

FRIDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT												DECEMBER 16, 2011												
	3:00	3:30	4:00	4:30	5:00	5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	1:00	1:30		
BROADCAST STATIONS	PBS NewsHour (N) (In Stereo) 24/7 Flyers/Rangers: Life & Times												Great Performances The Little Mermaid From San Francisco Ballet performs. (N) (In Stereo) 20/20 Maternal health. (N) (In Stereo) KSFY News at 10 in HD											
PAY CHANNELS	HBO 17 (40) "Dinner-Schm"												HBO2 "Turner & Hooch"											
CABLE STATIONS	A&E 57 (47) Criminal Minds												AMC 41 (54) "Spy Game" (2001)											

APPRECIATION

Dobie Gray's One Hit Will Never Really Drift Away

BY BEN WENER

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"Gimme the beat, boys, and free my soul / I wanna get lost in your rock 'n' roll / And drift away ..."

So sang Dobie Gray nearly 40 years ago, exposing a little-known, quasi-spiritual song from 1972 that, coming from the hearty voice of the Texan believed to have been born Lawrence Darrow Brown, would rocket to No. 5 the following year and become a staple of classic-rock radio ever since.

Gray, who died Tuesday at 71 from causes that weren't mentioned in his website's announcement, wasn't the first person to cut a version of the tune written by Mentor Williams, brother of the more famous '70s star Paul Williams. Nor would he be the last: everyone from Roy Orbison and Rod Stewart to Waylon Jennings and Michael Bolton has remade it. And then came Kid Rock affiliate Uncle Kracker's 2003 revival. With Gray on its final verse, it rose to No. 9 on the Billboard singles rundown and spent an unprecedented 28 weeks atop the adult contemporary chart.

But Gray's warm, moving rendition is the one that made the song a standard.

A chin-up country-soul anthem that evokes memories of campfire singalongs and lakeside nights for some, overcoming the worst of times for others, "Drift Away" is the sort of life-affirming recording plenty of people would like to have played at their funeral. Gray's greatest hit is also the perfect soundtrack for his eulogy.

Dobie Gray made other records, of course. He started out under a variety of names: Leonard Ainsworth (some insist that was on his birth certificate), Larry Curtis, Larry Dennis. Eventually Sonny Bono stepped in, guiding him to the independent Stripe Records, where Gray's lasting moniker was acquired by cribbing it from then-popular TV comedy The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis.

He broke into the Hot 100 in 1963 with his seventh single, "Look at Me," but really hit it big two years later with his recording of "The 'In' Crowd," which climbed to No. 13 and would soon spawn an equally popular jazz/soul crossover version by Ramsey Lewis.

But apart from that and "Drift Away," Gray would lodge only one more minor hit, "You Can Do It," which eked into the Top 40 in 1979. During the '80s, he ventured further into country music with the same slight success, before eventually fading from view — until Uncle Kracker called him up eight years ago.

Rock history books may forever brand him a prime example of a one-hit wonder. But oh what a hit it was. (And what strange timing, to die just days after another largely forgotten soul star, Howard Tate.)

Local Scrabble Tourney Set For Jan. 29

Word lovers are invited to "Spellbrate for a Good Cause" by participating in the second annual Amateur Scrabble Tournament. The fundraising event is hosted by the Yankton Area Literacy Council (YALC), a United Way Agency. The all-ages tournament takes place from 1-4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 29, at The Center (Senior Center) located at 900 Whiting Drive in Yankton. The storm date for the event is Sunday, Feb. 12.

YALC Board President Deb Overseth says the tournament is benefiting both YALC and the Yankton community by providing needed funds for local tutoring services. "The funds raised through the tournament allows YALC to provide literacy skills to individuals with low level skills or those who need to learn English," Overseth says. "This truly is a 'good cause' which helps individuals improve themselves and then in turn contribute to our community."

Early birds who register by Thursday, Dec. 15, will enjoy reduced registration fees. The registration form can be found online at bit.ly/YALC-Scrabble2012, at the United Way Non-Profit Center at 610 West 23rd St. or at the Yankton Community Library. Completed forms must be accompanied by the appropriate registration fee and returned to the YALC office at PO Box 387, Yankton, SD. Registration categories include Youth (11 and under); Student (12-17); and Adult. There is a Family Rate for families with three or more entrants. Final registration deadline is Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2012.

To learn more about YALC or for additional information about the tournament, contact Bev Calvert at 605-665-3048 (yalc@iw.net).

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