

## **Carol Grimes on African-American music**

It was very early days then of what essentially was this love of African-American music that had swept from, as we said earlier, from the Docks and from American bases, and people had really taken hold of that music, and were listening to you know, early blues, erm, what some people nowadays call roots music. And the desire to want to be around that and play that was very strong with us, but of course we were getting it... certainly the indigenous white Londoners were getting it by proxy really. Um, but there was a wonderment about it, because it was, it was, doing something that wasn't the pop charts. That wasn't... we weren't chasing pop stardom, or um, celebrity. We were just playing music that we loved, and I think there, there's always an element of that in the, in the sort of, I know that say, if you compare it to say fringe, each festival has its fringe. And I think wherever there's a fringe of anything there's an excitement there, because the, it's not the buck you're chasing, it's the thing. So The Race for me was very much about that, about trying things for the first time, and singing songs that really meant something to me. And the... it did strike me later when I recorded a couple of albums in the States, that it was a bit silly for a small what, five foot one white girl to be singing songs written by a seven foot two black guy like Howlin' Wolf. [LAUGHS]. But it was more than the lyric, it was the, it was the substance of it. The fact that it was a calling, the fact that it was a hollering, the fact. It, it did something for me. And then of course I started writing my own songs because I felt a little bit like a fake, and had a crisis of confidence several times thinking, how, you know what am I doing singing this... this is not my music. I should be really singing *My Old Man's a Dustman* or *Come Into The Garden Maud* or whatever, not African-American blues. But then, working on an album in Memphis in the mid-seventies, I had a conversation with a guy called Frederick Knight who was the keyboard player, and had written songs for, Aretha Franklin. And we were all in pu-, their version of a pub, as you do after a session. And I said 'oh god, you know, what am I doing?', and he was amazing cos he said 'look, music floats around the world. Okay. Back-my parents back, were slaves. What were bits of kids in Europe doing when they were down mines, and climbing chimneys? I call that slavery, so come on.' Basically he was saying get over yourself, and do whatever it is you want.