



American jazz pianist and composer Jelly Roll Morton plays piano with his band The Red Hot Peppers, ca. 1926. The band featured trombonist Kid Ory, drummer William Laws, bassist John Lindsay, banjo player Johnny St. Cyr, and clarinetist Omer Simeon. (Metronome/Getty Images)

perspective on the history of jazz. The recording was eventually issued for the first time in 1948 under the title, *The Collected Piano Music: Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton* and is regarded by many as an invaluable oral history and criticism of jazz.

In addition to his musical talents, Morton also remains known for losing several fortunes through gambling, pool hustling, boxing promotion, and a failed investment in the cosmetics industry. Throughout his entire life, Morton was a notorious braggart and self-promoter, a characteristic that helped spread his name in the music world, but ultimately tarnished his reputation. Shortly before his death, he publicly denied a claim that W. C. Handy (1873–1958) was the originator of jazz and the blues, boasting that he had created jazz in 1902. Consequently, critics and fans ceased to take his music seriously, and Morton died in poverty and relative obscurity in Los Angeles in 1941. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in his music, and he has been credited as one of the first significant arrangers in jazz.

See also: Blues; Jazz; Vaudeville and Burlesque

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Ann Torrusio

Motown

Motown Records was an African American-owned independent record company formed in Detroit, Michigan, in 1959 by Berry Gordy Jr. Motown became the most successful independent record company in the world during the 1960s, releasing music in an R&B style that was simultaneously popular in multiple markets.

Important Motown artists included The Supremes (active 1959–1977), Mary Wells (1943–1992), The Miracles (active 1955–1983, 1993–present), Marvin Gaye (1939–1984), The Temptations (active 1960–present), Stevie Wonder (1950–), and the Jackson 5 (active 1964–1990). After moving to Los Angeles in the early 1970s, Motown branched into the film industry, and the company's most important creative teams disbanded. The core of Motown's creative enterprise was sold to Boston Ventures in 1988. Universal Music currently owns the Motown label.

Berry Gordy (1929–) opened a jazz record store called the 3-D Record Mart in 1953 financed with a combination of army discharge pay, a \$700 loan from his father, and help from his partner and brother, George (Gordy 1994). The record shop was located in a city block that was also home to several Gordy family businesses, including a grocery and print shop. The eventual failure of the 3-D Record Mart did not shake Gordy's interest in working in the music industry. Instead, it compelled him to focus on the business of making music, rather than selling directly to consumers. In 1957 Gordy began to work with Detroit club owner Al Green, who managed nationally known artists Johnnie Ray (1927–1990) and LaVern Baker (1929–1997). Gordy worked as a writing partner with his sister Anna (1922–) and Roquel "Billy" Davis (1932–2004; also known as Tyran Carlo) and began to pitch songs to Green. Several original songs by this partnership became national hits for singer Jackie Wilson (1934–1984), the most famous of which were "Reet Petite" (1957) and "Lonely Teardrops" (1957). Despite his success, Gordy was frustrated by his lack of financial reward. According to common lore, this is what motivated him to form Motown.

In January 1959 Gordy started his own record label, Tamla Records, with an \$800 loan from his family's cooperative savings fund. During the next several years, Gordy signed many Detroit-based artists to recording and management contracts, including The Miracles, The Supremes, The Temptations, The Marvelettes (active 1960–1972), Mary Wells, and Marvin Gaye. The first record Gordy released was "Come to Me" by Marv Johnson (1938–1993), on February 18, 1959. In September 1959, with the release of The Miracles' "Bad Girl," Gordy changed the company name to Motown and launched the label of the same name. At about the same time, Gordy released Barrett Strong's (1941–) "Money" on the Anna label (owned by his sister and Billy Davis), which achieved national popularity. The next year, in October 1960, The Miracles' "Shop Around" marked the beginning of Motown's national presence in the recording industry.

Motown had a range of popular artists during the early 1960s, including both male and female groups and

male and female solo vocalists. Male groups typically performed in the doo-wop tradition of vocal ensembles that used choreography backed by a separate group of musicians. Motown groups of this type were The Miracles (which included one female member until 1964), who had two major hits, "Shop Around" (1960) and "You've Really Got a Hold on Me" (1962), and The Contours (active 1959–1968, 1971–present), who released "Do You Love Me" (1962). The Marvelettes were the company's most popular female group, and they participated in the "girl group" movement along with non-Motown groups such as The Shirelles (active 1958–1982) and The Ronettes (active 1959–1966). Songs recorded by girl groups typically featured call and response vocals and texts that reflected the travails of teenage girls. Important Marvelettes songs of the early 1960s include "Please, Mr. Postman" (1961) and "Playboy" (1962). Marvin Gaye was a popular male solo vocalist at Motown, releasing "Stubborn Kind of Fellow" (1962) and "Hitch Hike" (1962). Female vocalist Mary Wells was the company's most popular artist during the early 1960s, with hits such as "Bye Bye Baby" (1960), "The One Who Really Loves You" (1962), "You Beat Me to the Punch" (1962), "Two Lovers" (1962), and "My Guy" (1964). Music performed by African American artists that was popular with both white and black teenagers became Motown's hallmark. Between January 1959 and December 1962, Motown artists released nearly thirty songs that reached the top 40 of either the national pop or R&B charts. More than half of these songs achieved this feat simultaneously on both charts, a feat known as "crossover."

The hub of Motown's operation was the company headquarters at 2648 West Grand Boulevard, which was christened "Hitsville U.S.A." with a large sign, and several adjacent buildings. During the formative years of Motown a creative process emerged that employed the use of dedicated songwriters, producers, studio musicians, arrangers, studio engineers, professional and personal development specialists, and a quality control board. This process has famously been dubbed an "assembly line," akin to the way cars were put together in Detroit's many automobile plants (Smith 1999). The most important songwriters and producers during the early Motown period were Berry Gordy and William "Smokey" Robinson (1940–), the lead singer of The Miracles. The studio band, which played background tracks for all Motown recordings, was comprised of a rotating group of musicians that called themselves the Funk Brothers (Justman 2003). Arrangers such as Paul Riser (1936–) and Gene Page (1940–1998) worked with the Funk Brothers and created arrangements for strings and horns to augment backing tracks. Gordy later employed choreographer Cholly



Smokey Robinson, left, expresses his surprise and delight midway through his performance as he is joined by friend and fellow entertainer Berry Gordy at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles, June 15, 1981. Gordy is president and founder of Motown Records, for which Robinson has recorded since the early 1960s. (AP Photo)

Atkins (1913–2003) and etiquette coach Maxine Powell (1924–) to help refine Motown artists into mainstream entertainment figures.

With a basic business structure in place, Motown's popularity increased exponentially throughout the remainder of the 1960s, making the company the most powerful and profitable black-owned company in America (Early 2004). The level, diffusion, and swiftness of Motown's success can be seen in the example of The Supremes. After releasing four moderately successful singles in 1962 and 1963, this girl group saw twelve of their next fourteen singles reach the top 10 of both the R&B and pop charts from 1964 through the summer of 1967. (Six of these songs went to number one on both charts.) In mid-1965 The Supremes appeared on the cover of both *Time* and *Ebony* magazines, representing their widespread appeal in American culture. As the most important girl group of the 1960s, The Supremes were Motown's most popular group of the decade.

The Motown songwriting and production team of Brian Holland (1941–), Lamont Dozier (1941–), and Edward Holland Jr. (1939–) was the dominant creative force at Motown during a six-year period in the mid-1960s (George 2007). The team wrote and produced hit songs for The Supremes, including “Where Did Our Love Go”

(1964), “Baby Love” (1964), “Stop! In the Name of Love” (1965), “I Hear a Symphony” (1965), “You Can't Hurry Love” (1966), and “You Keep Me Hangin' On” (1966). Another girl group, Martha and the Vandellas (active 1962–1972), created a number of hit songs with the Holland, Dozier, and Holland team, including “Heat Wave” (1963), “Quicksand” (1963), “Nowhere to Run” (1965), and “Jimmy Mack” (1967). Another notable Martha and the Vandellas single, “Dancing in the Street” (1964), was written by the team of William “Mickey” Stevenson, Ivy Hunter, and Marvin Gaye. Holland, Dozier, and Holland also worked closely with the Four Tops, writing and producing “I Can't Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch)” (1965), “It's the Same Old Song” (1965), and “Reach Out (I'll Be There)” (1966). Holland, Dozier, and Holland left Motown in 1968 after a dispute over royalties. During their time with Motown, the team collaborated on more than fifty songs that appeared in the top 40 of either the pop or R&B charts.

During the mid-1960s Norman Whitfield (1940–2008) and Barrett Strong (1941–) also formed a successful songwriting and production team, which became the most prominent creative force at Motown after the departure of Holland, Dozier, and Holland. Whitfield collaborated with lyricist Eddie Holland in 1966 on “Ain't Too Proud to Beg” and “Beauty Is Only Skin Deep” for The Temptations before beginning his long partnership with Strong. Obtaining creative control over The Temptations from Smokey Robinson, who had written “My Girl” (1964) with fellow Miracle Ronald White (1939–1995), Whitfield and Strong produced dozens of hits for The Temptations over the course of the next decade, including “I Wish It Would Rain” (1967), “Cloud Nine” (1968), “I Can't Get Next to You” (1969), “Just My Imagination (Running Away with Me)” (1971), and “Papa Was a Rollin' Stone” (1972). Whitfield and Strong also worked closely with Gladys Knight and the Pips (active 1953–1989), who signed with Motown in 1965, writing and producing “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” (1967), “Friendship Train” (1969), and “The Nitty Gritty” (1969). Knight and the Pips worked with other Motown creative teams after 1970, releasing “If I Were Your Woman” (1970) and “Neither One of Us Wants to Be the First to Say Good-bye” (1973).

Other Motown artists worked with various teams during the mid-1960s to create popular recordings. Junior Walker and the All Stars recorded a series of upbeat dance songs that featured the screaming saxophone of Walker. These included “Shotgun” (1965), “(I'm a) Road Runner” (1966), and “What Does It Take (to Win Your Love)” (1969). Stevie Wonder emerged in 1963 with the improvisational “Fingertips, Part 1,” and went on to record some of Motown's funkier music of

the 1960s, including "Uptight (Everything's Alright)" (1966), "I Was Made to Love Her" (1967), "For Once in My Life" (1968), "My Cherie Amor" (1969), and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" (1970). Marvin Gaye also made a long string of popular recordings during the mid-1960s, including "Pride and Joy" (1963), "How Sweet It Is to Be Loved by You" (1965), "I'll Be Dog-gone" (1965), and "Ain't That Peculiar" (1965). Gaye's most notable release of the 1960s as a solo artist was his version of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" (1968), which competed for popularity with the Gladys Knight and the Pips version, eventually becoming Motown's most successful single to date. Gaye also worked as a duet vocalist throughout the 1960s, releasing collaborations with Mary Wells, Kim Weston (1939–), and Tammi Terrell (1945–1970). Released between 1967 and 1970, Gaye and Terrell duets such as "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" (1967), "Your Precious Love" (1967), "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing Baby" (1968), and "You're All I Need to Get By" (1968) were the most popular of Gaye's duet recordings. Many of these songs were written and produced by the team of Nickolas Ashford (1942–) and Valerie Simpson (1946–). Other important Motown artists of the mid-1960s included the Elgins (active 1950s–1967), Kim Weston, The Isley Brothers (active 1954–present), Shorty Long (1940–1969), Jimmy Ruffin (1939–), the Spinners (active 1961–present), and The Velvelettes.

Motown became the most successful independent record company in the world in the mid-1960s, placing a high number of its releases on national charts and breaking into the entertainment mainstream as no African American-owned company had previously done (Werner 2006). The company also began to court international audiences during the mid-1960s. In 1965 EMI began to distribute Motown records internationally (under the name Tamla-Motown), giving Motown an official commercial presence outside of the United States. On July 29, 1965, The Supremes was the first of many Motown acts in the next decade to perform at New York City's famous Copacabana nightclub, which is evidence of Motown's acceptance by the adult, white mainstream. Other Motown artists also frequented supper clubs in the last half of the 1960s, including The Temptations, The Miracles, and Marvin Gaye. Motown began to branch into other forms of media late in the decade, which helped to improve the company's appeal to older audiences. The company produced a television special in 1968 that ran on NBC, called *TCB* (or *Taking Care of Business*), which was a vehicle for The Supremes and The Temptations. A follow-up called *GIT* (*Getting it Together*) aired on NBC in 1969.

The company worked successfully from its Detroit home throughout the 1960s, but due to Gordy's growing success and interest in other forms of commercial media, the company gradually moved to Los Angeles between 1968 and 1971. The last of the successful groups produced using the creative model of the 1960s, "assembly line" approach was Jackson 5. Working out of both Detroit and Los Angeles, Jackson 5 released four singles in 1969 and 1970 that reached the top of both the pop and R&B charts, including "I Want You Back" (1969), "ABC" (1970), "The Love You Save" (1970), and "I'll Be There" (1970). Jackson 5 also benefited from Gordy's growing interest in television. The group was featured in a prime-time special and a Saturday morning cartoon, which contributed greatly to its musical popularity.

The move to Los Angeles caused a change in both administrative and creative personnel, dramatically altering Motown's creative output (Ward 1998). Although Motown artists had been featured regularly in television specials, after moving to Los Angeles Gordy became more involved in the film industry. Films with heavy Motown involvement during the next two decades included *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972), *Mahogany* (1973), *The Wiz* (1978), *Thank God It's Friday* (1978), and *The Last Dragon* (1985). Diana Ross was the center of Motown's interest in film and was featured in leading roles in, and also provided substantial sound track material for, *Lady Sings the Blues*, *Mahogany*, and *The Wiz*. The westward move coincided with the departure of Ross from The Supremes in 1970. Other iconic 1960s Motown groups also lost key members during the move west. The Temptations saw the departure of David Ruffin in 1968 and Eddie Kendricks in 1971. Smokey Robinson left The Miracles in 1972. In all of these cases, both the original groups (with replacement members) and the departed vocalists still recorded for Motown. Kendricks's most popular single after his departure from The Temptations was "Keep on Truckin'" (1973), while Robinson released singles such as "Baby That's Backatcha" (1975), "Cruisin'" (1979), and "Being with You" (1981).

Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye continued to release extremely well-received recordings throughout the 1970s, arguably outshining their output from the Detroit period (Neal 1999). Beginning in 1971 with the album *Where I'm Coming From*, Wonder took control over his own productions and released a string of albums and singles that are among the most important albums of the Motown catalog. The albums *Music of My Mind* (1972), *Talking Book* (1972), *Innervisions* (1973), *Fulfillingness' First Finale* (1974), and *Songs in the Key of Life* (1976) each reached the top of the R&B album charts while achieving similar popularity

in mainstream markets. Wonder's singles from this period, including "Superstition" (1972), "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" (1973), "I Wish" (1977), and "Sir Duke" (1977), blended funky synthesizer performances with highly structured songwriting and virtuosic vocals. Similarly, Marvin Gaye took a more active creative role in his music at the beginning of the 1970s and produced a series of important albums, including *What's Going On* (1971), *Trouble Man* (1972), and *Let's Get It On* (1973). Gaye singles from the period included "What's Going On" (1971), "Mercy Mercy Me (the Ecology)" (1971), "Inner City Blues (Makes Me Wanna Holler)" (1971), "Trouble Man" (1972), and "Let's Get It On" (1973), which blended social commentary with a newfound sexual identity that reflects the context of Los Angeles in the 1970s.

Important new Motown artists during the 1970s and 1980s included The Commodores (active 1968–present), Rick James (1948–2004), Teena Marie (1956–2010), and DeBarge (active 1979–1989). The Commodores was originally a funk group, known for singles in the style of "Brick House" (1977), but slowly the ballad singing of saxophonist Lionel Richie came to define the group. Richie's songs "Just to Be Close to You" (1976), "Easy" (1977), "Three Times a Lady" (1978), and "Still" (1979) were among the most popular R&B ballads of the decade. James released a series of funk-oriented albums and singles between 1978 and the late 1980s, including "You and I" (1978), "Super Freak (Part 1)" (1981), and "Cold Blooded" (1983). James was also active as a songwriter and producer, working with artists such as Teena Marie and the Mary Jane Girls. Following the Motown principle of appealing to multiple markets, each of these artists appealed to both pop and R&B audiences. Motown was, however, much more successful in the black market during the 1970s, and company profits came more and more from long-play albums rather than seven-inch singles.

During the 1970s and 1980s Motown's business structure changed dramatically. In January 1973 Berry Gordy stepped down as president of Motown Records, leaving this post to former sales head Ewart Abner (1923–1998), and appointed himself the new head of Motown Industries, which included the company's substantial film and television production arm. Motown's once-consistent role in the creative process slowly waned during the mid-1970s. By the end of the decade there were few at Motown (both administrative and creative), including many of the label's best-known artists, who had been with the company during the formidable Detroit years. Gordy continued to run Motown until 1988, when he sold the company to Boston Ventures for \$61 million. After that the company changed hands twice: Polygram bought Motown in 1993, and Polygram

subsequently merged with Universal Music in 1998 (upon the acquisition of Polygram by Seagrams). Jobete, the publishing arm of Motown, was sold in pieces over the course of seven years, from 1997 to 2004. In 1997 EMI bought half of the publishing rights to the Jobete catalog for a reported \$132 million; in the spring of 2003 it raised its stake to 80 percent, at the cost of an additional \$109 million; and Gordy sold his final holdings in April 2004 for a reported \$80 million. Under the label Universal/Motown, Universal continues to release both classic Motown and music by new artists such as Boyz II Men (active 1988–present), Brian McKnight (1969–), Erykah Badu (1971–), and India Arie (1975–).

See also: African American Influences on American Music; African American Women's Influences on American Music; Badu, Erykah; Commercial Successes in Music; Crossovers; Film Music; Funk and Postpsychedelic Funk; Gaye, Marvin; Jackson Family; Pop Music; R&B; Rock 'n' Roll (Rock); Soul; Studio Musicians; Television Variety Shows; Women in American Music; Wonder, Stevie

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Andrew Flory