

# ‘I just love the American labels’

Alan Paterson’s hobby is so expensive that he would not be able to start it today. But he began early and has amassed more than 10,000 rare 45s and 1,500 albums from the 50s, 60s and 70s. And he’s not finished yet ...

**A**s holidays go, two weeks spent in a warehouse in downtown Philadelphia doesn’t sound like much of a break. Unless, that is, you’re a northern soul fan with a passion for vintage vinyl.

Alan Paterson has been a music enthusiast since boyhood. He remembers being smitten by Ray Charles’ Hit the Road, Jack while listening to his parents’ radiogram.

He developed a taste for fifties doo-wop group harmonies from the north-eastern states of the USA, and progressed to soul, Tamla Motown and the funkier sounds coming out of America in the seventies. While his schoolmates were into Slade and Status Quo, he was reading Beatles sleeve notes and tracking down the soul songs that had inspired them. He was obviously destined to become a record collector, attending fairs, swapping “doubles” and hunting down rare discs.

Alan even moved down to fight fires in Hertfordshire for two years in the early nineties, so he could save on expensive trips south to hunt down rare discs. He even became a regular at the famous 100 Club.

You can tell a serious collector by their grasp of detail and record company history, which Alan is happy to share. As any collector worth his salt knows, Tamla

and Motown were two separate US labels which came together when Berry Gordy started to distribute his records in the UK. Aficionados will also know the significance of TMG 501; it’s the serial number for Stop in the Name of Love, the first record Tamla Motown released in the UK. US labels Ric-Tic and Golden World tried to imitate the Tamla sound, but it wasn’t long before Berry Gordy bought them up.

## True connoisseur

Alan, in the spirit of a true collector, tries to get hold of the originals, and has got “thousands,” including demos that were never released.

The Tamla Motown stable makes up a large chunk of Alan’s collection – with a good few US issues on Tamla (yellow label) Motown (blue with a map of Detroit) and Gordy, which just has Gordy’s signature on it and is highly collectable.

“I just love the American labels,” says Alan, speaking with the passion of a true connoisseur. “Over here they were largely black or blue. US sixties singles are highly collectable, particularly demos – and there are loads of collectors out there now, which drives up the price. I couldn’t afford to start collecting from scratch now.”

Alan has trawled Stateside warehouse and factory



PICTURES: DAVID BLADES



#### ALAN PATERSON

Grampian brigade secretary Alan Paterson has been a music enthusiast since boyhood. He was smitten by Ray Charles' *Hit the Road, Jack* on his parents' radiogram. He even moved to fight fires in Hertfordshire for two years in the nineties so he could hunt down rare discs.

The thrill of the chase: Alan Paterson hunts for rare records

## 'My boys can sell them if they want when I'm dead and gone. But I won't be selling'

outlets in his quest for rare discs, following leads, chasing tip-offs in the days before eBay and reference books made it easier to track down true finds. He was even able to bankroll one trip by selling on "doubles" to other collectors when he got home.

That two weeks in a Philadelphia warehouse with a fellow record collector back in '94 proved fairly lucrative. His fellow warehouse trawler has since "cashed in and sold the lot" but Alan isn't in it for the money and has no plans to follow suit. "My boys can sell them if they want when I'm dead and gone. But I won't be selling."

So what marks a disc out as collectable? "There are three main factors whatever people collect – demand, availability and condition determine the price."

#### Record prices have really rocketed

But Alan thinks records are there to be played. "If you take good care of your records, you don't need to worry. You can have them for years if you look after them properly. I've got paper sleeves, cardboard sleeves, the whole works."

Though a diehard vinyl enthusiast, Alan doesn't turn his nose up at CDs. "Record prices have really rocketed since I started to collect. Fortunately, I managed to get a lot of 'big pieces' before prices really took off, but I couldn't afford to start out collecting now."

He would encourage people who want to start from scratch to collect CDs instead. He's even got a good few himself. "I buy them to learn about new music, but they sometimes contain rare tracks and those that have never been issued before. And the "sleeve notes" can help me track down the original vinyl."

And for true collectors, tracking stuff down is, of course, part of the pleasure ...

### ALAN'S TOP TEN

*I feel so bad* – Jackie Edwards (UK Island)

*There's no love left* – Isley Bros (Tamla)

*Have I got a right* – Chuck Cockerham (Mala)

*The time is right for love* – Bobby Reed (Bell)

*My love is so strong* – Joseph Webster (Crow)

*You don't have to be a tower of strength* – Gloria Lynn (Everest)

*I'm the one who loves you* – The Impressions (ABC Paramount)

*What's a matter baby* – Timi Yuro (Liberty)

*I gotta have your love* – The Sapphires (ABC Paramount)

*Get involved* – George Soule (Fame)