

verve  
PICTURES

# AM I BLACK ENOUGH FOR YOU

A Documentary with

# HRH BILLY PAUL

By **GÖRAN HUGO OLSSON**

With **BILLY PAUL**  
**BLANCHE WILLIAMS**

**KENNY GAMBLE**  
**CLIVE DAVIS**  
**QUESTLOVE**  
**SCHOOLLY D**

RUNNING TIME: 90 mins tbc    CERT: 12A

For further information please contact:

Caroline Henshaw / Clare Sainsbury at Rabbit Publicity  
[caroline@rabbitpublicity.com](mailto:caroline@rabbitpublicity.com) / [clare@rabbitpublicity.com](mailto:clare@rabbitpublicity.com)

Tel: 020 7299 3685

For Unit Photography please go to:



## SYNOPSIS

*Am I Black Enough For You* tells the story of legendary Philadelphia soul artist Billy Paul, his life long companionship with his wife Blanche, and of how the oppression of Afro-Americans and the civil rights movement gave rise to the birth of Soul music.

Particularly well known for his song, "Me and Mrs Jones" which became a smash hit on both sides of the Atlantic in the seventies, Paul's follow up single, *Am I Black Enough For You* flopped, and it was a failure that nearly cost Paul his career. Looking back it seems that the lyrics offered too radical a message for the majority of the white market of the seventies.

But if the song had such a radical message, enough to turn away a huge number of fans, why was it released? The answer lies in the relationship between Paul and his record executive Kenny Gamble. Gamble and those around him were prepared to sanction and encourage the release of a single they knew could irreparably damage Paul's career for the sake of the message it contained. This was a time in which political affiliations, ambitions and assertions came above friendship and personal success.

As a rare example of a successful black American, did Paul have an obligation to act as a leader for his race? *Am I Black Enough For You* seeks to answer this question and to help us comprehend the lived experience of racism in America during this period.



## BILLY PAUL BIOGRAPHY

Billy Paul had a good run in the '70s as an R&B vocalist, though he'd been recording since the '50s, when he debuted on Jubilee. Paul was featured on radio broadcasts in Philadelphia at age 11 and had an extensive jazz background. He worked with Dinah Washington, Miles Davis, and Roberta Flack, as well as Charlie Parker, before forming a trio and recording for Jubilee. His original 1959 recording of "Ebony Woman" for New Dawn was later re-recorded for Neptune as the title of his 1970 LP. He signed the next year with Philadelphia International and scored his biggest hit with "Me & Mrs. Jones" in 1972, topping both the R&B and pop charts. Paul had one other Top Ten R&B single, "Thanks for Saving My Life," in 1974. He remained on Philadelphia International until the mid-'80s. Paul recorded one LP for Total Experience in 1985, *Lately*, and *Wide Open* for Ichiban before announcing his retirement in 1989 in London. Between June and November 2008 Paul toured extensively in Brazil, the US, Japan, Belgium, Switzerland and France and in January 2009 performed in the UK with Peabo Bryson, James Ingram, Freda Payne, Edwin Hawkins, Eddie Holman, Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis, Stylistics and Dorothy Moore. Billy Paul is currently working on a new album.

## BILLY PAUL DISCOGRAPHY

1969	Feelin' Good At The Cadillac Club	Gamble Records
1970	Ebony Woman	Neptune Records
1971	Going East	Philadelphia Int
1972	360 Degrees of Billy Paul	Philadelphia Int
1973	War Of The Gods	Philadelphia Int
1974	Got My Head on Straight	Philadelphia Int
1974	Billy Paul 2 (Brazil)	Epic
1974	Billy Paul Live in Europe	Philadelphia Int
1975	When Love is New	Philadelphia Int
1976	Let 'Em In	Philadelphia Int
1977	Only The Strong Survive	Philadelphia Int
1979	First Class	Philadelphia Int
1979	Best of Billy Paul	Philadelphia Int
1983	Billy Paul's Greatest Hits	Columbia-Globo Brazil
1985	Lately	Total Experience
1988	Wide Open	Ichiban
1993	Billy Paul Greatest Hits	Columbia-Globo
1995	Billy Paul The Very Best Of	Sony-Versailles
1998	The Very Best of Billy Paul	Sony-Epic UK
1999	20 Super Successos Int	Sony-Epic Brazil
1999	Me and Mrs Jones The Best of Billy Paul	Epic-Legacy Series



2000 Live World Tour 1999

**AM I BLACK ENOUGH FOR YOU** PRODUCTION NOTES  
PhillySounds

**AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR, GÖRAN OLSSON taken from an interview by journalist Alison Young**

Fifteen years ago I was driving from LA to Las Vegas and I stopped for gas and we bought a cassette of Billy Paul. I fell in love with the music. Billy's more than a singer; with his voice he's a composer, arranger and interpreter. Later, back in 'cold and depressing' Sweden, Billy's music helped me deal with troublesome bouts of northern angst. I had all Billy's records on my iPod and it was comforting. I used it as therapy basically.

Billy Paul is best known for his 1972 Grammy award-winning single *Me and Mrs Jones*, and to mainstream audiences for not much else, but this jazz-trained singer with a richly textured and sophisticated voice is regarded by many as one of the most underrated performers of the soul era. Now in his early seventies, with a brace of black music awards and the keys to numerous cities across the States in his pocket, he continues to tour and to run his own label with his wife, Blanche.

The follow up single to *Me and Mrs Jones* was the eponymous *Am I Black Enough For You*. It was a move that, despite his black consciousness, Billy Paul was against, and one that nearly destroyed his career, given the socio-political climate in the US at the time and this is the storyline of the film. Billy had a conflict with the record company and we explore that in the film as a narrative structure.

The record company was Philadelphia International Records, owned by the legendary writing and producing duo Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. Gamble and Huff were very militant; they were friends with Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. They used Billy as a political tool. He wanted to be a popular singer. *Am I Black Enough For You* received almost no radio airplay from nervous radio bosses, and it took until 1974 for Paul to re-enter the Top 40. More recently, in 2003 Kenny Gamble lost a lawsuit to Billy Paul for unpaid royalties, resulting in a payout of half a million dollars. Gamble appears in the film and his relationship with Billy is complicated.

Gamble and Huff sold I think around one hundred million records around '72, '73 and became enormously rich. They started with real estate and things and abandoned the record company and the artists in some ways. It was common in the music industry, it took a long time for artists to know the contract and claim their rights; it's a nasty industry.

I wouldn't say that Kenny Gamble is a crook, but that it's a crooked business. But I respect him. And Billy Paul was not an easy character, he was a wildcat. Involvement in the film has had an influence and they are approaching each other again. They're not enemies anymore, they're over the hurdle and patching things up.



We spent a summer with the Pauls in Philadelphia and followed them on tour to Brazil and Paris, much to the bemusement of Billy and Blanche. Coming from Sweden they thought it was an unlikely thing for us to want to do; we're Swedes, we look so blond and they think we're like Eskimos and they loved that we paid attention to this stuff but he's a smart guy and he understood.

I also wanted to deal with Billy being married to the same woman, who is also his manager, for forty years; their relationship, love and respect. Blanche is very much part of the film, she's very witty, funny and entertaining. The film also features Questlove; producer and drummer with hip hop band, Roots, hip-hop artists Scholly D and Malik B and music industry legend Clive Davis.

Visually, my inspiration was from Bruce Weber's film about Chet Baker, *Let's Get Lost*. I did a very close analysis of Bruce Weber's masterpiece and I took a still image of every single cut in the film and made a montage on the wall. *Let's Get Lost* is black and white, it's in the '50's, it's in California and it's about heroin. We transformed that to the '70's, colour, Philadelphia and cocaine. I wanted to treat it as respectfully as I could. I wanted to make a beautiful film so we shot it on film and we did it all, except for one scene, (where Billy places a gardenia on Billie Holliday's grave) during nighttime because I wanted an intimate, soul feeling to it.

I've tackled more controversial subjects in the past, like that of notorious Swedish rapper, Leila K, but this is basically a fan film. As to whether the finished result fulfilled my aims, I don't know yet. I'm thoroughly happy that I got the opportunity to meet these people and to put light on these beautiful artists. So I'm feeling blessed. I don't care about the rest.



## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**GÖRAN OLSSON** (director) was born in 1965 in Lund, Sweden and educated at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Stockholm. A documentary filmmaker and manufacturer of his own innovation, the A-Cam (a Super-16 film camera) he has travelled the world making films for television since the late 80's. He is editor as well as founder of the short documentary TV programme *Ikon* (SVT). Prior to that, Göran worked on SVT's *Elbyl* series. Göran co-founded Story AB where he makes bold, strong and drastic films like "*Fuck you, fuck you very much*" as well as commercials and music videos.

**JENNY ÖRNBORN** (producer) was born in 1968 in Malmö, Sweden and educated at New York Film Academy following film studies at Stockholm University. An editorial member of the documentary TV-programme *Ikon*, Jenny has worked as a producer at Story AB since 2002 and has also been working as a film critic for the past six years..

**STORY AB** was founded in 1997 and is run by seven documentary filmmakers and producers working in different film-areas. Story produces documentaries for television and cinema and makes international and national productions financed mostly from Film Institutes and Public Service Channels in Europe. Story represents several talented directors and has an ambition to produce personal and inventive films. Story has made shorts, animated and feature documentaries many of which are award winning at International film festivals ie "*Hidden*" by David Aronowitsch and Hanna Heilborn which won Best Shorts at Hot Docs in 2004 and "*Slaves*" which received the Silver Cub at IDFA 2008.



**CREW**

Director

GÖRAN HUGO OLSSON

Producer

JENNY ÖRNBORN

Schnittmeister ANDERS REFN

Editor

GÖRAN HUGO OLSSON

MIA ENGBERG DINO JONSÄTER

Art Director

STEFANIA MALMSTEN

Researchers

KATARINA WÅHLBERG

Sound Design

ESA NISSI/KLAFFI

Additional Sound

ÅSA JACOBSSON

Sound Mix

MEGURU FILM SOUND

Production Assistants:

TIM DAHLBERG JOHN OLSSON

Music Licensing:

ANDERS ENGSTRÖM/PICNIC MUSIC PUBLISHING

Filmlab and Post Production:

NORDISK FILM POST PRODUCTION STOCKHOLM

Co-producer Denmark

HENRIK VEILEBORG/COSMO FILM DOC APS

Co-producer Finland

KIMMO PAANANEN/KLAFFI PRODUCTIONS



**AM I BLACK ENOUGH FOR YOU** PRODUCTION NOTES

Associate Producers  
BEVERLY GAY CHRISTIAN WÅHLBERG

Co-producer  
SVERIGES TELEVISION, SVT STOCKHOLM KULTUR/VERA BONNIER



**AM I BLACK ENOUGH FOR YOU** PRODUCTION NOTES