THE COMPLETE MOTOWN SINGLES

VOLUME 11B: 1971

THE COMPLETE MOTOWN SINGLES

VOLUME 11B: 1971

Hitsville U.S.A.
THE MOTOWN SOUND

JUST MY IMAGINATION
BY SCOTT REGAN 4

REMEMBER HOW YOU GOT WHERE YOU ARE
BY DR. ANDREW FLORY 12

DISC 61 20

DISC 62 34

DISC 63 52

DISC 64 72

DISC 65 90

THE INDEXES 108

REMEMBER HOW YOU GOT WHERE YOU ARE

In 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders presented a much-anticipated study of the declining inner cities of America. As a reaction to the series of riots that had plagued various urban centers including Detroit, Los Angeles and Newark in the years prior, this famous “Kerner Report” found that white racism was one of the primary causes of the exploding tension in black neighborhoods. The fact that President Johnson had even commissioned the report was a sign of how dire the racial situation in America’s cities had become.

More than three years later, in September 1971, a group called the National Urban Coalition released an update on the findings of the Kerner Report. The results were chilling. With Detroit as one of the six cities specifically under investigation, the Coalition found that none of the original suggestions from the Kerner Commission had been implemented. Furthermore, the report predicted, “if this trend continues at its present rate—and if racism continues—most cities by 1980 will be predominately black and brown, and totally bankrupt.”

The Temptations

In line with these findings, the neighborhood surrounding 2648 West Grand Boulevard was starting to take a toll on those who lived and worked in the Motor City. Furthermore, it was clear that the social atmosphere was not the only thing that had changed in Detroit. The music coming out of Motown was much different than it had been during the sixties. Optimistic songs about young love anchored by the "Motown Beat" were few and far between. The plug-side hits that did sound like old Motown were now mostly being produced in Los Angeles. In this light, there was irony dripping from the opening line of the Temptations' October 1971 release "Superstar (Remember How You Got Where You Are)," when Dennis Edwards sang "don't change your style now that you've reached the top."

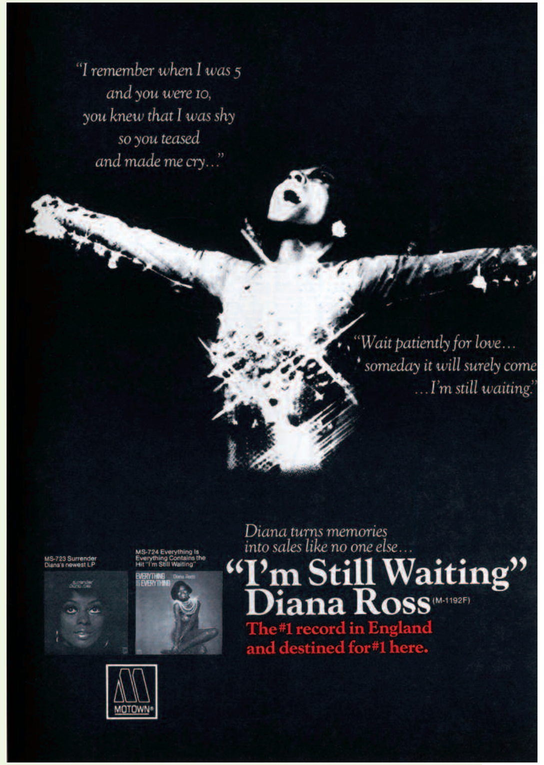
Motown's biggest hits of late 1971 were largely in a stylistic gray zone between The Sound Of Young America and the mature Los Angeles sound to follow from artists like Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and Diana Ross. The struggle to find a new direction, and the beginning of a new era of self-produced artists, had led to a lack of fresh material. Accordingly, during this transitional period there was a notable dependence on older, reworked songs. This type of recycling had always been a part of the Motown business model, but it started to become much more apparent in late 1971 when fewer newly composed songs appeared on the upper reaches of the record charts.

Eddie Kendricks, the Temptations, the Undisputed Truth and the Originals each had A-sides plucked from the Jobete catalog. In September the Elgins' 1966 classic "Heaven Must Have Sent You" was re-released in the U.K. to great success, and subsequently in the U.S. as well, but without similar results. One of Motown's two Christmas singles was Stevie Wonder's "What Christmas Means To Me," which he had recorded four years earlier. This would be the last Wonder record before *Music Of My Mind* hit the shelves in early 1972.

HEAVEN MUST HAVE SENT YOU
(Holland, Dozier, Holland)
V.I.P.®
V 25065F
© 1966 Jobete Music Co., Inc., BMI
H-I-V-206317
Produced by Brian Holland & Lamont Dozier
Time: 2:31
THE ELGINS
In Album "DARLING BABY" VS 400
A TRADEMARK OF MOTOWN RECORD CORP. © 1971

TAMLA
®
T 54214F
© 1967 Jobete Music Co. Inc., BMI
FD-SU-378M11
Time: 2:30
Prod. By: Harvey Fuqua & Johnny Bristol
Arr. By: Willie Shorter
In album "Someday At Christmas" TS 281
WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME
(H. Gordy, A. Gaye, A. Story)
STEVIE WONDER
A TRADEMARK OF MOTOWN RECORD CORP. © 1971

Perhaps the most fascinating recycling was the two-part "MacArthur Park" single by the Four Tops. While it did not sell exceptionally well, their version of Richard Harris's 1968 hit encapsulated Motown's struggles with both stylistic and geographic identity. Recorded three years earlier in November 1968, this track originally served as filler on the 1969 album *Four Tops Now!* (In keeping with the re-use theme, the entire album was re-released in 1971 with new cover art as *MacArthur Park*.) Clocking in at about six minutes, the two parts of this extended dramatic piece were unlike anything Motown had ever released as a single, and certainly anathema to those who cherished the dance-oriented Motown of the past. It was also a song that romanticized Motown's soon-to-be home of Los Angeles.


"I remember when I was 5
and you were 10,
you knew that I was shy
so you teased
and made me cry..."
"Wait patiently for love...
someday it will surely come
...I'm still waiting."
MS-723 Surrender
Diana's newest LP
MS-724 Everything Is Everything Contains the Hit "I'm Still Waiting"
Diana turns memories
into sales like no one else...
"I'm Still Waiting"
Diana Ross (M-1192F)
The #1 record in England
and destined for #1 here.
MOTOWN

Surprisingly, the Tops' "MacArthur Park" did not get a U.K. single release. Instead, the group recorded "A Simple Game," written by Mike Pinder of the Moody Blues (who backed them on the record) and produced by Tony Clarke. In September 1971 Tamla Motown released it as a single in the U.K. and scored a massive hit. This marked a first, as the label had made a practice of picking U.S. album tracks and old 45s and turning them into hits in the U.K., but never before had it recorded a Motown act especially for the British market. Meanwhile, Motown waited until 1972 to release "A Simple Game" in the United States, where it peaked at No. 34 on the *Billboard* Best-Selling Soul Singles chart and barely broke into the Hot 100, illustrating how far British and American attitudes toward Motown had diverged by this time.

Similarly, in summer 1971 British disc jockey Tony Blackburn obsessively began to spin "I'm Still Waiting," an earlier album track by Diana Ross. Released as a single in the U.K., it spent four weeks at the national No. 1 spot. When finally released as a single in the U.S., "Waiting" did not repeat its U.K. success in the way that "The Tears Of A Clown" by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles topped the charts in both countries the year before.

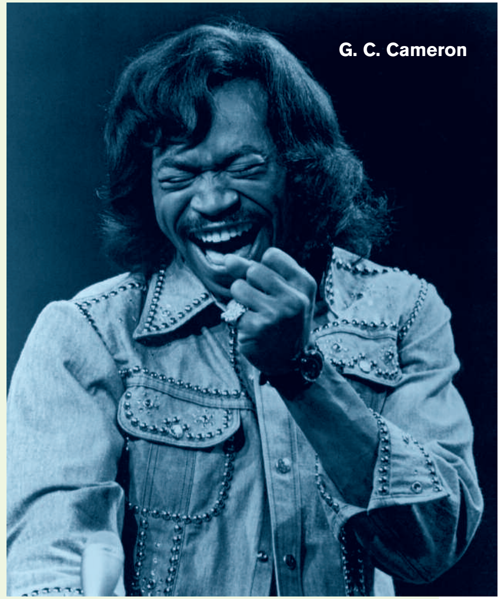
The divergence was equally marked in 1971 by the London publication of the first serious critical appreciation of the company and its music, *Motown & The Arrival of Black Music* by David Morse, published by the tiny but prestigious Studio Vista imprint. Always lagging in appreciation of its black music, the United States would not see its own book-length study of Motown until the end of the decade. The attention in magazines was also greater in Britain, notably in the candid interviews with Motown artists that appeared in almost every issue of the bi-monthly magazine *Blues & Soul*. Coverage in American magazines like *Crawdaddy!* and *Creem*, had been sporadic. *Rolling Stone* had named the Jackson 5 “Group of the Year” at the end of 1970, and followed with a cover story on Michael Jackson in April 1971. In May it published a lengthy article about the 5-LP box set *The Motown Story* that included an in-depth review each from Vince Aletti and Jon Landau. By mid-1971 Motown releases began to appear with regularity in the rock press. By the end of the year Rolling Stone was in preparation for its first formal interview piece, “A Visit With Marvin Gaye.”

In accordance with the company’s increasing focus on the West Coast, Motown’s stake in the larger entertainment field expanded during this time. In December, shooting finally began for the feature film *Lady Sings The Blues*, which incorporated into its production a bevy of Motown personnel. On television, the company’s youth-oriented hit-makers, the Jackson 5, were the stars of a prime-time ABC-TV special called *Goin’ Back to Indiana*, which included appearances by Bill Cosby, Elgin Baylor, Bill Russell and Tommy Smothers. The Jackson brothers were also the focus of a new ABC network cartoon, *The Jackson 5ive*, which premiered in September and ran for more than 20 episodes over two seasons. Michael’s role as the leader of the group was confirmed in these television appearances, and supported with the release of “Got To Be There,” which became the first Jackson family solo single to hit the shelves.

Michael Jackson
Got To Be There

Several groups that were at the center of Motown’s hit-making machine in the sixties showed signs of wear during the final half of 1971. Martha Reeves and the Vandellas continued to struggle on the charts, having failed to make it into the Top 20 for the last four years. Similarly, Jr. Walker’s otherwise excellent singles “Take Me Girl, I’m Ready” and “Way Back Home” received a lukewarm reception from record buyers. Even the Miracles were readying Smokey Robinson’s departure from the group after a series of mediocre releases. And the Supremes, who led the Motown cavalcade in 1964, quietly scored the group’s last Top 20 hit with “Floy Joy.”

As the Supremes saw the slow commercial decline of their latest incarnation, Motown also closed the chapter on a lingering issue tied to the original group. In February 1971, Florence Ballard, feeling she had been ousted from the group in 1967 through what was termed “fraud and conspiracy,” had sued Berry Gordy and the company for more than $8 million. Michigan’s Wayne County Court ruled against her in October 1971. The messy split with Ballard, coupled with the exit of Paul Williams from the Temptations, illustrated the extent to which departures by artists foundational to the company’s success were becoming an unfortunate part of business as usual at Motown.


G. C. Cameron

Though Motown was seeing a decline in popularity with its African-American base, several recordings from this time showcased Motown’s attempts to court the evolving soul and gospel markets. On the new MoWest imprint, former Spinner G. C. Cameron’s “Act Like a Shotgun”—with behind-the-scenes help from Hal Davis, Willie Hutch and Gene Page—exhibited a solid funk groove. The company also saw the brief return of early Motown staffer Richard “Popcorn” Wylie, whose “Funky Rubber Band” appeared on the Soul label. Motown also released a gospel compilation called *Rock Gospel: The Key to The Kingdom*, full of contributions from a diverse cross-section of the company’s artists, including Valerie Simpson, Blinky, Impact of Brass, and Stoney and Meatloaf. The Bobby Taylor song “Hey Lordy,” released as a single in November on MoWest, had its origins in this set.

Other eclectic singles to fall under the radar from this period included a collection of rock tracks, spoken word releases and some revered gems, including rare treasures by Bobby Darin, Thelma Houston and Virgil Henry. The second single released on Motown by Darin could not have been more different from the first, “Melodie,” which was released in the first part of the year. Culled from his unreleased debut album *Live At The Desert Inn*, the self-penned topical song “Sing A Simple Song Of Freedom” and his cover of Bob Dylan’s “I’ll Be Your Baby Tonight” offer a splendid portrait of Darin’s country sound during his fascinating late period. Houston's MoWest debut is also an infrequently discussed classic. Her version of Chris Clark's 1967 song "I Want to Go Back There Again," with its commanding vocal performance and virtuosic bass work, explains Motown's interest in a singer who had already released more than half a dozen poor-selling singles on Dunhill. Henry's November release on Tamla, a pickup from the Colossus label, included two songs that have since become Northern Soul favorites, "I Can't Believe You're Really Leaving" and "You Ain't Sayin' Nothin' New," which both feature lush orchestral textures endemic to the emerging Philly Soul sound.

Marvin Gaye

Virgil Henry's record served as a stark reminder that Motown's hegemony in the field of black crossover was effectively coming to an end. Though Norman Whitfield was dominant in the industry as both a songwriter and producer during 1971, there were many other important acts on the rise. Former Motown stalwarts Holland, Dozier and Holland scored the first No. 1 pop hit on their Hot Wax label in June with Honey Cone's "Want Ads." Isaac Hayes' funky orchestral arrangements ushered in a new blaxploitation soundtrack genre as his "Theme From Shaft" hit the top of the charts in late November. (Marvin Gaye would follow suit the next year with the less successful *Trouble Man.*) And at the end of the year Sly and the Family Stone saw their single "Family Affair" and its parent album *There's A Riot Goin' On* hit No. 1 as well.

This wide success by black artists in the pop field did not go unnoticed by the music industry. For one, James Brown went corporate in July 1971, leaving the independent King Records out of Cincinnati to sign with Polydor. Much more important, however, was a study commissioned by Columbia Records and administered by the Business School at Harvard. Conducted during the last half of 1971, this study, better known as the "Harvard Report," would change the trajectory of black-based pop music by singling out R&B as an untapped market sector and urging major music corporations to invest heavily in the future of this music. After the completion of this study, Columbia secured distribution deals with Kenneth Gamble and Leon Huff's Philadelphia International Records and the Isley Brothers' T-Neck imprint.

In light of the drastic societal and musical changes to occur in 1971, Motown only released one song during the latter half of the year to comment directly on the crumbling ghettos of America: Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues (Makes Me Wanna Holler)." This was also the only song released by the company during the last six months of 1971 to top the *Billboard* Soul singles chart. The stark conflict between the subject matter and Gaye's easygoing falsetto makes this one of the most memorable tracks of the entire Detroit Era. Furthermore, as the finale of the *What's Going On* LP this piece marks the culmination of the album's concept. After the question raised in the opening title track is deconstructed over the course of two album sides, Marvin's "Blues" concludes that the problems facing the "Inner City" form a circular set of issues. This is evidenced even more fully on the LP with a reprise of "What's Going On."

Though in much different modalities, the views of Gaye and the National Urban Coalition were in lockstep concerning the urban crisis facing America. These were immense problems, and there was no easy solution. Unfortunately, the resounding echoes of the inner city were lost in the back pages of newspapers during the last half of 1971 while the unpopular war in Vietnam and President Nixon's announcement of a breakthrough in Chinese diplomacy were at the fore of the national consciousness.

Nevertheless, the continuing changes to Detroit were a crucial factor in the daily lives of those who were high in the ranks at Motown. As his father had moved to Detroit from Sandersville, Georgia nearly 50 years before in search of greater business opportunities, Berry Gordy also had his eye on moving away from his home base. This time, however, the goal was to depart the Motor City to allow Motown's new entertainment ventures to prosper. It would remain to be seen how the company's music would change without the support of Detroit and its unique cultural landscape.

—Andrew Flory

Dr. Flory is Assistant Professor of Music History at the Shenandoah Conservatory. He has taught courses about, and written widely on, many different aspects of American popular music. His book I Hear a Symphony: Listening to the Music of Motown *is forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press.*