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## Book Reviews

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*Heat Wave: The Motown Fact Book*. Compiled by David Bianco. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pierian Press, 1988. Illus. 524 pp. Hardback. \$39.50.

The Motown Recording Corporation means many things to many people. It is a triumphant black enterprise, an illustration of the rags-to-riches fulfillment of the American dream, a continuing soap opera complete with excesses of family love and personal tragedy, and the source of both legendary popular music and legendary performing stars. The breadth of Motown's contribution to American popular culture makes each of these images valid and worthy of scholarly investigation. *Heat Wave: The Motown Fact Book* is designed to provide not only a general historical and biographical overview of the Motown family, but also an in-depth discographic survey of the company's prodigious vinyl production between 1959 and 1987. Those who seek to trace the career of Motown artists, chronicle the company's sales successes, or explore popular music in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s should seek assistance from David Bianco's book.

*Heat Wave* is structured in eight sections. Part I features brief biographies of corporation founder Berry Gordy, Jr., plus more than 90 of Motown's brightest stars; part II offers a chronology from November 28, 1929 (Gordy's birthdate) through December 1, 1987, when a Michigan State Historical Marker was placed in front of the original Hitsville building located at 2648 West Grand Boulevard in downtown Detroit; part III alphabetically lists and provides brief descriptions of the American and British labels (from Anna, Black Forum, and Blaze to Weed, Workshop Jazz, and Yesteryear) on which Motown Record Corporation recordings were issued; part IV presents a mammoth United States discography of Motown singles and albums; part V features a United Kingdom Motown discography; parts VI and VII provide indexes arranged by singer or group name, by song or album title, by date of release, and by record numbers for all United States and British Motown releases; and part VIII is an appendix of five Motown-related label discographies (Anna, Golden World, Harvey, Ric-Tic, and Tri-Phi). The text is peppered liberally with handsome black-and-white publicity photographs and private snapshots of Motown's composers and artists, as well as reproductions of 45 rpm record labels.

In the “Foreword” to *Heat Wave*, publisher Tom Schultheiss speculates that the quintessence of what Motown was intended to be, and what it persisted in becoming, was a wellspring of Americans’ music. This was *not* simply the blues or rhythm ‘n’ blues performed by black artists and accepted by white audiences; it was, in Schultheiss’ words, “music without color.” This thumbnail description does not connote a lack of artistic integrity, the presence of weakened rhythm patterns, or a blandness of vocal presentation. It accurately defines the marketing genius of Gordy and his Motown producers in creating an immensely effective cross-over sound performed by young, attractive, talented artists. Why didn’t other black-owned record companies translate their music into this kind of mainstream fiscal bonanza? If the commonly asserted position that the “Motown Sound” was strictly formula-driven music is true, why didn’t Specialty, Vee-Jay, or other labels produce batches of million-selling discs to sustain themselves? Several writers, including Peter Benjaminson, Ashley Brown and Michael Heatley, Nelson George, J. Randy Taraborrelli, and Don Waller, preliminarily have explored these questions. But a comparative examination of the marketing strategy of Atlantic, Chess, Stax, Volt, and other prominent black labels has yet to be written. Bianco’s rich discographic compilation might help to stimulate such a study.

Beyond financial success, the songwriting and performing achievements of Motown’s talented stable of stars warrants serious examination. Superficial biographical studies on Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, and Marvin Gaye have yet to scratch the surface in terms of illuminating the roots of their distinctive contributions to Motown magic. *Heat Wave* issues a biographical challenge. The Motown composing corps (Nicholas Ashford and Valerie Simpson, Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, Eddie Holland, Norman Whitfield, Lionel Richie, and William “Smokey” Robinson) and singing stylists (The Four Tops, Gladys Knight and The Pips, The Supremes, The Temptations, and Stevie Wonder) are oral history subjects eagerly searching for popular culture analysts.

Bianco’s superb study calls attention to Detroit’s majestic contribution to popular music. Without James Brown, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin (How did the Rev. C. L. Franklin’s daughter escape from Gordy’s talent net?), and other flagship black artists, Berry Gordy, Jr. created the monster music corporation of the late 1960s. *Heat Wave* describes the nature of the expanding commercial phenomenon as follows. As Motown became a successful record company, Berry Gordy’s vision expanded to include other entertainment outlets. It was the company’s intention to pursue opportunities in film, television, and the theatre. West Coast offices were established as early as 1966, and in 1972 the company fully relocated to Los Angeles from Detroit.... In 1973, the magazine *Black Enterprise* recognized Motown as the #1 black-owned or managed business. In less than fifteen years, Motown had grown from a Detroit-based record company specializing in R&B hits to a full-fledged entertainment corporation. (p. 7)

Thus, Bianco describes a musical metaphor to the Brooklyn Dodgers fleeing Ebbets Field for Chavez Ravine. But, unlike the bums from Brooklyn, Motown was already the fence-busting Yankees of the popular recording industry and the murderers’ row of Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, and others just slugged on and on, playing to ever-increasing concert audiences, performing in motion pictures, and producing nostalgic soundtrack music for an array of 1980s films. With Motown on the field, popular music, especially for young black artists, became a whole new ballgame.

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*Heat Wave* is yet another splendid contribution to popular music research from Pierian Press. This fine reference work should be acquired by all sound recording archivists and popular culture teachers and scholars. It is a masterful organizational achievement. *Reviewed by B. Lee Cooper*

*Swinging in Paradise*. By John Gilmore. Montreal, Vehicule Press, 1988. 322 pp. \$16.95.

The role of Canada in the history of jazz has always been somewhat marginal. A number of internationally-known jazz musicians were born within Canada's borders (Georgie Auld, Paul Bley, Gil Evans, Maynard Ferguson, Kenny Kersey, Tiny Parham and Oscar Peterson) and its cities have been on the itineraries of touring jazz musicians as long as they've been touring. But most of the musicians born in Canada matured and made their real contribution in the United States, and most touring musicians were probably only vaguely aware of anything special about the Canadian cities they played in. The exception was Montreal, where the wide-open atmosphere, lack of overt racial strife and the warm welcome of French-Canadians caused American jazz musicians to seek out bookings in the city and, in some cases, to stay.

John Gilmore's book documents live jazz in Montreal from the earliest ragtime to the break-up of the Quatuor du jazz libre du Quebec in 1974. Using painstaking research and extensive interviews, he pieces together the social and political background of the city, which supported such famous jazz spots as L'Amorce, the Black Bottom, Cafe St. Michel, Chez Patee, Rockhead's Paradise and La Tete de l'Art, which welcomed visits by musicians as diverse as Pepper Adams, Louis Armstrong, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Jackie McLean, Fats Navarro, Charlie Parker and Lester Young, and which provided lengthier employment to Brian Barley, Paul Bley, Walter Boudreau, Willie Eckstein, Lou Hooper, Vernon Isaac, Pierre Leduc, Louis Metcalf, Oscar Peterson, le Quatuor de jazz libre du Quebec, Herbie Spanier, Mynie Sutton, Nelson Symonds, Harry Thomas, Rene Thomas and the legendary Benny Winestone.

Gilmore takes us through each period in the city's social and political history. He describes its impact, positive or negative, upon the jazz musicians and the places where they played as they witnessed the continual struggle between mobster and reformist, bootlegger and prohibitionist.

Each major North American city has made some special contribution to jazz, but few have had the benefit of someone like John Gilmore to seek out and describe their contribution in such an accurate yet readable manner. Supplementing the excellent text are numerous rare photographs of musicians, bands and sites, plus appendices of organizations and the addresses of clubs cited in the text. *Reviewed by Ron Sweetman*

*Laughter on Record: A Comedy Discography*. By Warren Debenham. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1988. Illus. 369 pp. Hardback \$35.00.

*Film, Television, and Stage Music on Phonograph Records: A Discography*. By Steve Harris. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1988. 445 pp. Hardback \$49.95.