

Motown: The Sound of Young America

Instructor: Pete Elman

This course covers the golden age of Motown 1960-72. It will concentrate on the people who started, nurtured, and established the label as the driving force behind American popular music in that period. The course will do this through several media: lectures, photographs, recorded music, film clips, question and answer sessions, and the use of live music. The instructor will play piano, guitar and sing, and will choose appropriate examples from each genre.

Course/class outline: The course will be six sessions. The instructor will break the course up into six distinct classes, each one representing a topic, an individual or a group of artists who were associated with the Motown label. Each session will include the following:

- A thorough, fast-moving background lecture about each topic covered, including; the key artist(s) involved, their personal and musical bios, the key aspects of their contributions,
- An accompanying slide show, including photographs, charts and maps, presented in a simple power point format, with accompanying commentary by the instructor.
- High quality audio CDs and documentary film and you tube clips of those artists performing at the peak of their powers, personal stories—sometimes primary source material—from the instructor.
- A live music component, where the instructor will demonstrate on piano, guitar, bass and voice the musical style that was the trademark of that music.
- A question/answer period where the students get to ask questions, critique, comment on, reminisce about personal events and weigh in on what was presented during that class.
- Visits by special guest musicians

Course outline with suggested reading, listening, and viewing:

Week 1: The Outer Visionary; Berry Gordy and the origins of Motown; Mabel John, Marv Johnson, Barrett Strong: The Funk Brothers studio band

Week 2: Smokey Robinson; musical force of nature: The man behind the music

Week 3: The great female singing groups: the Marvelettes, the Supremes, Martha and the Vandellas

Week 4: Their male counterparts: The Temptations, The Isley Brothers, The Four Tops, Junior Walker and the All Stars

Week 5: The great female singers: Mary Wells, Brenda Holloway, Kim Weston, Tammi Terrell, Gladys Knight

Week 6: Twin legends: Divided Soul; The evolution and genius of Marvin Gaye, and how Motown affected the political and social climate of America, and vice-versa: The Inner Visionary: Stevie Wonder

Suggested Reading:

Nowhere to Run, The Story of Soul Music, by Gerri Hershey (1985)
The Original Marvelettes: Motown's Mystery Girl Group, by Marc Taylor, 2004
by Berry Gordy, 1994
Where Did Our Love Go, by Nelson George (1986)
Motown: Music, Money, Sex, and Power by Gerald Posner (2005)
Divided Soul: The Life Of Marvin Gaye: David Ritz:

Viewing:

Get Ready: Definitive Performances by The Temptations 1965-1972 (DVD)
Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever, TV documentary 1983
Dreamgirls, dir. by Bill Condon, 2006
Standing in the Shadows of Motown, dir. by Paul Justman (2002)

Listening:

The Marvelous Marvelettes - The Marvelettes (Tamla) 1963
Where Did Our Love Go - The Supremes 1964
More Hits by The Supremes 1965
I Hear a Symphony 1966--The Supremes
Reflections 196--The Supremes
Come and Get These Memories 1963 Martha and the Vandellas
Heat Wave 1963-- Martha and the Vandellas
Gettin' Ready 1965-- The Temptations
Greatest Hits, The Temptations 1966
The Temptations Wish It Would Rain 1968
*Cloud Nine--The Temptations--*1969
Four Tops' Second Album 1965
Four Tops' Greatest Hits 1967
Do You Love Me (Now That I Can Dance) Contours 1962
Shotgun, Junior Walker and the All Stars, 1965
The One Who Really Loves You - Mary Wells
Two Lovers and Other Great Hits - Mary Wells 1963
Every Little Bit Hurts - Brenda Holloway 1965
Take Two - Marvin Gaye and Kim Weston 1966
United - Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell 1967
Everybody Needs Love - Gladys Knight & Pips (Soul) 1967
The Fabulous Miracles - The Miracles (Tamla)
Going to a Go-Go -The Miracles
What's Goin' On, Marvin Gaye, (Tamla, 1971)
Talking Book, Inner Visions, Stevie Wonder, (Tamla, 1972, 1973)