



## BIOGRAPHIES



### Ray Charles

b. Ray Charles Robinson, 23 September 1930, Albany, Georgia, USA, d. 10 June 2004, Beverly Hills, California, USA. Few epithets sit less comfortably than that of genius; Ray Charles held this title for over 40 years and he was a true musical genius. As a singer, composer, arranger and pianist, his prolific work deserved no other praise. Born in extreme poverty in Georgia, Ray Charles Robinson grew up in Greenville, Florida. He was slowly blinded by glaucoma until, by the age of seven, he had lost his sight completely. Earlier, he had been forced to cope with the tragic death of his brother, whom he had seen drown in a water tub. He learned to read and write music in Braille and was proficient on several instruments by the time he left school. His mother Aretha died when Ray was 15, and he continued to have a shared upbringing with Mary Jane (the first wife of his absent father). Dropping his surname in deference to the boxing champion Sugar Ray Robinson, Ray Charles drifted around the Florida circuit, picking up work where he could, before moving across the country to Seattle. Here he continued his itinerant career, playing piano at several nightclubs in a style reminiscent of Nat "King" Cole and a vocal similar to Charles Brown.

Charles began recording in 1949 and this early, imitative approach was captured on several sessions. Three years later, Atlantic Records acquired his contract, but initially the singer continued his "cool" direction, revealing only an occasional hint of the passions later unleashed. "It Should've Been Me", "Mess Around" and "Losing Hand" best represent this early R&B era, but Charles's individual style emerged as a result of his work with Guitar Slim. This impassioned, almost crude blues performer sang with a gospel-based fervour that greatly influenced Charles' thinking. He arranged Slim's million-selling single, "Things That I Used To Do", on which the riffing horns and unrestrained voice set the tone for Charles' own subsequent direction. This effect was fully realized in "I Got A Woman" (recorded in November 1954), a song soaked in the fervour of the Baptist Church, but rendered salacious by the singer's abandoned, unrefined delivery. Its extraordinary success, commercially and artistically, inspired similarly compulsive recordings, including "This Little Girl Of Mine" (1955), "Talkin' 'Bout You" (1957) and the lush and evocative "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying" (1959), a style culminating in the thrilling call and response of "What'd I Say (Part 1)" (1959). This acknowledged classic is one of the all-time great encore numbers performed by countless singers and bands in stadiums, clubs and bars all over the world.

However, Charles was equally adept at slow ballads, as his heartbreaking interpretations of "Drown In My Own Tears" and "I Believe To My Soul" (both 1959) clearly show. Proficient in numerous styles, Charles' recordings embraced blues, jazz, standards and even country, as his muscular reading of "I'm Movin' On" attested. In November 1959 Charles left the Atlantic label for ABC-Paramount Records, where he secured both musical and financial freedom (he was also given his own label, Tangerine Records). Commentators often cite this as the point at which the singer lost his fire, but early releases for this new outlet simply continued his groundbreaking style. Charles' first two US chart-toppers, Percy Mayfield's "Georgia On My Mind" (1960) and Hoagy Carmichael's "Hit The Road Jack" (1961) were, respectively, poignant and ebullient, and established the artist as an international name. He was battling a serious drug habit at this time and was finally convicted for possession. He managed to put it all behind him and gain strength. His stature was enhanced further in 1962 with the release of the massive-selling album *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music*, a landmark collection that produced the million-selling single "I Can't Stop Loving You" (this US/UK chart-topper was written by country artist Don Gibson).



Its success defined the pattern for Charles' later career; the edges were blunted, the vibrancy was stilled as Charles' repertoire grew increasingly inoffensive. There were still moments of inspiration: "Let's Go Get Stoned" and "I Don't Need No Doctor" brought glimpses of a passion now too often muted, while *Crying Time*, Charles' first album since kicking his heroin habit, compared favourably with any Atlantic release. This respite was, however, temporary and as the 60s progressed so the singer's work became less compulsive and increasingly MOR. Like most artists, he attempted cover versions of Beatles songs and had substantial hits with versions of "Yesterday" and "Eleanor Rigby". Two 70s releases, *A Message From The People* and *Renaissance*, did include contemporary material in Stevie Wonder's "Living In The City" and Randy Newman's "Sail Away", but subsequent releases reneged on this promise. Charles' 80s work included more country-flavoured collections, and in 1984 he signed to CBS Records' Nashville division for whom he recorded the country chart-topping *Friendship*. The album included duets with George Jones, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard and Ricky Skaggs among many others. In 1980, Charles had made a memorable cameo appearance in the movie *The Blues Brothers*, but the period is better marked by the singer's powerful appearance on the USA For Africa release, "We Are The World" (1985).

Charles signed to Warner Brothers Records in 1990, making his debut for the label the same year with the album *Would You Believe*. In 1992, an acclaimed documentary *Ray Charles: The Genius Of Soul* was broadcast by the PBS television channel. The following year's *My World* was a return to form, and was particularly noteworthy for Charles' cover versions of Paul Simon's "Still Crazy After All These Years" and Leon Russell's "A Song For You", which the singer made his own through the power of his outstanding voice. The follow-up *Strong Love Affair* continued in the same vein with a balance of ballads matching the up-tempo tracks; however, it was clear that low-register, slow songs such as "Say No More", "Angelina" and "Out Of My Life" should have been the focus of Charles' concentration. In 2000, Charles returned to jazz with an excellent contribution to Steve Turre's *In The Spur Of The Moment*. His final studio album in his lifetime, *Thanks For Bringing Love Around Again*, was released on his own Crossover imprint in 2002. On 23 May 2003 he played his 10,000th concert in Los Angeles, but was sidelined shortly afterwards by a hip ailment. Charles was recording a new collection of duets when he died of acute liver disease in June 2004.

The album *Genius Loves Company* was released posthumously a few months later. It became a smash hit and was his biggest record for over 40 years. The irony of such a success is shocking. Charles' marriage of gospel and R&B laid the foundations for soul music. His influence is inestimable, and his talent widely acknowledged and imitated by formidable white artists such as Steve Winwood, Joe Cocker, Van Morrison and Eric Burdon. Charles was honoured with countless awards during his career including induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 1986, and receiving the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1987 (he notched up a dozen Grammy Awards during his career). No record collection should be without at least one recording by this "musical genius". His ability to cross over into other musical territories remains an enviable achievement. He performed rock, jazz, blues, and country with spectacular ease, but it is "father of soul music" that will remain his greatest title. He was undoubtedly one of the most important figures in the entire history of all popular music.



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### James Brown

b. 3 May 1928, Barnwell, South Carolina, USA. Brown claims he was born in 1933 in Macon, Georgia. "The Hardest Working Man In Showbusiness", "The Godfather Of Soul", "The Minister Of The New New Super Heavy Funk" - such sobriquets only hint at the protracted James Brown legend. Convicted of theft at the age of 16, he was imprisoned at the Alto Reform School, but secured an early release on the approbation of local singer Bobby Byrd. Brown later joined his group, the Gospel Starlighters, who evolved into the Flames after embracing R&B. In 1955 they recorded a demo of "Please Please Please" at WIBB, a Macon, Georgia radio station. Local airplay was such that talent scout Ralph Bass signed the group to the King/Federal company. A re-recorded version of the song was issued in March 1956. Credited to "James Brown And The Famous Flames", it eventually climbed to number 5 in the US R&B list. Further releases fared poorly until 1958, when "Try Me" rose to number 1 in the same chart. Once again Brown found it difficult to maintain this level of success, but "I'll Go Crazy" and "Think" (both 1960) put his progress on a surer footing. From thereon, until 1977, almost every "official" single charted.

However, it was an album, *Live At The Apollo* (1963), that assuredly established the singer. Raw, alive and uninhibited, this shattering collection confirmed Brown as the voice of black America - every track on the album is a breathtaking event. More than 30 years on, with all the advances in recording technology, this album stands as one of the greatest live productions of all time. His singles continued to enthral: energetic songs such as "Night Train" and "Shout And Shimmy" contrasted with such slower sermons as "I Don't Mind" and "Bewildered", but it was the orchestrated weepie, "Prisoner Of Love" (1963), that gave Brown his first US Top 20 pop single. Such eminence allowed Brown a new manoeuvrability. Dissatisfied with King Records, he ignored contractual niceties and signed with Smash Records. By the time his former outlet had secured an injunction, "Out Of Sight" had become another national hit. More importantly, however, the single marked the beginning of a leaner, tighter sound that would ultimately discard accepted western notions of harmony and structure. This innovative mid-60s period is captured on film in his electrifying performance on the TAMI Show. Throughout the 60s, Brown proclaimed an artistic freedom with increasingly unconventional songs, including "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag", "I Got You (I Feel Good)", "It's A Man's Man's Man's World" (with a beautifully orchestrated string section) and "Money Won't Change You".

In 1967 Alfred Ellis replaced Nat Jones as Brown's musical director and "Cold Sweat" introduced further radical refinements to the group's presentation. With Clyde Stubblefield on drums, "Say It Loud - I'm Black And I'm Proud" (1968), "Mother Popcorn" (1969), and "Get Up (I Feel Like Being A) Sex Machine" (1970) were each stripped down to a nagging, rhythmic riff, over which the singer soared, sometimes screaming, sometimes pleading, but always with an assertive urgency. In 1971 Brown moved to Polydor Records and unveiled a new backing band, the JBs. Led by Fred Wesley, it featured such seasoned players as Maceo Parker and St. Clair Pinckney, as well as a new generation of musicians. Elsewhere, former bassist Bootsy Collins defected with other ex-members to George Clinton's Funkadelic. Such changes, coupled with Sly Stone's challenge, simply reinforced Brown's determination. He continued to enjoy substantial hits; in 1974 he had three successive number 1 R&B singles in "The Payback", "My Thang" and "Papa Don't Take No Mess (Part 1)", and Brown also scored two movie soundtracks, *Black Caesar* and *Slaughter's Big Rip Off*. However, as the decade progressed, his work became less compulsive, suffering a drop in popularity with the advent of disco.



A cameo role in the movie *The Blues Brothers* marked time, and in 1980 Brown left the Polydor label. Subsequent releases on such smaller labels as TK, Augusta Sound and Backstreet were only marginally successful. However, Brown returned with a vengeance in 1986 (the year he was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame) with "Living In America", the theme song from the *Rocky IV* soundtrack. An international hit single, it was followed by two R&B Top 10 entries, "How Do You Stop" (1987) and "I'm Real" (1988), the latter of which inspired a compulsive album of the same name. The Brown resurrection was abruptly curtailed that same year when the singer was arrested after a high-speed car chase. Charged with numerous offences, including illegal possession of drugs and firearms, aggravated assault and failure to stop for the police, he was sentenced to six and a half years' imprisonment at the State Park Correctional Centre. He was released in February 1991, having reportedly written new material while incarcerated. During the 90s he continued to have further problems with the law and a continuing battle to quit drugs; in 1995 he was forced to cope with a tragic medical accident when his ex-wife Adrienne died during surgery for "liposuction".

In January 1998 there were new fears for his own health, and he was treated in hospital for addiction to painkillers. Shortly afterwards he was arrested and charged for possession of marijuana and unlawful use of a firearm. Brown's considerable influence has increased with the advent of hip-hop. New urban-based styles are indebted to the raw funk espoused by 'The Godfather of Soul', while Stubblefield's rhythmic patterns, particularly those on 1970's "Funky Drummer", have been heavily sampled, as have Brown's notorious whoops, screams, interjections and vocal improvisations. Artists as disparate as Public Enemy, George Michael, Sinéad O'Connor and Candy Flip have featured beats taken from Brown's impressive catalogue. Despite his ongoing personal problems, he is still seen as one of the most dynamic performers in American music and a massive influence on most forms of black music - soul, hip-hop, funk, R&B and disco.



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### Sam Cooke

b. Sam Cook, 22 January 1931, Clarksdale, Mississippi, USA, d. 11 December 1964, Los Angeles, California, USA. Reverend Charles Cook and his wife Annie May relocated his family to Chicago during the 30s. The devout young Sam Cook first performed publicly with his brother and two sisters in their Baptist quartet, the Soul Children. As a teenager he joined the Highway QCs, before replacing Rebert "R.H." Harris in the Soul Stirrers. Between 1951 and 1956 Cook (now with an "e") sang lead with this innovative gospel group after being coached by another member, R.B. Robinson. Cooke's distinctive florid vocal style was soon obvious on "Touch The Hem Of His Garment" and "Nearer To Thee". The Soul Stirrers recorded for the Specialty Records label, where the singer's popularity encouraged producer Robert "Bumps" Blackwell to provide Cooke with pop material. "Loveable"/"Forever" was issued as a single in 1957, disguised under the pseudonym "Dale Cook" to avoid offending the gospel audience. Initially content, the label's owner, Art Rupe, then objected to the sweetening choir on a follow-up recording, "You Send Me", and offered Cooke a release from his contract in return for outstanding royalties. The song was then passed to the Keen label, where it became a smash hit and sold in excess of two million copies and topped the US singles chart for three weeks.

Further hits, including "Only Sixteen" and "Wonderful World", followed, and Cooke also had the foresight to set up his own publishing company, Kags Music, with J.W. Alexander in 1958. Cooke left Keen for RCA Records where original compositions such as "Chain Gang" (1960), "Cupid" (1961) and "Twistin' The Night Away" (1962), displayed a pop craft later offset by such grittier offerings as "Bring It On Home To Me" and Willie Dixon's "Little Red Rooster". Other magnificent offerings were to follow as Cooke just seemed to get better and better. "Nothing Can Change This Love", "Having A Party", "Mean Old World" and "Somebody Have Mercy" were all first class songs. Although RCA attempted to market him as a supper-club performer in the tradition of Sammy Davis Jr. and Nat "King" Cole, Cooke was effectively creating a new style of music, soul, by reworking the gospel anthems that remained at the heart of his music. To promote this new music, Cooke and Alexander founded the SAR and Derby labels, on which the Simms Twins' "Soothe Me" and the Valentinos' "It's All Over Now" were issued. Cooke also enlisted Allen Klein to become his business manager in 1963 and handle his other interests. Cooke's singing career was in the ascendant at the time of his tragic death.

He had just released the superb *Ain't That Good News*, but the purity of the music on the album made his tawdry fate all the more perplexing. He had already experienced the death of his first wife and the tragic drowning of his son Vincent in a swimming pool in June 1963. On 11 December 1964, according to the Los Angeles police department, Cooke was involved in an altercation at a downmarket Los Angeles motel with Lisa Boyer, a woman he had allegedly picked up that night. The singer was fatally shot by the manager of the motel, Bertha Franklin, and although subsequent investigations have disputed this outcome no definitive version has been forthcoming. Sadly, the ebullient "Shake" became a posthumous hit, but its serene coupling, "A Change Is Gonna Come", was a more melancholic and powerful epitaph. Arguably his finest composition, its title suggested a metaphor for the concurrent Civil Rights movement. Cooke's legacy continued through his various disciples - Johnnie Taylor, who had replaced Cooke in the Soul Stirrers, bore an obvious debt, as did Bobby Womack of the Valentinos. Cooke's songs were interpreted by acts as diverse as Rod Stewart, the Animals and Cat Stevens, while the Rolling Stones' cover version of "Little Red Rooster" echoed Cooke's reading rather than that of Howlin' Wolf.



Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson - the list of those acknowledging Cooke's skill is a testimony in itself. The 1986 compilation *The Man And His Music* provides an excellent overview of the singer's career. Cooke was a seminal influence on all soul music and R&B. His effortless and smooth delivery demonstrated an incredible natural singing voice that has rarely been surpassed.

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### Otis Redding

b. 9 September 1941, Dawson, Georgia, USA, d. 10 December 1967, Lake Monona, Madison, Wisconsin, USA. The son of a Baptist minister with the same name, Redding assimilated gospel music during his childhood and soon became interested in jump blues and R&B. After resettling in Macon, he became infatuated with local luminary Little Richard and began singing on a full-time basis. A high-school friend and booking agent, Phil Walden, then became his manager. Through Walden's contacts Redding joined Johnny Jenkins And The Pinetoppers as a sometime singer and occasional driver. Redding also began recording for sundry local independents, and his debut single, "She's Alright", credited to The Shooters Featuring Otis, was quickly followed by "Shout Bamalama". Both performances were firmly in the Little Richard mould. The singer's fortunes blossomed when one of his own songs, "These Arms Of Mine", was picked up by the Stax Records subsidiary Volt. Recorded at the tail end of a Johnny Jenkins session, this aching ballad crept into the American Hot 100 in May 1963. Further poignant releases, "Pain In My Heart", "That's How Strong My Love Is" and "I've Been Loving You Too Long" (written with Jerry Butler), were balanced by brassy, up-tempo performances including "Mr.

Pitiful", "Respect" and "Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)". Redding remained something of a cult figure until 1965, although he had already released a series of excellent albums. It was the release of the magnificent Otis Blue that triggered off a major appreciation, in which original material nestled beside cover versions of the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" and two songs by another mentor, Sam Cooke ("Wonderful World and 'A Change Is Gonna Come"). His version of the Temptations' "My Girl" then became a UK hit. Complete & Unbelievable: The Otis Redding Dictionary Of Soul contained a stunning version of "Try A Little Tenderness". This song was written in 1933 by Harry Woods, James Campbell and Reginald Connelly, yet Redding turns it into his own aching contemporary soul ballad. Meanwhile the singer's popularity was further enhanced by the tour of the Hit The Road Stax revue in 1967, particularly in Europe. "Tramp", a magnificent call and response duet with Carla Thomas, also provided major success, while Redding's production company, Jotis, was responsible for launching the career of Arthur Conley. A triumphant appearance at the legendary 1967 Monterey Pop Festival gave indication that Redding was about to attract an even wider following. He appeared on stage completely out of fashion with the colourful beads and bells of the audience, wearing one of his familiar dark green silk and mohair suits, with tie and smart shoes.

His explosive set was, along with that of Jimi Hendrix, the highlight of the festival. More importantly, he calmed and unified the "love crowd" like never before. He brought his music of black origin into the hearts of white hippies (many of them middle-class kids who had never heard soul music). Horribly poignant were the last words he uttered on the victorious stage at Monterey at the end of an astonishing finale of "Try A Little Tenderness". He said, "I've got to go now, but I don't want to". A few months later tragedy struck. On 10 December 1967, his light aircraft in which he was travelling plunged into Lake Monona, Madison, Wisconsin, killing the singer, his valet, the pilot and four members of the Bar-Kays. He had recently been voted the world's top male singer by Melody Maker. This was highly significant because for the previous 10 years Elvis Presley had held the crown. He died on the cusp of greatness at the age of 26 not living to see how important a figure he would become. The wistful "(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay", a song Redding had recorded just three days earlier, was immediately mixed and released. It became his only million-seller and US pop number 1.





The single's seeming serenity about sitting on a jetty in San Francisco's harbour, as well as several posthumous album tracks, suggested a sadly unfulfilled maturity as a songwriter. Although some critics now point to Redding's limited vocal range, few could match his guttural sounding voice, which, at any volume could send shivers into the spine. Such was his emotional drive, and his distinctive sound remains immediately compelling. There is no doubt that Redding matched the smooth vocal intensity of artists such as Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield and Al Green. What should also be acknowledged in addition to his quite remarkable voice is the considerable amount of classic songs he wrote, often with guitarist Steve Cropper. They stand as some of the most enduring moments of the golden age of soul music. Redding should be regarded as a giant of the genre, even though his achievements were made in just a three-year burst of unrivalled energy and explosive talent.





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### The Supremes

America's most successful female vocal group of all time was formed by four Detroit schoolgirls in the late 50s. Diana Ross (b. Diane Ernestine Ross, 26 March 1944, Detroit, Michigan, USA), Betty Hutton, Florence Ballard (b. 30 June 1943, Detroit, Michigan, USA, d. 22 February 1976) and Mary Wilson (b. 6 March 1944, Greenville, Mississippi, USA) named themselves the Primettes in tribute to the local male group, the Primes - who themselves found fame in the 60s as the Temptations. Having issued a solitary single on a small local label, the Primettes were signed to Berry Gordy's Motown Records stable, where they initially found public acceptance hard to find. For more than two years, they issued a succession of flop singles, despite the best efforts of top Motown writer/producer Smokey Robinson to find them a suitable vehicle for their unsophisticated talents. Only when Diana Ross supplanted Florence Ballard as the group's regular lead vocalist, at Gordy's suggestion, did the Supremes break into the US charts. The dynamic "When The Lovelight Starts Shining In His Eyes", modelled on the production style of Phil Spector, was the group's first hit in 1963. The follow-up single flopped, so Gordy handed over the group to the newly formed Holland/Dozier/Holland writing and production team.

They concocted the slight, but effervescent, "Where Did Our Love Go" for the Supremes, which topped the US charts and was also a major hit in Britain. This achievement inaugurated a remarkable run of successes for the group and their producers, as their next four releases - "Baby Love", "Come See About Me", "Stop! In The Name Of Love" and "Back In My Arms Again" - all topped the US singles charts, while "Baby Love" became the only record by an American group to reach number 1 in Britain during the beat-dominated year of 1964. All these singles were hinged around insistent, very danceable rhythms with repetitive lyrics and melodies, which placed no great strain on Ross' fragile voice. With their girl-next-door looks and endearingly unsophisticated demeanour, the Supremes became role models for young black Americans and their name was used to promote a range of merchandising, even (ironically) a brand of white bread. The rather perfunctory "Nothing But Heartaches" broke the chart-topping sequence, which was immediately restored by the more ambitious "I Hear A Symphony". As Holland/Dozier/Holland moved into their prime, and Ross increased in confidence, the group's repertoire grew ever more mature. They recorded albums of Broadway standards, played residencies at expensive nightclubs, and were expertly groomed by Motown staff as all-round entertainers.

Meanwhile, the hits kept coming, with four more US number 1 hits in the shape of "You Can't Hurry Love", "You Keep Me Hanging On", "Love Is Here And Now You're Gone" and "The Happening" - the last of which was a blatant attempt to cash in on the psychedelic movement. Behind the scenes, the group's future was in some jeopardy; Florence Ballard had grown increasingly unhappy in the supporting role into which Berry Gordy had coerced her, and her occasionally erratic and troublesome behaviour was ultimately used as an excuse to force her out of the group. Without fanfare, Ballard was ousted in mid-1967, and replaced by Cindy Birdsong (b. 15 December 1939); most fans simply did not notice. At the same time, Ross' prime position in the group's hierarchy was confirmed in public, when she was given individual credit on the group's records, a move that prompted a flurry of similar demands from the lead singers of other Motown groups. "Reflections", an eerie, gripping song that was one of Motown's most adventurous productions to date, introduced the new era. Motown's loss of Holland/Dozier/Holland slowed the group's progress in 1968, before they bounced back with two controversial slices of overt social commentary, "Love Child" and "I'm Livin' In Shame", the first of which was yet another US number 1.



The Supremes also formed a successful recording partnership with the Temptations, exemplified by the hit single "I'm Gonna Make You Love Me". During 1969, there were persistent rumours that Berry Gordy was about to launch Diana Ross on a solo career. These were confirmed at the end of the year, when the Supremes staged a farewell performance, and Ross bade goodbye to the group with the elegiac "Someday We'll Be Together" - a US chart-topper on which, ironically, she was the only member of the Supremes to appear. Ross was replaced by Jean Terrell, sister of heavyweight boxer Ernie Terrell. The new line-up, with Terrell and Mary Wilson alternating lead vocal duties, found immediate success with "Up The Ladder To The Roof" in early 1970, while "Stoned Love", the group's biggest UK hit for four years, revived memories of their early successes with its rhythmic base and repetitive hook. The Supremes also tried to revive the atmosphere of their earlier recordings with the Temptations on a series of albums with the Four Tops. Gradually, their momentum was lost, and as Motown shifted its centre of activity from Detroit to California, the Supremes were left behind. Lynda Laurence replaced Cindy Birdsong in the line-up in 1972; Birdsong returned in 1974 when Laurence became pregnant.

The latter move coincided with the departure of Jean Terrell, whose place was taken by Scherrie Payne (b. 14 November 1944, Detroit, Michigan, USA). With the group recording only rarely, Birdsong quit again, leaving Mary Wilson - at last established as the unchallenged leader - to recruit Susaye Greene in her place. This trio recorded the self-explanatory Mary, Scherrie And Susaye in 1976, before disbanding the following year. Mary Wilson attempted to assemble a new set of Supremes for recording purposes, and actually toured Britain in 1978 with Karen Rowland and Karen Jackson in the line-up. The termination of her Motown contract stymied this move, however, and since then the use of the Supremes' name has legally resided with Motown. They have chosen not to sully the memory of their most famous group by concocting an ersatz Supremes to cash in on their heritage. Jean Terrell, Scherrie Payne and Lynda Laurence won the rights to use the Supremes' name in the UK. Payne began recording disco material with producer Ian Levine in 1989, for the Nightmare and Motor City labels. Levine also signed Laurence, Wilson and ex-Supreme Susaye Greene to solo contracts and recorded Terrell, Lawrence and Greene for a remake of "Stoned Love".

The career of Mary Wilson has also continued with a starring role in the Toronto, Canada production of the stage musical The Beehive in 1989 and the publication of the second volume of her autobiography in 1990. In 1988, the Supremes were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame.



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### Mary J. Blige

b. Mary Jane Blige, 11 January 1971, the Bronx, New York, New York City, USA. Blige was signed to Uptown Records by their head of A&R, Sean "Puffy" Combs. After being promoted by her record company as "The original queen of hip-hop and soul", Mary J. Blige's 1992 debut album sold over two million copies (many of the best songs being written for her by POV). The hip-hop quotient was represented by bass-driven rhythms, the soul stylings including her affecting voice. Guest appearances from rappers Grand Puba and Busta Rhymes were merely a bonus on this accomplished piece of work. When she journeyed to England for live shows in 1993 she was widely criticised for overpricing a set that was merely six songs long, but quality rather than quantity remains the keynote to Blige's career. *My Life* was an edgy, raw set that dealt with the break-up of her relationship with K-Ci Hailey of Jodeci. According to her publicity handout, *Share My World*, her first album away from mentor Combs, marked "her personal and musical rebirth"; rebirth or not, it was certainly another excellent album and reached the top of the US album charts. Mary featured guest appearances from artists including, Lauryn Hill, Eric Clapton, George Michael, Elton John and, on the tense personal drama of "Not Lookin'", her ex-lover Hailey.

Blige maintained her impressive series of releases with 2001's *No More Drama*, featuring the US chart-topping single "Family Affair". The follow-up *Love & Life*, released in September 2003, provided the singer with her second US chart-topping album.

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