singers. As soon as the old drifters were fired by Treadwell at the Apollo Theatre he wasted no time forming a new group composed of original members Gerhart and Andrew Thrasher and Little David Baughan who would replace Clyde McPhatter who at the time was busy with a solo career. They would call themselves The Original Drifters. Looking at the facts! though Treadwell had now formed a new group of Drifters from the Crowns. Bill Pinkney's Original Drifters who had recorded such songs as "Honey Bee" and "Know Sweet lovin" in 1955, musically had more right to the name, though the Crowns were the legal group using it. Pinkney in 1978 finally officially won his right to the use of the name The original Drifters after a succession of singers over the years. Sadly Bill Pinkney, last of the original Drifters and first of the Original Drifters, passed away on July 4, 2007 at age 81.



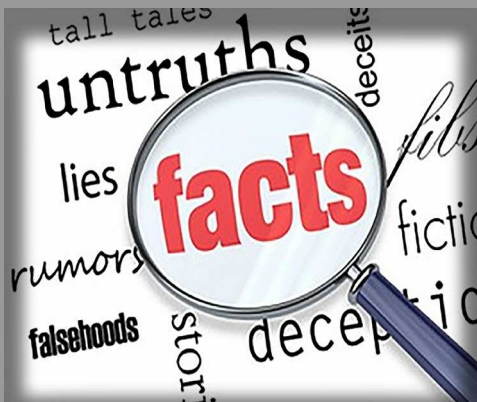
# Drifter Misinformation

By Butch Leake



Much is spoken on the Drifters in various circles relating to who is or was a Drifter, the music etc. Depending on who's telling the story or reporting all the misinformation, you hear such comments as The current lineup of Drifters under the Treadwell PMG management are phonies and imposters. The former Bell / Arista group were no more than a Disco outfit. Many of these comments come from so called critics in the industry, period fans, former Drifter members and I mean former cause if you are not currently working under the trademark license you are former. I've even read where someone posted on youtube that Charlie Thomas has warrants out for the Treadwell imposter group as if he is the only legitimate Drifter that has come along over the years that has the right to be called a Drifter. Give us a break with such nonsense! the Drifters is a brand and has been that way since it's offset. With 60 or more members Drifting in and out, it truly lives up to its name Drifters. Yes, some more significant than others. The brand can truly only be categorized through its golden age periods and there are three. The Clyde McPhatter era, The Ben E. King era and The Bell / Arista era headed by Johnny Moore and The fact is Johnny Moore sang with the group in all those eras and on more songs and hits than anyone. After the Atlantic era, the group was dead so to speak and was resurrected in the 70's with the producer and songwriter Roger Greenway. It was the Greenway team along with the signing to Bell Records headed by it's president Dick Leahy which helped bring the group back into vogue during the 70's with a string of hits throughout that period. So it was the Johnny Moore group of the 70's along with Bill Fredricks, Grant Kitchings and yours truly Butch Leake that brought the brand from the grave in the early 70's era.

That is a fact which you can try and deny, but the data is there to prove it. Though the Atlantic period of songs were great and I will be the first to acknowledge they were some of my favorites. The Bell Record era had it's songs which were conducive for its time.



## The Atlantic / Bell perspective

There has been much downplay of the Bell/Arista period as if this era in The Drifters history didn't count. Much coming from quarters of who's interest aren't served by reporting the facts as they really stand.

One distortion duly noted is this play on original Drifters vs Non-original Drifters.