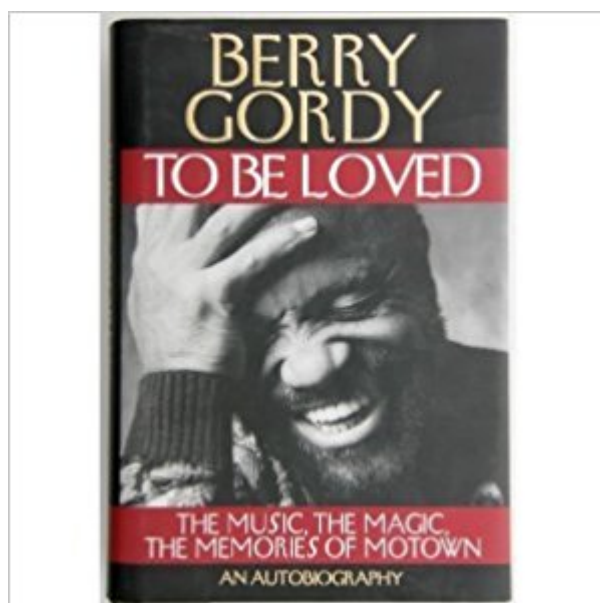


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To Be Loved: The Music, The Magic, The Memories Of Motown : An Autobiography



Synopsis

A personal account of Motown Records details its incredible recording artists--Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, The Jackson 5, Stevie Wonder, among others--as well as the gossip, rumors, and myths surrounding it and the life and loves of the man who brought it all together.

Book Information

Hardcover: 432 pages

Publisher: Warner Books; First Edition edition (October 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 044651523X

ISBN-13: 978-0446515238

Product Dimensions: 1.5 x 6.2 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (87 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #367,754 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #103 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rhythm & Blues](#) #873 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > African-American & Black](#) #4596 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Theory, Composition & Performance](#)

Customer Reviews

Like his main protege' Diana Ross' book SECRETS OF A SPARROW, I found this autobiography, TO BE LOVED, a bit too self-flattering and unapologetic. Berry Gordy's story is extremely fascinating, his accomplishments in, and contributions to, American music are absolutely gargantuan. He deserves a great deal of credit for having created the conditions for an unmatched musical legacy to flourish. The lore surrounding the founding and early development of his great musical empire is almost as wonderful and engaging as the music itself. You DO get some of that here. Gordy also explains many of his business decisions. From most accounts, Mr. Gordy and his family were astute business people. However, Gordy's single-mindedness could often cause him to ignore or underplay some of the artist's gifts, appeal and marketability. For example, great as Diana Ross' star potential was, other female artists, even within the Supremes, were not as fully developed as they deserved to be, while Diana was given "special" opportunities in the way of extraordinary classes [beyond Motown's famous Artist Development] in modeling, etc. Was this purely a "business" decision? In the meantime, artists such as Kim Weston and Brenda Holloway, both quite gifted vocally, and very attractive physically, basically languished at the label. Gladys

Knight and The Pips, while having had moderate success at Motown, but not given that "extra push," absolutely exploded after they left the label, had huge sales, and were awarded several Grammy awards. The Spinners fared even worse at Motown. But after they left the label they had phenomenal success in the early-mid seventies with singles and album sales. Many of those singles are considered r&b classics. Was there just too much talent at Motown for all of it to be promoted as deserved? Was Mr. Gordy too hands-on during those years? I wasn't satisfied with Mr. Gordy's take on some of these situations. As a huge Supremes' fan, I was especially dissatisfied with his matter-of-fact comment that, within the original group, Diana had the "sparkle," and Mary Wilson and Florence Ballard didn't, to paraphrase. People loved all 3 Supremes, and us fans recognized the magic and potential in all three. The fate of Florence Ballard is especially sad. She was dead [of a broken heart?] at age 32, just about 9 years after her ousting from that group. Her replacement within the Supremes was literally waiting in the wings to take over, between the early evening and later performance at a Las Vegas casino in July, 1967, when Flo was fired from the group. Was this also, a purely business decision? Was Mr. Gordy willing to hear Flo's grievances about being relegated more and more to the background, when the fans loved her to be featured, and by many accounts, she was the "founder" of the group? I really prefer Mary Wilson's unvarnished take on the Supremes' story, as presented in her wonderful books DREAMGIRL and SUPREME FAITH [both available in one volume]. She tells it like it is, and, along the way, exposes her own warts and blemishes, but also comes across as a rounded, real, fallible, wonderful person. TO BE LOVED didn't have nearly enough of that. DREAMGIRL sold like hotcakes, while Mr. Gordy's book did rather poorly. Ms. Ross' book also sold poorly. A lesson??? If you're going to do a memoir, people will really relate more the more real you relate.

This book is great for those who don't know the truth about the humble beginnings of Berry Gordy and his Detroit empire. Berry Gordy gives us no insight into the recording sessions and no credit to the background singers, or the background musicians. Oh he compliments them for being a part of the Motown success story this book is nothing more than a couple of recollections of Motown history and for that it deserves 3 stars. He does not get into what really happened between Florence and Diana and Mary and that fateful day of her dismissal... There is no mention of how the recording sessions went with Holland-Dozier_Holland, Mickey Stevenson, Ashford and Simpson and others. The early picture of the Supremes as the Primettes is worth the price of the book alone.

I'm amazed at the almost uniformly positive reviews of this book by other readers here. Berry Gordy

accomplished a great deal by founding Motown Records, no question about it (what he did for African American culture in general is immeasurable); what I object to is his (predictable, but no less shocking) glossing over of many unpleasant facts in this book. The fact is, Gordy was a mean and ruthless businessman who stomped on countless others in his rise to the top (the part he played in the downfall of Florence Ballard alone is unforgivable); his warm and fuzzy recounting of his and Motown's story simply reads false to me. Better books on this subject are J. Randy Taraborelli's Motown book, his biography of Diana Ross, and the two Mary Wilson autobiographies. Those read quite a bit more convincingly.

I hold Berry Gordy in high reverence. There is no single figure in the entertainment business with the kind of impact that he has made in this world. From his early talents as a key songwriter for "Mr. Excitement Jackie Wilson", I wasn't even aware then that Berry would begin affecting my love of music. One of the first artists I ever saw live was none other than Jackie Wilson. I had to be 6 yrs-9 yrs old at the time. Slowly his influence would captivate me as he discovered the genius of Smokey Robinson and The Miracles.

Berry Gordy is somehow seen as some kind of hero, empowering black people by building a hugely successful business. The sad truth is that Gordy was as ruthlessly and remorselessly exploitative of black musicians as any New York Mafioso record company owner. Greedy, manipulative, sexist, the man treated the musicians who made him wealthy like chattel- robbing them of self-respect, money, and their careers. He was basically a successful plantation owner, who treated his musicians like a bunch of sharecroppers, all at the same time as he was putting out records of Martin Luther King speeches. Hooray for black empowerment. There are a lot of Motown books out there. Some of them even contain some truth. This self-serving whitewash isn't one of them. Love (other than self-love) had nothing to do with it. The man wanted to be rich, and he made it. Congratulations.

How can you write about the Truth, all that Mr. Gordy wrote about I could relate to it. I myself is a product of the Detroit & it's secrets. Thanks Mr. Gordy for sharing your life with us. It has filled in the parts of the puzzle for me. My God continue to bless your efforts. Agape, Irvin Hayes Sr.

After attending the musical, Motown, I decided to read this book. Enjoyed it immensely. Nice getting the back story on the Motown company and the many stars that I grew up dancing and singing to, and still enjoy. Highly recommend the book: great read!

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