

2000s. Tammi was singing in church by the age of three. "That taught me a lot," she explains. "Especially being in a choir. It helped me learn about harmony and singing in general. I've never had any formal musical training, so being in church every Sunday to sing, as well as choir rehearsals, taught me things I would otherwise never have known."

Soul has been one of the last bastions of the accomplished vocalist in popular music – a once vital quality if you were going to make progress in the industry, but in some ways sacrificed when producer- and technology-driven record-making kicked in from the mid-60s. So many great soul vocalists took their first steps singing in church, naturally absorbing the dynamics of live performance and vocal projection. Did that grounding also help Savoy? "Yes, although I was always very shy," she admits. "I was the last one to project. I was always the one at the back."

She was living in Chicago, with a husband and young daughter, before things started to happen on the performance front, she explains. "I was working in a normal job, but in 2014 I decided to book a photographer and do a pin-up calendar as a present for my husband. The photographer

recommended me to Lance Lipinsky, who had a band in Chicago and was shooting a video for a song. He already had two females and wanted a third to complete the look. Lance sent me the song and I liked it, so he told me to learn it so we could lip sync it in the video. But when I got there, we never lip synched at all. We just sang the song and it was like instant harmony."

Lance Lipinsky and The Lovers specialise in recreating the sounds of the 40s and 50s. As a member of his female vocal group The Lovettes, Savoy found herself growing in confidence.

"I suffered from bad stage fright, but gradually I started to feel more comfortable up there, so we began to expand our routines. Lance would have us doing our own solo songs.

I've been singing with Lance ever since, but also from

there I began to be able to branch out and do my own solo shows."

It helped that Savoy's own love of vintage music went back to childhood family road trips, on which her father played everything from classic 50s rock'n'roll to Motown and deep soul. But the angle she has worked since becoming a performer has involved excavating the work of female R&B singers, who have

tended to get overlooked down the years. "I have a soft spot for the females who didn't get a lot of recognition back in their day," she explains. "I feel like I want to bring them out more, because if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing. They helped pave the way, because it was very difficult for women to do this kind of music with the way things were back then. So it's like I'm paying my respects to them."

Among the names Savoy cites is Annisteen Allen. The song *Fujiyama Mama* is frequently associated with Wanda Jackson, but the original version was recorded by Allen, for Capitol in 1955.

Neither her nor Jackson's cut, for the same label two year later, were hits at the time, but on her rendition Allen shows it's possible to sound tough and impassioned without becoming overly

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Tammi Savoy breathes fresh life into songs by some of her favourite female artists on her debut album with guitarist Chris Casello, *That Rock 'N' Roll Rhythm!*