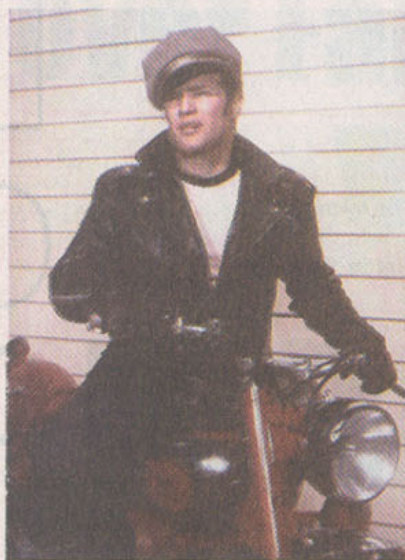


I was very surprised to know that even my children knew one or two of his soulful tunes. Come to think of it, the PBS award-winning show "Sesame Street" used to play Ray Charles' signature tune "Hit the road Jack" to entertain toddlers and parents alike.

The inborn quality of musicianship in him was summed up by someone on a web site: "He was the seminal singer of "soul" music, and no one could phrase a lyric better than Ray Charles. In addition, he was known in the music business as "One Take Ray," because he was known to show up at a recording session and get it exactly right the first time. He was, however, according to an interview with one of the regular sidemen, very tough on his drummers. His fellow musician said, "Ray would drive drummers crazy, because some of his songs are so slow. Drummers never seemed to be able to play slow enough for Ray Charles. I can completely relate. Ray Charles never needed a drummer to keep the beat; he had an internal metronome that was flawless. A good drummer didn't lead Ray Charles. A good drummer followed Ray Charles."

Encomiums for Ray Charles came from many living legends too. The Queen of soul music Aretha Franklin said, "A great soul has gone on. He was a fabulous man, full of humor and wit." Many accomplished vocalists, such as Frank Sinatra referred to Ray Charles as a "genius." Others called him "the greatest pop singer of his generation" and "a true American musical original." The king of the pop-soul genre James Brown also had high praise for Ray Charles. He became very emotional hearing the news of Ray Charles' death when he said, "We lost a genius and we lost my brother. You've lost a cornerstone of good, and that hurts real bad."



Marlon Brando (1924-2004)

Brando was an enigmatic actor, whose rare blend of sensitivity and savagery had brought him acclaim as one of the most powerful actors in American movie industry in the last 50 years. Like his movie persona he was also an icon of defiance in his personal life. He died on July 1, 2004, at the age of 80.

The first movie of Marlon Brando that I ever watched in 1963 or 1964 was "Mutiny on the Bounty." By that time Brando had acted in 11 movies and made a name for him as one of the most emotional heroes of the time. Brando came to Dhaka in the early 1970s and stayed in

Hotel Intercontinental opposite the Sakura Restaurant. A bevy of girls from the Holy Cross College went to see the actor; the thespian chastised the girls telling them that he did not expect all the adulation from them because he thought it was out of character for girls from our region. That was Marlon Brando.

Brando was "sweaty, swaggering, mumbling, wounded, brutish, and beautiful." His naked display of raw emotion in celluloid matched that with his tragedies in personal life. Of Brando Newsweek's cultural observer Jack Kroll wrote in 1994, "That will be Brando's legacy whether he likes or not--the stunning actor who embodied a poetry of anxiety that touched the deepest dynamics of his time and place."

In the postwar movie scene Brando was a new breed of actor who could display a raw soul "that ached with passion but also was unpredictably bestial," as one film critic put it sensibly. Another critic noted that in "The Men"-- Brando's first ever movie--the actor "comes like a blood transfusion into cinema acting." Among the movies he made in the seventies his fans remember his portrayal of mafia chieftain Vito Corleone, who mostly whispered rather than talked, in the movie "The Godfather" and as Army Col. Walter Kurtz, a delusional Vietnam war veteran who symbolizes all the madness that was associated with the war in Indochina in the 1960s.



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