



## History of Belgium Popcorn

By Michel Scarpone

Artikel verschenen in Discoveries - Amerikaans muziektijdschrift

The Belgian "popcorn" style began in 1968 in Oostende. There is a nightclub that was called 'The Groove'. The first notes of music came from this nightclub which was called at that time "Soul Music". I was seventeen. I never heard such beautiful music. Now I'm 41 and I'm still crazy about that type of music, "The Oldies Popcorn" as we call this music in Belgium. At the time in the nightclub Groove the classics were : Billy Larkin - 'Hole In The Wall' and Leon Haywood - 'Soul Cargo'. Ska music was also played : Roland Alphonso - 'Doctor Ring Ding', 'Sake A Lady' and 'Song of My Father'. Even some instrumental music such as Ramsey Lewis - 'Wade in The Water', 'China Gate', Alvin Cash - 'Twine Time'.

In 1970 a new nightclub opened its doors, called "Dancing Popcorn", located in Vrasene. It was the great beginning of a new style of music. This music was called 'oldies popcorn'. The collectors of Belgian Popcorn increased more and more. There were collectors of popcorn music in Belgium, then in France, then in Holland, now even in other countries. The popcorn style can't really be explained. It is the collectors themselves who created the style and it can change from year to year, but the most sought-after great classics are always the same. Here are some examples : Dick Baker - 'Heartless Lover', Jay Abbott - 'La Tanya', Johnny Barnes - 'The Time Is Now', Mary Mazza - 'Cha Cha Italiano' and Ray Rivera 'Troubles Troubles'.

In the seventies about ten nightclubs began to play popcorn records! They were the best DJs in Belgium at the time, and some of them still play today. For the nightclub The Groove, the best DJ was Gilbert Govaert. At Popcorn the great DJ was Jeff Callebaut. In the Versailles Georges Toniotti was the top DJ. Two guys, Eddy and Kurt, were tops at Viertap. The Viertap is always open. My brother Paul and I give people lots of enjoyment in many Belgian nightclubs. Sometimes we organize one or two evenings per year. Still today, after 25 years, the popcorn style is still around and the best records that can be heard are James Conwell on 4J; Jeff Lane - "Carmelita", Bruce Cloud - "Let Me Come Back Home", Kurt Harris - "Emperor Of My Babys Heart" - Douglas Banks - "Ain't that Just Like A Woman", also many by Major Lance.

Despite the release of oldies popcorn on compact disc, (about 30 so far) more than 1.000 collectors still look for original "Belgium Popcorn" classic singles. If you visit Belgium don't forget to go to a nightclub where you can hear Belgian Popcorn. People who really like 50s and 60s music can't miss this opportunity, because the popcorn music is something that you can hear and dance to in a nightclub and the atmosphere is super !

Michel Scarpone

*Ever since Doug Hanners began telling me about Belgian Popcorn Music, I've wanted to know more. Thanks for giving us this brief history on the scene, Michel. No matter what you call it, your musical taste is pretty good. Glad the scene is thriving, both on vinyl and CD.*

(Note of the redaction)