

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



Charles 'Skip' Pitts was responsible for the unforgettable wah-wah pedal guitar sound on Hayes' "Theme from Shaft."

Guitarist Helped Define Soul

'Theme from Shaft' musician remembered

(AP) — Charles "Skip" Pitts, the longtime guitar player for Isaac Hayes whose distinctive sound helped define soul and make "Shaft" cool, is being remembered after his death from cancer on May 1 at the age of 65.

Pitts was responsible for the unforgettable wah-wah pedal guitar sound on Hayes' "Theme from Shaft," the '70s Blaxploitation film that remains a memorable moment in American popular culture — mostly due to the enduring popularity of

the song.

Pitts' 1971 riff was angry and bristling with menace, capturing a dangerous vibe that transcended the screen and translated to the streets of a tense nation.

He also was responsible the guitar line from The Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing," also a distinctive, influential moment in American music.

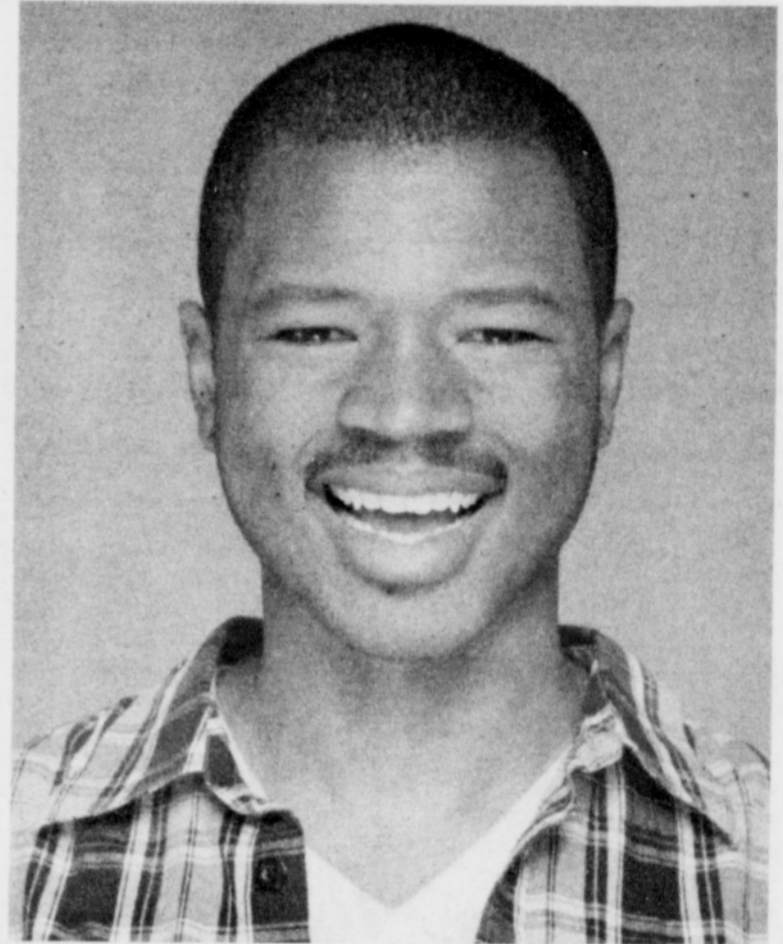
Schooled by neighbor Bo Diddley while growing up in Washington, D.C., Pitts first recorded when he was 15 and had a long, historic run in Memphis after moving there to join Hayes. He played with the deep-voiced soul singer for nearly four decades, worked as a session mu-

sician for Stax Records where some of America's greatest music was made and logged time with many significant soul and blues acts, including Al Green, Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, Rufus Thomas and Albert King.

Late in his career, he made appearances in movies like "Black Snake Moan," to which he also contributed three soundtrack entries, and "Soul Men" and performed on the score for "Hustle and Flow."

Most recently he appeared on Green's "I Can't Stop" and Cyndi Lauper's "Memphis Blues," both of which were nominated for Grammy Awards. He also released an album last fall with his band The Bo-Keys.

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