

# Junior Giscombe Talks About The British Collective (Interview)



It's been 3 decades combined since the members of The British Collective emerged and developed the canon of UK Black music. Junior Giscombe, Lee John, Omar Lye-Fook, Don-E and Noel McKoy were among the first generation of artists to successfully claim a unique soul identity inspired by their American heroes but proudly tied to their British roots. Their work spans from John's days as a member of the '80s dance group Imagination to Don-E's debut as a solo artist in the early '90s. They created their own soul after the bluesy British Invasion and long before the current global fascination with Amy Winehouse, Adele and Sam Smith. And it was a meeting at Carl McIntosh's birthday party that brought them together and became the catalyst for their music as The British Collective. The McIntosh event was a fitting place for the seeds of the group to be planted, considering McIntosh's role in the beloved '80s R&B band Loose Ends. Giscombe's "Mama Used To Say" and "Too Late" from the '80s reached out across the ocean and was so accepted in the United States that most fans thought he was an American. [Pharrell Williams](#) just added "Mama Used To Say" to the playlist for the NBA 2K15 video game. Lee John became a dance music icon as one-third of Imagination who made timeless club music spearheaded by their hits "Changes" and "Just An Illusion." Noel McKoy established himself as a soul artist with his family in the late '80s and later fronted The James Taylor Quartet. Don-E's "Love Makes The World Go Round" made him a young solo star who later signed with D'Angelo's label and worked with him on "So Cold." Omar Lye-Fook's 7-album discography often gets him labeled

as the forefather of Neo Soul. In 2012 he was presented the MBE Award by Prince Charles. ["Romantic"](#) is the first song from their forthcoming album in the Spring. Junior Giscombe talked to Kickmag about The British Collective and the importance of substance returning to R&B.

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**How did The British Collective come together? And how did you pick the name?**

We all met up at Carl McIntosh's birthday bash about 2 years ago while Don-e was recording his *Little Star* album and suggested we get together on one of the tracks. It was a great idea, but how was it going to work? Everyone works constantly, how would we do it? Don suggested we all work from our own studios and send him the vocals and that's how "Spiritual" our first collaboration came to be. We choose the name British Collective for what, to us, it represents, where we were born, who we are, British.

**All of you are solo artists, was it hard for any of you to adjust to the group dynamic?**

I think for us it's not the normal scenario as we still work outside of BC. Our coming together live is incredible, up until we did at Koko's a few weeks ago for Children In Need, we had no idea how each would react to being on stage together. It was magic.

**What inspired "Romantic" and how did you all decide to make that the first song to spearhead the project? Who wrote it?**

"Romantic" was written by BC, as too the album/CD we bring our

own vibe to each song, then blend, then create. "Romantic" was inspired by the lack of it in the music we were hearing. We completed the song last year, it was one of the first songs we did and as the project went on we all seemed to come go back to it. "Romantic" had all the right ingredients and I think we made the right decision.

[youtube id="5MtCB-GsMZg"]

### **What was the idea behind the video?**

The idea was born out of conversations with the rest of the team, Sam "Mama" Davis our stylist and video director and Diane Dunkley who manages the band. It was to be, simple, direct and to the point. No profanity, historic, a feeling of warmth that you only get when you're being romantic.

### **What will the full-length album sound like? Is it all original songs?**

There are two covers on the finished album and the rest of the songs are originals. The overall sound will remind you of the past, but is rooted in the here and now. Very fresh.

### **What does each individual member bring to the sound?**

Each member is seasoned in their act so brings much to the table individually, to point to one thing only. Our voices work together because we're musicians and understand how to use them to complement the other and as players we're coming from the same place.

### **All of you are veterans of British R&B, what would say is the biggest difference in the music now versus your earlier days as an artist?**

I think the culture toward R&B has changed, it has been watered down to the point that those who are making it today wouldn't know where it came from originally, that's sad as it means a history or a nation is wiped out. In my day it was

important to know who did what in making the music, who sang what, who wrote what, it was needed, an education if you like. You can't move forward without knowing where you come from. I was fortunate a few years ago to have Stevie Wonder play drums on a song of mine "Do You Really Want My Love" which was in the **Beverly Hills Cop** movie and soundtrack, which won a Grammy, as he played he heard me sing a run which he uses, he nearly fell off his stool laughing then said "You stole that from me? I stole it from Clyde, he stole it from Jackie" The greats know the importance and relevance of knowing their HISTORY why don't we????

**Are you surprised that "Mama Used To Say" and "Too Late" still live on?**

Both songs represent a social picture that can be seen or remembered and were given the chance to be heard, I have always wanted what I have, so no, I'm not surprised just grateful for the support shown by the old and new fans.

**How do you like being a DJ versus a singer?**

LOL. I really enjoyed being a DJ and would love the chance to do it again but making music and most of all, performing live, you just can't compare.

**How is your daughter Jenique doing? I know you already experienced the loss of her mother to MS and now she is battling the disease. How do you stay strong for her and still maintain your creative life?**

Wow, I've never really thought about it, it is a fact of life that I live with. Jenique is doing well, she has Progressive Multiple Sclerosis and to date there is no cure, but I've changed her diet, she does a lot of exercise. We have a saying "If you don't use it you'll lose it" she is very inspirational and I am humbled all the time by her determination and fight. I am creative by nature, so for me that side isn't hard, what is, is to know that there are millions of people out there who

have the same complaint and there is nothing that can be done for them. I consider myself fortunate to have had her and her mother in my life as they both enhance my overall vision.

[youtube id="QwP6r1zEB14"]

**I know it's too early to tell, but do you think the band would want to record more than one project under the British Collective name ?**

As you said it is too early to tell, but we're all on the same page concerning the ethos of the band and I can't see why not if the people make it happen with "Romantic".

**Is there a release date for the album and have you all discussed or made plans to tour?**

We are looking at a spring release for the album. Yes, we have discussed it and schedules are being put in place. We are going to tour, as live for us is what our music is all about.

**Keep up with The British Collective On [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [The British Collective.com](#)**

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# The British Collective-Romantic

[youtube id="5MtCB-GsMZg"]

The British Collective is a combined 20-plus years of soul music from UK veterans Don-E, Omar Lye-Fook, Junior Giscombe, Lee John and Noel McKoy. "[Romantic](#)" is the first single from their endeavors as a collective and so far there's no word on

a possible full-length album.