

# Soul Unsigned

**Phil Driver describes how Soul Unsigned's radio show and record label started off from a trip to Tesco.**



***People often ask me where the original idea for Soul Unsigned came from. The answer is that it started with a packet of Nestle breakfast cereal...***

Rewind to 2003, and I'm doing the Sunday morning shop with *Mrs Soul Unsigned*. Something catches my eye on one of the cereal packets.

Nestle were giving away a 30-day free trial of EJAY "Dance 4" – a software package that allowed you to create your own music from a library of 1000s of drum, bass, guitar and vocal samples.

Who could resist an offer like that? Even if the actual cereal in the packet was one of those crappy, tasteless, slimming cereals that simply don't work.

Within a week, I'd lost half a stone, and had already created 10 stunning new dance tracks. I was ready to release my first album!

I decided to call my "band" the Harcombe Boys in homage to Sonny Rollins' classic "Harlem Boys"...and because I used to live in Harcombe Road in Cambridge.

I knew it would be difficult to get the album into HMV, so I searched the internet for somewhere to start promoting it, and maybe even build up an underground *buzz*. That's when I found Soundclick.com – an Internet site chock-full of music from aspiring and unsigned bands.

I soon found that many of the "bands" on Soundclick also shopped at Tesco, and also ate the same crap breakfast cereal. Half of the tracks on Soundclick seemed to use the same EJAY samples as mine, albeit in a different order and a slightly different BPM.

But among all the rubbish tracks, I started to find the occasional gem, from *real* bands who, presumably, ate a different breakfast cereal and didn't need EJAY to create their music for them.

In those days, most of the tracks on Soundclick were free, so I started to download my favourites and began to create my own compilation albums. Over the next couple of years I built up quite a good collection of music from unsigned bands.

Fast forward to the summer of 2007, and I'd just driven to work playing one of my old Soundclick compilations. I was listening to Tony Monson's morning show on Solar and I suddenly realised that much of the unsigned music I'd collected over the years would not be out of place on Solar Radio, or any other soul music station for that matter.

So I put together a new "best of" compilation of some of my favourite unsigned tracks and sent it off to Tony. I basically pitched the idea to him of what has since become the Soul Unsigned show.

The first show aired in November 2007 and the reaction was incredible. Clearly, there's a huge interest among the soul community for music from new and exciting talent.

Six months later, and Soul Unsigned has now extended to being a record label as well as a radio show. The first EP has already featured on Solar's sweet rhythms chart, and is enjoying airplay on other soul stations in the UK, Europe and USA.

MYSPACE has long since replaced Soundclick as my main hunting ground for new talent, but I still look around the Soundclick site from time to time.

Incredibly, some of the tracks that I downloaded several years ago are still up there, and still available as a free download. Check these out –

- Blacklover2000 – Step Song Pt. 1
- Thirdworldproject - Homage
- Raine – I love you

My old EJAY-inspired music is still up there too! Sadly, the Harcombe Boys will never make it into soul music folklore. Maybe, one day, Soul Unsigned will.

**Check out Phil Driver's "Soul Unsigned" show.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month.**



**14:00-16:00 GMT**

**[www.solarradio.com](http://www.solarradio.com)**

**Know any good unsigned soul acts?**

**Send Phil your suggestions to:  
[info@soulunsigned.com](mailto:info@soulunsigned.com)**

**[www.soulunsigned.com](http://www.soulunsigned.com)**