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SOUNDS AND THE CITY
Popular Music, Place, and Globalization

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Sounds and the City

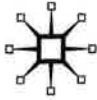
Popular Music, Place, and Globalization

Edited by

Brett Lashua, Karl Spracklen, and Stephen Wagg

Carnegie Faculty, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK

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Tamla Motown in the UK: Transatlantic Reception of American Rhythm and Blues

Andrew Flory

British consumption of African American music grew precipitously after the Second World War. As distinct British youth cultures emerged, groups such as the mods appropriated Jamaican blue beat and American rhythm and blues (R&B). Many American record companies took on mythical identities in this context, and came to play a large role in British reception of American music. The most important of these in British culture was Tamla Motown (known simply as Motown in American parlance), which originated as a refined form of African American R&B in Detroit, Michigan.

In 1959, Berry Gordy, Jr founded the Motown record company. Gordy was a middle-class African American man, the seventh of eight children in a prominent Detroit family that owned and managed local, black-oriented insurance, construction, printing, and grocery businesses. Having written successful songs for singer Jackie Wilson, Gordy was well versed in Tin Pan Alley, vernacular forms like blues and boogie-woogie, modern jazz, and myriad other forms of American popular music. The company experimented with a wide range of other American musical idioms from 1959 to 1962, when Motown was largely a regional entity. An early discography comprised of jazz, gospel, and mainstream pop, alongside raunchy and refined R&B, showed a strong connection between the values and interests of Detroit's black middle class and the music produced by Gordy. Among this experimentation, a form R&B that appealed to mainstream audiences emerged as Motown's best-known style during the early 1960s.

The reception of Motown in British culture offers a fascinating case of transatlantic cultural dialogue beginning in the 1960s that continues to the present day. Motown entered the British market in stages between 1960 and 1965. As interest in Motown blossomed during the early 1960s, original American recordings were scarce in the UK, and a culture of both live and recorded reinterpretation (or 'covering') developed among British artists.

Between 1963 and 1965, Motown slowly established business relationships within the British entertainment industry, culminating in a large-scale tour of the UK in May and June 1965. Much of the work of Motown during this period was supported by the activities of the Tamla Motown Appreciation Society, which actively promoted knowledge about African American music and artists through member events and newsletters. During the late 1960s, a distinct strain of Motown reception developed in the working-class north, centred on Manchester. Activities related to the reception of Motown largely folded into the movement of dancing, record collection, and fandom known as 'Northern Soul'. In the context of Northern Soul and a doggedly British culture of record collecting, Motown has remained a vibrant element of British culture for the past half century.

British youth culture and the emergence of R&B

Before World War II, the reception of black music in British society occurred mainly through society fads that popularized forms such as the concert spiritual and dance-oriented jazz. During two important tours of the UK during the 1870s, the Fisk Jubilee Singers became the 'biggest sensation of the Victorian period', according to Michael Pickering (1990, p. 30). In the introduction to his edited collection of essays on black music in Britain, Paul Oliver (1990) also discusses the rise of minstrelsy imported from the US and dance band music that stemmed from African American musicians and bandleaders. Big band jazz made its mark on British society in the late 1910s with the arrival of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra (Rye, 2009).¹ A study of British interest in American blues by Roberta Freund Schwartz (2007a) traces the history of African American imports in Britain, beginning with jazz recordings in the late 1910s and touring jazz musicians in the 1920s. Oliver (1990) makes it clear that, in spite of the diverse listenership in the UK at this time, the majority of these audiences were comprised of white listeners. Moreover, 'over a span of more than a century', he writes, 'the majority of black artists who performed on the public stage in Britain were from the USA' (Oliver, 1990, p. 12).

During a 20-year period between 1935 and 1956, work permits for American musicians in the UK were restricted, which dramatically changed the presence of American music in Britain (Rye, 1990). Nevertheless, the work of Oliver and Schwartz traces a continuing interest in rural blues and other African American music during this period. Other sections of the white public in the UK explored forms such as Trinidadian steel pan music followed by ska, or what was often called blue beat, after the British record label of the same name (Chatburn, 1990; Cowley, 1990; Marks, 1990). British interest in these musical styles reflected growing levels of immigration to the UK from colonies such as Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, Pakistan, and India after World War II, which created a community of African and Asian

descendants quite distinct from the African American culture that created black American music (Fryer, 1984). This widespread immigration forced white British society to come to terms with ethnic difference, spurring several notable race riots and great public debate about this new sector of the British public (Gilroy, 1991).

In the first half of the 1960s, concurrent with growing colonial immigration into the UK, many forms of black music became central to the teenage life of white Britons. In *Urban Rhythms*, Iain Chambers (1985) traces the history of a distinct Americanization of British popular culture after World War II, which lasted until the late 1960s. Through the emergence of rock, trad jazz, skiffle, 'high school', and the later beat movement, teenage culture in the UK became fully entrenched in myriad forms of American music that drew on African American culture. Among the most important American sources was R&B, a market that had developed during the late 1940s as big bands slimmed down to smaller combos and vocalists became prominent leaders of these ensembles. British fascination with American R&B led to a more esoteric interest in obscure black soul during the mid-1960s, which coincided with a bifurcation of white and black music in the marketplace that occurred slowly throughout the remainder of the 1960s.

Emerging in the late 1950s, the mod subculture was perhaps the most important group to appropriate R&B. Known for a clean-cut sense of fashion, mods embraced a decidedly un-bohemian class representation and tolerant attitudes towards racial difference. In addition to ska and contemporaneous British rock, mods showed specific interest in R&B from Detroit, in part due to its stereotypical high energy and fast pace. Transportation, the driving force behind the growth of the American automobile industry, also emancipated the mods, allowing them to travel freely throughout London and to beach towns for weekend holidays. The frenetic pace of records favoured by mods served as a musical accompaniment to a lifestyle that centred on buzzing through town on Lambretta scooters and abusing amphetamines (Hebdige, 2002).

The ways in which immigration and subcultural appropriation of black music affected popular music in Britain were profound, though not always obvious. During the period between 1963 and 1965, white groups established a 'beat' movement, which, according to Chambers (1985, p. 51), enforced an 'internal remaking of British pop music', and it was during this period that British youth culture became increasingly aware of the black roots of this music. The contexts explored above, in which British fascination with Motown was represented principally by white, male, middle-class British teenagers showing interest in music that clearly represented class uplift in its own surroundings, represent the beginnings of this cultural awareness. Among the larger public in the UK, Motown was still relatively unknown in 1963. The larger public realization of the origins of this form of R&B came via several important portals of contact, including cover versions

of original material by British-based artists, press, radio, and the work of appreciation societies (or fan clubs).

Covers

During the period between 1963 and 1965, many British fans heard the music of Motown for the first time via the widespread practice of British artists recording new versions of the company's songs. These 'cover songs' represented at least two facets of British listening culture. In one sense, this phenomenon was related to a history of live performance, as many of the British groups that recorded covers of American R&B had learned this repertoire for a live setting. With few original recordings available to the public, British musicians used concerts to disseminate a newly found repertoire of black music from the US (Chambers, 1985, p. 72). On the other hand, the materiality of these covers as recordings fitted neatly into a tradition of black reception in British culture created through portability, which fostered connections between a largely white audience and the black traditions infiltrating mainstream youth culture.

British groups covered many Motown songs during this period, but only a few entered the British mainstream. The first widely popular cover version of a Motown song in Britain was Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' version of *Do You Love Me*, which reached the top of the *Record Retailer* chart in October 1963, a year after the original Contours' version became popular in America. The Tremeloes' *Do You Love Me* was a refined version of a Motown rock song; instead of the raucous sound offered by the Contours, through pitch and rhythm normalization, instrumentation, and vocal timbre differences, the Tremeloes created a stereotypical Merseybeat interpretation. Another notable Motown cover was released a year later in the Fourmost's *Baby I Need Your Loving*, which drew from, and did little to alter, the sonic character of a Motown hit by the Four Tops. This track gives similar insight into the dual role of these covers, which popularized Motown's music among British audiences, but often stripped Motown songs of their racial signifiers. Similarly to Brian Poole's performance of *Do You Love Me*, the Fourmost's version of *Baby I Need Your Loving* used a stricter vocal delivery than the original. Likewise, extant video evidence shows a heightened rigidity in the song's physical presentation in the context of live performance.²

Perhaps the most famous British group to cover Motown songs at this time were the Beatles, who released versions of three Motown songs – *You Really Got a Hold On Me*, *Please Mr. Postman*, and *Money (That's What I Want)* – during the autumn of 1963 (in the UK) and early 1964 (in the US), the season of Beatlemania in each country, respectively.³ In the approach of the Beatles towards covering Motown, we see a middle ground between the rigid whitening of the Tremeloes and the arguable plagiarism of the Fourmost. The manner of engagement with the original artist may be the

key to understanding the difference in reception among these types of cover artist. In the musical domain, these differences led to the reception of acceptable groups as emulators and unacceptable groups as imitators. Accordingly, in contrast to the Tremeloes and the Fourmost, both the Beatles and Dusty Springfield made notable efforts to maintain personal connections with original artists, working as promoters of original recordings. And, unlike either the Tremeloes or the Fourmost, the Beatles' cover versions show multiple aspects of the group's engagement with the music of Motown at the time, including instrumental reduction and reorientation, changes of textual perspective, and modal interpretation.

Although the Beatles maintained a well-publicized interest in Motown, it is also crucial to witness Motown's clear efforts to connect with the music of the Beatles, which completed an important circle of influence between American R&B and the music of what was popularly referred to as 'The British Invasion', and helped Motown gain a foothold in the British market. This was apparent in several notable recordings and press releases, as well as in the company's willingness to send artists on tour with the Beatles. Motown actively publicized the most significant instances in which the Beatles mentioned the company, including a Four Tops quotation by John Lennon in a fan club recording, the group's possible interest in recording with Holland, Dozier, and Holland, and many others.⁴ The American press had been keenly aware of the commercial possibilities of a connection between the Beatles and Motown since the Beatles' second tour of America in the autumn of 1964, and many of Motown's efforts to publicize the company's connection to the Beatles were promulgated in American newspapers.

Tamla Motown

Unlike in America, where the names Tamla and Motown appeared prominently (and separately) on labels and in advertisements, for the first half of the 1960s Motown records in the UK were distributed by, and took the appearance of, other British-based independent labels. Between 1959 and 1963, Motown's records appeared on no fewer than four different imprints in the UK (Wilson, 2009). The first four Motown-owned recordings released to the British public appeared on the London American label in 1959 and 1960.⁵ At the end of 1961, Motown diverted its distribution arrangement in the UK to Fontana, a British record company that released a wide range of music, from early rock to conservative crooners and instrumentalists. Like London American, Fontana also released a total of four Motown-based singles, three of which appeared simultaneously in March 1962. These eight single releases were sporadic, and only represented a fraction of the company's output during this period. It was not until September 1962 that Motown established a more comprehensive arrangement to

have its recordings released in the UK on the Oriole label. During the next year, Oriole released nearly 20 Motown singles, arguably marking the first significant period of release for the company in Britain.

In March 1963, a trio of Motown executives, comprising president Berry Gordy, vice-president Esther Gordy Edwards, and head of sales Barney Ales, travelled to Europe to improve the company's sales presence on the other side of the Atlantic, visiting eight different countries, including Holland, France, Germany, and England. Although the trip was intended in part to establish publishing ties in Europe, another significant motive was the desire for a more permanent distribution agreement in Britain. In the autumn of 1963, Motown executives signed a deal with EMI, and the first single released on EMI's Stateside label was Martha and the Vandellas' single *Heat Wave*.⁶ After taking over Motown's distribution rights in the UK from Oriole, Stateside released more than 40 Motown singles during the next 18 months.

With secure publishing and distribution deals in place, Gordy began to support a growing number of British Motown releases by sending artists to Europe. In December 1963 and January 1964, Stevie Wonder travelled to France and Britain, where he performed live concerts and appeared on the popular youth-oriented TV dance show *Ready Steady Go!*⁷ Mary Wells visited in March 1964, and several months later her *My Guy* became the first Motown recording to break into the British mainstream. At the same time as Wells was achieving success as measured by the British charts, a full-page spread appeared in *Melody Maker*, providing evidence of an early effort to establish brand identity in the UK: 'Watch out for this team – they're coming your way – Tamla Motown.' An article accompanying the advertisement discussed the prominent Motown acts of the time, the company's important writing teams, and Motown's touring revues.⁸

In October 1964, a third trip abroad featured the Supremes, who were in Britain for three weeks, a period when two of their songs were at the top of the British charts (*Where Did Our Love Go* and *Baby Love*).⁹ Motown's official press release on the topic casts the Supremes' achievements in the light of the British Invasion, noting: 'their appearances on television caused crowd scenes reminiscent of the Beatles (sic) reception in America'.¹⁰ Finally, in November and December, there were successive visits by four more Motown acts – Martha and the Vandellas, Marvin Gaye, the Miracles, and Kim Weston – who appeared extensively on television and in the press, but made no live performances.¹¹ By the middle of November, Bob Dawbarn reported in *Melody Maker* that the Detroit sound had formed a 'beach-head', writing: 'Britain exported the Liverpool sound to America – now America is sending us back the Detroit sound in the shape of Tamla Motown artists.'¹²

In addition to the artists themselves, American R&B was presented to British youth through a group of important institutional and individual mediators who worked in radio, dance clubs, television, and fan clubs. While performances and recordings by British musicians necessarily

presented interpretations of American music, non-musician mediators began to assume an important role in disseminating American R&B in recorded form as interest in original artists grew. The institutional side of these portals was very different in the UK than in the US in many cases, forcing Motown executives to work within an unfamiliar system. While each of these mediators was certainly vital to the emergence of R&B, the appreciation society may have been the most distinctly British method of galvanizing support for and disseminating information about music, featuring a level of dedication, style of publication, and overarching cultural presence unlike anything found in America at the time (Fiske, 1992; Grossberg, 1992; Jenson, 1992; McKay, 2005; Schwartz, 2007b). Although appreciation societies abounded in support of many types of leisure activities in post-war Britain, music was an important subject for British fan groups, and during the 1960s R&B became a particularly strong topic of interest.¹³

Arguably the most important appreciation society of the R&B movement in Britain – and the model for most of the societies that proliferated in the UK during the 1960s – was the Tamla Motown Appreciation Society (TMAS).¹⁴ Founded at the end of 1963, the society was led by Dave Godin, later music journalist and proprietor of the *Soul City* record shop, who became the main conduit between Motown's corporate offices in Detroit and the British public. In hindsight, it is clear that the TMAS was far from a simple appreciation society. Instead, the group served as a vital promotional tool for Motown, making obvious attempts to promote Motown's music among the British public. Furthermore, it is very likely that this appreciation society was financed by Motown, showing the company's adroitness in understanding and exploiting the post-war social networks of British youth.

Although difficult to calculate, it is safe to estimate that membership in the group was between 500 and 1000 during the peak years of 1964 and 1965. Most members of the TMAS resided in and around London, but the society kept a watchful eye on other locales.¹⁵ In January 1964, the group published its first newsletter, *Mary Wells and Motown News*, which spanned five issues over the next six months. About a year later, this publication began to reflect its constituency's broader interest in all Motown artists, and in January 1965 the name of the newsletter was changed to *Hitsville U.S.A.* The complete run of this newsletter comprised 13 issues, published through 1965 and early 1966. The formats of *Mary Wells and Motown News* and *Hitsville U.S.A.* were essentially the same. Each issue began with a letter from Godin, initially addressed 'Dear Friend' and later changed to 'Dear Swinger and Friend'. Most issues had sections for news, single (and later album) reviews, feature articles, charts of readers' top singles, and facsimiles of American and British articles from the popular press.

The most important undertaking of the TMAS, and perhaps the sole purpose of its existence in the eyes of Motown, was the promotion of a large-scale tour of the UK by Motown artists in early 1965. Centred on a four-week

string of live dates between 9 March and 12 April 1965, Motown attempted to stage a 'reverse' invasion of the UK that would parallel the Beatles' first three visits to the US in early 1964. The British music weeklies started to discuss the tour in late 1964.¹⁶ In January 1965, *Melody Maker* proclaimed: 'The first British tour by the Tamla-Motown American pop package has been set. The Supremes top the bill, and chart-topper [British singer and keyboard player] Georgie Fame will be special guest star.'¹⁷ In the weeks before the trip, a multitude of articles and advertisements about Motown appeared in print in the UK, as the British press updated readers about performance dates and television appearances. On 5 March 1965, the cover of *New Musical Express* was splashed with a half-page advertisement.¹⁸ Just after the opening of the tour, Norman Jopling announced in *Record Mirror*: 'America Hits Back With Tamla Motown Attack.' Likewise, a *Melody Maker* feature by Bob Dawbarn called Tamla Motown 'Not So Much a Pop Sound, More a Way of Life'. To coincide with the tour, Motown announced that it would launch a new EMI-distributed Tamla Motown label in Britain beginning on 15 March 1965. The first six singles, by the artists featured on the British tour, and a selection of six albums – including the Supremes' *With Love from Us to You* – were released concurrently on the new label.¹⁹ In the weeks leading up to the release of these records, *Record Retailer*, the main British music industry weekly, was deluged with advertisements announcing the grand scope of Motown's entrance into the British market.²⁰

Numerous television programs were broadcast in Britain during the period of the tour, which featured performances (often lip-synched) of the Motown acts. The most important of these was filmed several days after the arrival in Britain for the television special 'The Sound of Motown', hosted by Dusty Springfield and produced by Vicki Wickham and the team that created *Ready Steady Go!* This hour-long program highlighted the artists featured in the touring review, including Martha and the Vandellas, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Stevie Wonder, the Supremes, a group featuring the Motown backing instrumentalists called the Earl Van Dyke Sextet, and the Temptations, who were included in the television special but did not perform on any of the live dates. Because of the prominence of *Ready Steady Go!*, the inclusion of actual live performances, and the scope of the Motown acts included, 'The Sound of Motown' was a vital promotional piece for Motown in Britain during 1965.²¹

Northern Soul

This half-hour television program revealed a powerful package of Motown talent augmented by Springfield, but the subsequent Motortown Revue tour had difficulty living up to the expectations created in the British press. This indicated the beginnings of a marked change in the listening habits of the British public during late 1965, which coincided with the rise of urban

psychedelia, the decline of mod culture, and a greater interest in forms of American R&B more closely representative of southern, working-class African American culture. Dave Godin changed the name of his newsletter to *Rhythm and Soul U.S.A.* in 1966, the Stax/Volt group launched a successful tour of Europe in 1967, and Dusty Springfield began to explore the music of the American South while recording *Dusty in Memphis* in 1968. As Alan Marks writes, 'the popular imagination got out of step with the clean, sharp Motown style' (1990, p. 106). For the time being, it seemed as if Motown had run its course, and was little more than a youth-culture fad.

Listeners throughout the UK continued to follow Motown, however, during the 1960s and into the 1970s. Record shops specializing in hard-to-find American issues of soul music catered to the interests of Motown enthusiasts. Among these was the Soul City record shop in London, opened in 1966 and operated by Godin, David Nathan, and Robert Blackmore. Selecta-Disc in Nottingham and the Clifton Record Shop in Bristol were two other shops that began to specialize in soul music at the time. These shops were cultural centres that participated in the reception of soul music in the UK. Both Soul City and Selecta-Disc also supported record labels, and the Clifton Record Shop distributed a lengthy newsletter entitled *Groove*, which comprehensively listed Motown releases in Britain and offered a mail order service.

Many British publications emerged during this time to support the reception of American soul music. Following the demise of the *TMAS* in 1966, Godin's new periodical called *Rhythm and Soul U.S.A.* focused on non-Motown soul. Other publications were active for much longer, including *Home of the Blues*, which quickly changed its name to *Blues and Soul*, and *Soul Music Monthly*, which later went by the title *Shout*. British coverage from this period, and later magazines like *Black Music* that started in the early 1970s include some of the finest writing on black popular music from the time, displaying a deep compassion for African American arts emanating from the US at a level not represented in the home country of this music.

By the early 1970s, there was a subcultural bifurcation in British reception of Motown and other forms of American soul music. While one faction consisted of record collectors and enthusiasts from the south, mainly London, working-class northerners embraced a more specific formation that has since been labelled 'Northern Soul' (Browne, 2008; Goldman, 1975; Hollows and Milestone, 1998; Milestone, 1998; Nowell, 1999; Rimmer, 2001; Wall, 2006; Wilson, 2007). Centred on dancing to high-energy music, collecting rare soul recordings, a distinct manner of dress, and the use of amphetamines (and other drugs) to fuel long stretches of physical activity during late hours, the Northern Soul scene was based originally in clubs such as the Twisted Wheel and the Wigan Casino, both in Manchester, the Blackpool Mecca in Blackpool, and the Golden Torch in Stoke-on-Trent. These clubs often hosted all-night dance parties, or 'all-nighters', in which patrons danced

from late one evening until early the next morning, often from midnight until 8:00 am. In his ethnographic work on this scene, Andrew Wilson (2007, p. 52) cites other important cultural loci of Northern Soul, including the often extensive travel required to attend events, meeting points established through travel, and smaller mid-week events in other locations that sustained interest leading to larger weekend all-nighters.

The Northern Soul scene began to flourish in the late 1960s, and the original formation was at its height in the middle of the following decade. Many of the formative clubs, such as the Twisted Wheel and the Golden Torch, ceased operations in the early 1970s, and the Wigan Casino and Blackpool Mecca Highland Room became more central to the scene. Northern Soul explored music far beyond the Motown catalogue, but the cultural launching point for the movement in Britain were the community that so warmly received Motown in the UK in the early 1960s. Accordingly, Motown music, both famous and obscure, was central to the Northern Soul scene. 'Motown was my be-all and end-all. It drove my whole life', disc jockey Ian Levine once remarked, 'my love of northern soul grew out of my love of Motown' (Brewster, 2010, pp. 81–89).

Northern Soul events and record collecting were closely intertwined, and it was not uncommon for dealers to sell records at events. As an outgrowth of this focus on collecting, rarity was valued highly in the Northern Soul scene. Adherents resurrected the careers of many soul music artists who had not been particularly successful upon originally releasing material, re-releasing their records on British labels or in later compilations, and supporting performances in the UK. As both collectors and promoters of rare material, disc jockeys became important agents in Northern Soul (Brewster and Broughton, 2010). Seen as experts, some jockeys brazenly advanced their rare finds, while others actively shielded identifying labels on their records in performance. With a fetish for rarity, the market for Northern Soul favourites caused the value of American soul music to rise tremendously. Uniformly considered the most exclusive Northern Soul disc, one copy of Frank Wilson's *Do I Love You (Indeed I Do)*, released originally on Motown's Soul label in 1966, was sold at auction in 2009 for more than £25,000.

Modern manifestations of Motown

In the light of Motown's instantiation in British culture, the extent to which re-recordings of music from the Motown catalogue and references to Motown music in original recordings by British groups were commonplace after the 1970s is not surprising. A version of the Miracles' 1967 hit *Tears of a Clown* by Birmingham band The Beat in 1979 showed the musical adaptability of one of Motown's best-known songs in a new wave ska context, and Phil Collins' 1982 version of the Supremes' 1966 hit *You Can't Hurry Love* was a pop cover that reached the masses in both the UK and the US.

Other popular songs from the British punk and New Romantic movements of the 1980s were *about* Motown, showing the pervasiveness of cultural references to Detroit soul in British popular music. These include the ballad *True* by Spandau Ballet, an album track by the Clash called *Hitsville U.K.*, the upbeat dance song *When Smokey Sings* by ABC, and many others. The music video for the last song depicted a male protagonist who kept a shrine to Smokey Robinson, adorned with Northern Soul memorabilia, above a turntable used to play rare soul records. Lost on an audience from the US, the context of this music video was surely commonplace to many British viewers.²²

In the 1990s, British artists like Rod Stewart regressed to their youthful, mod interest in Motown. Stewart recorded versions of *This Old Heart of Mine* (originally by the Isley Brothers) and *It Takes Two* (a duet between Marvin Gaye and Kim Weston). In addition, Stewart scored an international hit with his version of Larry John McNally's *The Motown Song*, a song that reminisced about the sounds of Motown records wafting onto a rooftop from an alleyway below. In the 2000s and after, a long line of youthful British women vocalists paid homage in various ways to the music of Motown, including Joss Stone, Duffy, Amy Winehouse, and Adele. Additionally, male vocalists such as Jamie Lidell and James Morrison drew extensively on the sounds and images of Motown in a contemporary context.

After the turn of the millennium, Motown was still active in the dance and record-collecting communities. Even though many of the classic northern venues had shut down, by this time the scene had embraced weekend festivals, known as weekenders, which often occurred in ocean-side towns and holiday destinations. Ironically, another important centre for Northern Soul after the 1970s was London, with one particularly important gathering at the 100 Club celebrating nearly three decades of continuous meetings. Accordingly, interest in obscure soul music, both within and outside the Northern Soul movement, was still prevalent in British culture. Many of the most prominent Motown discographers and historians came from Britain, including Keith Hughes, who served as consultant for Universal Music Enterprises (Motown's parent company) and as co-producer for a massive 12-volume 'Complete Motown Singles' project. An official UK wing of Motown released a wealth of obscure older material, unearthing never-before-released and difficult-to-find items in several notable compilations. Perhaps more importantly, smaller reissue companies from the UK were important agents of rare Motown. The most prominent of these was Ace and Kent Records, which released a series of compilations produced and coordinated by Hughes and Mick Patrick.

After more than 50 years, it is still difficult to ascertain why Britain's fascination with Motown is so intense and unswerving. In one sense, post-war British youth were searching for authentic middle-class voices they could relate to, and the sophisticated sounds and images offered by African

American Motown artists offered a niche, contrasting sharply with earlier interests in trad jazz and contemporaneous forays into American blues culture, promulgated by bands like the Rolling Stones. This perspective is maintained by active fans from the era, such as David Nathan, who has spoken passionately about the connection between the British working class and the black middle class, noting that many British fans of American black music were from the working class (regardless of membership in a subculture), and that the place of Motown within American cultural hierarchies resonated with the background of many Britons.²³ The different approaches of, and attitudes towards, artists such as the Beatles and Dusty Springfield, who championed Motown artists, and Brian Poole and the Fourmost, who recoiled when confronted with accusations of thievery, illustrate these class-oriented values, which extended directly into the core of British reception of Motown in various cultural movements during the next five decades.

Far from a passing exoticist attraction to African American culture, British fascination with the music and artists of Motown has contributed to the company's longevity. Beginning with a spate of cover versions and the rise of the TMAS in the early 1960s, British fans have been the most exhaustive collectors of American R&B, and have parlayed an interest in rarity into a scholarly pursuit of accurate information about Motown. British fans, and the Northern Soul club culture, have supported and resurrected the performance careers of many Motown artists. A widespread knowledge of Motown is apparent in the wealth of modern soul music released by performers from the UK that draws heavily upon Motown's music and Motown as a historically important entity. This cultural familiarity with the Motown catalogue, both popular and obscure, has become vernacular for many British fans and musicians, more so than in Motown's home country of the US.

Notes

1. See two volumes of *Black Music Research Journal* (vol. 29, no. 2 and vol. 30, no. 1) edited by Howard Rye that discuss the work of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra.
2. Four Tops, *Reach Out: Definitive Performances, 1965–1973* (Hip-O/Motown B-001G9LVB6 DVD, 2008). The Fourmost performed this song live on *Ready Steady Go!* on 6 November 1964. At the time of publication, this performance is not available commercially.
3. The Beatles' version of *Money* was released first in the UK on the album *With the Beatles* on 2 November 1963, and subsequently released in the US on the EP *All My Loving*, released on 7 February 1964. The Beatles' *Please Mr. Postman* and *You Really Got a Hold on Me* were also first released in the UK on *With the Beatles*, and in the US on *The Beatles Second Album*.
4. On the recording, Lennon breaks into an affected version of *It's the Same Old Song* and is interrupted by other members of the group, who remind him that he can't perform songs that are under copyright. 'Motown Now Number One in U.S.

- Single Record Sales', Motown press release, 3 January 1966, Alan E. Abrams Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (AAC). ' "Anatomy of Pop" Analyzes Music', *Chicago Daily Defender*, 10 January 1966; Lee Ivory, 'Among the Stars', *The Chicago Defender*, 5 February 1966.
5. Marv Johnson, *Come to Me*; the Miracles, *Shop Around*; the Miracles, *Ain't It Baby*; and Barrett Strong, *Money*.
 6. This single was released on 11 October 1963. See 'EMI Acquires Tamla-Motown for Britain', *Billboard*, 28 September 1963, p. 3.
 7. 'Stevie Wins Hearts of Frenchmen', *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 January 1964, 14.
 8. *Melody Maker*, 6 June 1964, p. 13.
 9. Ren Grevatt, 'Smash-Hit Supremes Tell Why', *Melody Maker*, 19 September 1964, 7; 'Supremes Here for Radio and TV Dates', *Melody Maker*, 10 October 1964, 5; Bob Dawbarn, 'Supremes Suddenly Shoot to Stardom', *Melody Maker*, 17 October 1964, 7; 'Supremes Supreme!', *Melody Maker*, 14 November 1964, p. 1 [the wrong date appears on the cover of this issue]; 'Supremes Visit Here Next Month', *Record Mirror*, 26 September 1964, p. 6; James Hamilton, 'Supremes Will Not Do Package Shows', *Record Mirror*, 3 October 1964, p. 6.
 10. 'Lightening Strikes Thrice', Motown press release, 23 November 1964, AAC.
 11. 'Top U.S. Stars Storm In – Dates Announced', *Melody Maker*, 24 October 1964, p. 1.
 12. Bob Dawbarn, 'The Detroit Sound Forms a Beach-Head', *Melody Maker*, 14 November 1964, p. 10.
 13. In addition to the TMAS, later in the decade a variety of groups were formed to follow artists (Otis Redding, Nina Simone, James Brown, Chuck Berry, Martha and the Vandallas, and many, many others), companies (Scepter-Wand), and even instruments (Organ).
 14. Other contemporary British publications included *R&B Monthly* (which advertised in the *Hitsville U.S.A.* 'anniversary issue'), *R&B Scene*, *Fame-Goldwax Followers (Soul Survey)*, *R&B Gazette*, *R&B Monthly*, *Soul Beat*, *Blues Unlimited*, *Jazzbeat*, and *Blues World*. For more on these publications, see Schwartz, 2007a; Guralnick, 1999, p. 414.
 15. Malcolm Harrison, 'Report from Liverpool', *Hitsville U.S.A.* 1, no. 6 (June 1965): 116–117.
 16. 'Tamla Motown Here in March', *Melody Maker*, 26 December 1964, p. 4; 'Motown Revue Here Next Year', *Record Mirror*, 17 October 1964, p. 9.
 17. 'Supremes Top Tamla Tour', *Melody Maker*, 16 January 1965, p. 5; 'Tamla Team for TV', *Melody Maker*, 23 January 1965, p. 5; 'Tamla Steps into Tour with Georgie', *Melody Maker*, 6 March 1965, p. 4; 'Tamla Team Moves in for Tour', *Melody Maker*, 13 March 1965, p. 5; 'TV and Radio Queue Up for Tamla Team', *Melody Maker*, 20 March 1965, p. 4; 'The Girlie Groups', *Melody Maker*, 20 March 1965, p. 10; and 'Tamla Tearaways!', *Melody Maker*, 20 March 1965, p. 15.
 18. Three weeks earlier, this publication printed an article called 'Supremes on Love "n" Marriage', *New Music Express*, 12 February 1965, p. 4.
 19. The title *With Love From Us to You* was in response to the Beatles' single *From Me to You*.
 20. 'EMI Are to Launch Tamla Motown Label: Major Promotion Campaign Announced', *Record Retailer*, 18 February 1965, p. 8; 'Biggest Pop Launch Ever For Tamla-Motown', *Record Retailer*, 11 March 1965, p. 20; 'Get this Tamla Motown Sound – On Record', advertisement in *Record Retailer*, 18 March 1965. See also 'Twelve Million Singles! That's the Tamla Total', *Record Retailer*, 1 April 1965, p. 16;

- and 'Get this TAMLA MOTOWN SOUND', advertisement in *Record Mirror*, 3 April 1965, p. 6.
21. *New Music Express*, 26 March 1965, p. 9; Tony Hall, 'Tamla on TV', *Record Mirror*, 27 March 1965, p. 10.
 22. Martin Fry and Mark White, who wrote *When Smokey Sings*, were both from the north of England, Fry from Stockport and White from Sheffield, offering another regional connection between this song and Northern Soul.
 23. David Nathan, interview by author, 15 March 2009.

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