SOUL MUSIC

Fromm Institute

Week Two: Early Motown and Mid-‘60s Soul in Other Midwestern/Eastern Cities

Recommended Listening:

Maxine Brown, *25 All Time Greatest Hits* (Varese Sarabande, 2002). Overlooked by much music criticism that favors earthier soul, Maxine Brown was one of the best pop-soul singers, sometimes categorized as having worked in the school of "Uptown" soul recorded in New York. As most of these songs are not played on oldies radio, they'll come as a nice surprise to fans looking for quality ‘60s soul they might not be familiar with. The most famous is "Oh No, Not My Baby," written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, though it might be more famous to rock listeners via cover versions by British rock acts Manfred Mann and Rod Stewart.

Solomon Burke, *The Very Best of Solomon Burke* (Rhino, 1998). Though he didn't have much pop success, Burke was one of the most influential soul singers, and one who merged elements of both gospel and country into R&B. This has the cream of his 1960s work for Atlantic Records, including two songs covered by the Rolling Stones, "Cry to Me" and "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love."

Jerry Butler, *The Best of the Vee-Jay Years* (Shout Factory, 2007). One of the smoothest romantic soul singers, and one of the first one to use orchestration adeptly. Unfortunately there's no best-of that so adeptly bridges his early work for the Vee-Jay label with his funkier later material recorded in Philadelphia. This is a good overview of his most popular stuff from the late 1950s through the mid-1960s, however, including "He Will Break Your Heart," "Make It Easy on Yourself," and "Giving Up on Love."

The Contours, *The Very Best of* (Motown, 1999). Although they were one of the less talented and versatile early Motown acts, the Contours would be important if for nothing else than their huge 1962 hit “Do You Love Me,” one of the greatest raucous soul dance smash hits of all time. Some of their other songs were pretty good too, like “Shake Sherry” and “First I Look at the Purse,” but they never had another hit nearly as big or as good.

Sam Cooke, *One Night Stand! Sam Cooke Live at the Harlem Square Club* (RCA/Legacy, 2005). Recorded live in Miami on January 12, 1963, but not released until decades after Cooke’s death, this shows him in a rawer and earthier mode than most of his studio hits.

The Four Tops, *The Ultimate Collection* (Motown, 1997). Their peak was brief, but for a while the Four Tops were one of Motown's biggest vocal groups, and perhaps its most forceful. This might be missing a few post-Motown hits, but what's here is classic mid-to-late-'60s soul, including of course their chart-topping "Reach Out (I'll Be There)."
Marvin Gaye, *Anthology* (Motown, 1995). Two-CD best of one of Motown's most important and eclectic singers and songwriters, from peppy early-'60s hits like "Hitch Hike" and "Stubborn Kind of Fellow" to more serious-minded late-'60s/early '70s material like "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" and "What's Going On."

Brenda Holloway, *The Very Best of Brenda Holloway* (Motown, 1999). Unlike the vast majority of Motown hitmakers, Holloway was not based in Detroit, instead hailing from Los Angeles. Besides her big 1964 hit “Every Little Bit Hurts,” she had a small 1967 hit with “You’ve Made Me So Very Happy,” which became a much bigger hit for Blood, Sweat & Tears, and which she co-wrote.

The Isley Brothers, *The Isley Brothers Story Vol. 1: Rockin' Soul (1959-1968)* (Rhino, 1991). The Isley Brothers' story is difficult to condense into a single-disc best-of as they did quite a bit of label-hopping, and their hits were sporadic. This is a good compilation of their first decade, however, in which they merged gospel and rock with more frenzy than anyone else. Includes "Twist and Shout," covered of course by the Beatles, who also did their earlier hit "Shout" on a 1964 TV program.

Etta James, *Her Best* (Chess, 1997). Though her career stretches from the 1950s to the present, Etta James's best work was done for Chess in the 1960s. Here are twenty of the top songs by a singer who could be both gutsy and sweet, including "Tell Mama," famously covered by Janis Joplin.

Gladys Knight & the Pips, *Every Beat of My Heart* (Charly, 1992). It’s unfortunate there isn’t a first-class collection of Gladys Knight & the Pips’ pre-Motown recordings from the early to mid-1960s, some of which were quite good, and some of which were even quite popular. This non-annotated 20-track compilation has fine pop-soul, the best of which was written by Van McCoy.

Barbara Lewis, *Hello Stranger: The Best of Barbara Lewis* (Atlantic, 2005). Barbara Lewis was one of the best singers in what has been retrospectively labeled the “sweet soul” style, combined soul and upbeat romantic pop. This has her most popular 1960s recordings, including the huge 1963 hit "Hello Stranger" and the more lushly orchestrated mid-'60s hits “Baby I’m Yours” and “Make Me Your Baby.”

Major Lance, *Everybody Loves a Good Time: The Best of Major Lance* (Epic/Legacy, 1995). Double-CD compilation of a singer who with the Impressions, Jerry Butler, and Jerry's brother Billy defined Chicago '60s soul. Uncoincidentally, much of Lance's material was written by Impressions leader Curtis Mayfield, and produced by Carl Davis, who also worked with Billy Butler – a more obscure singer whose mid-1960s recordings are recommended to those who like the Impressions or Major Lance.

Martha & the Vandellas, *The Ultimate Collection* (Motown, 1998). Motown's most successful girl group before they were surpassed by the Supremes, and a more fiery one, especially on "Heat Wave" and "Dancing in the Street."
**The Marvelettes, The Ultimate Collection** (Motown, 1998). The poppiest of Motown’s star female groups, though not to their detriment, with their early-'60s smash "Please Mr. Postman" vital to putting the label on the map. They continued to score hits over the course of the decade with songs like "Too Many Fish in the Sea," "Don't Mess with Bill," and "My Baby Must Be a Magician."

**Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions, The Anthology 1961-1977** (MCA, 1992). It's not easy to find a best-of that satisfactorily summarizes the best of the Impressions' 1960s work, as they're either not comprehensive enough or include some post-'60s solo material by leader Curtis Mayfield. This two-CD set is a good compromise, with the first disc largely devoted to the Impressions' sweet Chicago soul, delivering messages of both love and, with songs like "Keep on Pushing" and "We're a Winner," messages of African-American pride. The messages and the music got more groundbreaking with his early-'70s solo work, covered on disc two (and covered in a later class on soul during that period).

**Curtis Mayfield/Jerry Butler/The Impressions, Curtis Mayfield/Jerry Butler/The Impressions** (Raven, 2001). The Impressions, led by Curtis Mayfield, and Jerry Butler were the leading figures of 1960s Chicago soul, working together (though they soon went their separate ways) at the beginning of their careers. There are good anthologies focusing solely on the Impressions or solely on Butler. But this unusual collection combines much of their most popular and essential work, from the early '60s to the early '70s, onto one 28-song CD. "It's All Right" (the Impressions), "People Get Ready" (the Impressions), "He Will Break Your Heart" (Butler), and "Never Give You Up" (Butler) are among the classics here, though each of them would move into more socially conscious and elaborately produced soul in the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially Mayfield when he split from the Impressions.

**Garnett Mimms, The Best of Garnet Mimms: Cry Baby** (Capitol, 1993). A little overlooked by mainstream popular music history, perhaps because he wasn't part of a label or regional scene with a big profile, Mimms was one of the most effective soul singers at merging gospel and pop sensibilities. He had some help from top East Coast songwriters like Bert Berns and his producer, Jerry Ragovoy.

**Smokey Robinson & the Miracles, The Definitive Collection** (Motown, 2008). There were more worthy Miracles songs than the eighteen here, but this has the biggest hits they made during their first decade, from "Shop Around" to "The Tears of a Clown." The Miracles were a group, not just a vehicle for Robinson, but he did dominate it with his high voice and superb songwriting.

**Nina Simone, The Best of Nina Simone** (Polygram, 1990). It's difficult to recommend a Simone best-of or introductory survey, as she recorded such an eclectic assortment of material for several different labels. This nails most of the top essentials from her best era, the mid-1960s, including "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," covered for a hit by the Animals. Simone blended soul, jazz, pop, and even classical to unpredictable degrees,
and much of the work she recorded earlier and later for different labels is also worth checking out, if almost always inconsistent.

**Percy Sledge, It Tears Me Up: The Best of Percy Sledge** (Rhino, 1992). Perhaps the most esteemed of the so-called "deep" Southern soul singers specializing in romantic ballads, including his signature song, the 1966 #1 hit "When a Man Loves a Woman."

**The Supremes, Gold** (Motown, 2005). There are plenty of Supremes greatest hits collections. This two-CD, forty-track one is more thorough than most, including all of their 1960s hits, and the ones they did in the 1970s without Diana Ross.

**The Temptations, Anthology** (Motown, 1995). Two-CD compilation of Motown's top male vocal group, from their early sweet pop-soul hits (often written or co-written by Smokey Robinson) through their psychedelic funk of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

**Doris Troy, Just One Look: The Best of Doris Troy** (1994, Soul Classics). Troy only had one hit, 1963’s “Just One Look,” but made (and often wrote) some of the best overlooked, wide-ranging soul of the era. Definitive compilation of her 1963-65 sides, including her sole Atlantic LP and various non-album singles.


**Mary Wells, The Ultimate Collection** (Motown, 1998). Mary Wells was briefly Motown's biggest star before she left the label, never to have a big hit again, and the Supremes moved into her place. Her girl-group influenced sound was also the sound of Motown finding its feet as a soul-pop powerhouse, most memorably on "My Guy," but also on other hits Smokey Robinson wrote and produced for her, like "Two Lovers" and "The One Who Really Loves You."

**Stevie Wonder, The Best of Stevie Wonder: 20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection** (Motown, 2005). It is strange that such a major musician as Stevie Wonder does not have a truly good, lengthy, chronologically sequenced greatest hits collection. This one has a dozen of his most famous songs from his first decade or so as a recording artist, including his hits "Fingertips Part 2," "Uptight," and "For Once in My Life," though it stops short of his more personal and most popular work from the early-to-mid-1970s.

**Various Artists, Beg, Scream & Shout!: The Big Ol' Box Of 60's Soul** (Rhino, 1997). Idiosyncratic six-CD box set of '60s soul, mixing hits, rarities, and major/minor artists of an extremely wide range of styles and regions.

**Various Artists, Chess Soul: A Decade of Chicago's Finest** (Chess, 1997). Though most famous for its 1950s electric Chicago blues and rock'n'roll, Chess had a lot of success with soul music in the 1960s. This has two CDs' worth, including hits and non-
hits by acts including Etta James, Billy Stewart, Jan Bradley, Sugar Pie DeSanto, Mitty Collier, Jackie Ross, the Knight Brothers, and Fontella Bass, whose "Rescue Me" is probably the biggest Chess soul hit.

**Various Artists, The Scepter Records Story** (Capricorn, 1992). Three-CD box set of the most important material recorded in the 1960s by the independent Scepter label (and its Wand subsidiary), including hits by the Shirelles, Dionne Warwick, Chuck Jackson, Maxine Brown, and the Isley Brothers.

**Various Artists, Soul Shots Vol. 1-11** (Rhino, 1988). In an uncommon instance where the original vinyl series is markedly superior to its CD counterpart, this eleven-volume batch covered an enormous amount of ground in '60s soul, even without Motown material or hits by star artists. There were separate volumes for ballads, dance tunes, women soul artists, blue-eyed soul, soul-blues, and instrumentals, including many one- or two-shot artists and rarities. Rhino did later put out a four-volume *Soul Shots* series on CD, but it was considerably less extensive.

**Various Artists, Sweet Soul Music 1961–1966** (Bear Family, 2008–2009). This series has separate volumes for soul music of each year between 1961 and 1975, with thirty songs on each. This first burst of a half dozen discs covers all facets of soul in the early and mid-1960s, northern and southern, pop and earthy, and huge hits to small hits, with detailed liner notes.

**Recommended Books:**

*Ain't Too Proud to Beg: The Troubled Lives and the Enduring Soul of the Temptations*, by Mark Ribowsky (Wiley, 2010). Though it suffers somewhat from the unavailability of most of the original Temptations (most of whom had died by the time this book was written) for interviews, this is a decent overview of the great Motown group.

*All Music Guide to Soul* (Backbeat, 2003). At nearly 1000 pages, the biggest guide of record reviews and biographies of its sort, covering soul and R&B in all its manifestations from the 1940s to the end of the twentieth century.

*Anyone Who Had a Heart: My Life and Music*, by Burt Bacharach with Robert Greenfield (Harper, 2013). Interesting and reasonably candid memoir that pays much attention to his music, and especially his songwriting partnership with Hal David and their records with Dionne Warwick, though it gets much less worthy of attention after passing the early 1970s.

*Bobby Womack: Midnight Mover* (John Blake, 2006). Womack was a journeyman soul singer, most famous for (when he was part of the Valentinos) writing and singing on the original version of “It’s All Over Now,” covered on a 1964 single by the Rolling Stones; his Top Ten hit “Looking for a Love” ten years later; and playing guitar on Sly Stone’s 1971 #1 album *There’s a Riot Goin’ On*. While his own work might not be on the level of
his most famous associates, this is a very interesting and entertaining memoir full of stories about his mentor Sam Cooke, the Stones, Sly Stone, Ray Charles, Wilson Pickett, and others. If you want violence and tumultuous tragedy, that’s here too, Womack getting ostracized for marrying Cooke’s widow months after the singer’s death; getting shot at by that widow; almost accidentally shooting one of his sons; and generally finding some sort of trouble.

*Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye*, by David Ritz (Da Capo Press, 2003). The most in-depth biography of the troubled soul star (who was shot to death by his father in 1984), by an author who worked with Gaye as a songwriting collaborator toward the end of the singer’s life.

*Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone*, by Nadine Cohodas (Pantheon Books, 2010). Not the smoothest of reads, but still a thorough 400-page biography of this hard-to-classify artist, whose personal life was as enormously troubled as her music was eclectic.

*Signed, Sealed, and Delivered: The Soulful Journey of Stevie Wonder*, by Mark Ribowsky (Wiley, 2010). Though it didn’t get much attention, this is a reasonable biography of one of the most beloved figures in twentieth century popular music, properly focusing on his 1960s and 1970s work with Motown.

*The Supremes: A Saga of Motown Dreams, Success, and Betrayal*, by Mark Ribowsky (Da Capo, 2010). Another volume by prolific Motown biographer Mark Ribowsky, which like his books on the Temptations and Stevie Wonder is the most in-depth one on the subject.

*Where Did Our Love Go?: The Rise and Fall of the Motown Sound*, by Nelson George (University of Illinois Press, 1997). Of the numerous books that have been written about Motown (including biographies and memoirs for its artists and chief Berry Gordy, Jr.), this remains the best and most readable, balancing history with insightful and fair critical description.

*Women of Motown: An Oral History*, by Susan Whitall (Avon, 1998). Memories of major (Mary Wells, Martha Reeves, the Supremes, Claudette Robinson of the Miracles) and not-as-major (Mable John, Kim Weston, the Velvelettes, Brenda Holloway, Tammi Terrell) female Motown acts of the ‘60s, both from the artists themselves and people who worked with them.

**Recommended DVDs:**

*The Four Tops, Reach Out: Definitive Performances 1965-1973* (Universal, 2008). Twenty-six Four Tops clips from 1964-1973, a decade the Four Tops mostly spent on Motown. There are also bonus interviews with members of the group and some of their colleagues, including Smokey Robinson.
Marvin Gaye, *The Real Thing in Performance 1964-1981* (Universal, 2006). Sixteen full-length Gaye television performance clips from throughout his career, as well as some vintage interview material. The documentary *What's Going On: The Life & Death of Marvin Gaye* (Eagle Vision, 2005) also has some performance/interview footage that will be of interest to Gaye fans.

Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions, *Movin' on Up: The Music and Message of Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions* (Hip-O, 2008). Twenty performance clips from 1965-73, although the ones of Mayfield solo from the 1970s are considerably more kinetic then the earlier ones with the Impressions. Also includes interviews with some of the Impressions, Mayfield's wife, and several associates and prominent fans.

Smokey Robinson & the Miracles, *Definitive Performances 1963-1987* (Hip-O, 2006). It's a little surprising this isn't longer, but it has vintage clips of eight of their big hits from 1963-70, as well as a couple Robinson-less performances from 1976; Smokey solo ones from the 1980s; and interview material with several Miracles, including Robinson.

Nina Simone, *Live in '65 and '68* (Reelin' in the Years, 2008). Two different sets by this intense performer, one of the least easily classifiable of the twentieth century.

Nina Simone, *What Happened Miss Simone?* (Eagle Vision, 2016). Excellent documentary on both the musical and social sides of Simone's stormy life, focusing on her most interesting pre-1975 work and years. There are excerpts of vintage performances from throughout that era, though they can be frustratingly short.


*Motown Gold from the Ed Sullivan Show* (Motown, 2011). Two-DVD set of performances by Motown acts on *The Ed Sullivan Show* between the mid-1960s and early 1970s. Most of the label's biggest acts are here, including the Supremes, the Jackson 5, the Temptations, and the Four Tops.

*Standing in the Shadows of Motown* (Lions Gate, 2003). Documentary on the many session players for Motown, most of them rarely if ever credited during the label's heyday, focusing on the clique known as the Funk Brothers.

*20 Feet From Stardom* (Anchor Bay, 2013). This documentary focuses on backup singers from the past 50 years and of a few different styles, but the best segments are on
woman soul singers most known for the backup work they did in the 1960s and 1970s: Darlene Love, Merry Clayton, and Claudia Linnear.

*The T.A.M.I. Show* (Shout, 1964). Filmed in late 1964 in the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, the first great rock concert film features top soul acts James Brown, the Miracles, the Supremes, and Marvin Gaye, as well as other rock stars like the Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys, Chuck Berry, and Jan & Dean.

**Notable Figures (Excluding Star Musicians):**

**Cholly Atkins:** Choreographer for several major Motown acts, including the Temptations, Supremes, Miracles, and Four Tops. The smooth dancing and concert presentation of Motown acts was instrumental in solidifying their crossover success with pop audiences of all races.

**Burt Bacharach:** With Hal David, songwriter and producer for numerous pop-rock and soul-pop acts, particularly Dionne Warwick.

**Bert Berns:** Important soul-pop singer-producer who worked with the Isley Brothers, the Drifters, Solomon Burke, Barbara Lewis, and other soul stars, as well as white rock acts like Them, Lulu, Neil Diamond, Van Morrison, and the McCoys.

**Hal David:** Lyricist in the Burt Bacharach-Hal David songwriting partnership, which also served as producer for Dionne Warwick in the 1960s.

**Carl Davis:** As producer and A&R director for OKeh Records, he was a key figure in Chicago soul, working with Major Lance, Billy Butler, Walter Jackson, and Curtis Mayfield.

**The Funk Brothers:** The informal name given to the core of musicians who played on sessions for Motown. The best known of these were probably bassist James Jamerson, drummer Benny Benjamin, keyboardist Earl Van Dyke, and guitarist Dennis Coffey, the last of whom had some big instrumental soul-funks hit of his own in the early 1970s.

**Berry Gordy, Jr.:** Founder of Motown whose drive, and songwriting/production contributions, were vital to its enormous success, although his autocratic style caused friction with some of Motown's artists and producers.

**Florence Greenberg:** Head of Scepter Records, whose successful girl group and pop-soul artists included the Shirelles, Dionne Warwick, Maxine Brown, and Chuck Jackson.

**Brian Holland-Lamont Dozier-Eddie Holland:** Often referred to as Holland-Dozier-Holland or simply H-D-H, this trio were Motown's most successful production/songwriting team, working extensively with the Supremes, the Four Tops, and Martha & the Vandellas. After a dispute over royalties with Berry Gordy, Jr. in 1967, they left Motown and continued working together for their own Hot Wax/Invictus labels.
**James Jamerson:** Bassist who was the most renowned of Motown's session players, though most of his fame came after his prime. Many bassists admire him as a big influence, most notably Paul McCartney.

**Johnny Pate:** An important arranger in the heyday of Chicago soul for the Impressions, Major Lance, and others.

**Maxine Powell:** Ran Motown’s “charm school,” geared toward teaching the label’s young artists grace and manners to help them cross over to mainstream pop audiences.

**Jerry Ragovoy:** East Coast songwriter-producer who contributed in one or both capacities to important soul records by Garnet Mimms, Erma Franklin (whose “Piece of My Heart” was made more famous by Janis Joplin), Lorraine Ellison, and others.

**Ed Sullivan:** As he did with British Invasion artists, Sullivan often had Motown singers on his top-rated TV variety show, especially the Supremes. These were vital to exposing them to audiences of all backgrounds and, by subtle extension, helping to break down segregation.

**Notable Places:**

**The Hacienda Hotel:** Los Angeles hotel where Sam Cooke was shot to death by the hotel manager under mysterious circumstances after meeting a woman there on December 11, 1964.

**Motown Historical Museum:** Open for the past 25 years, and located at the original building, 2648 West Grand Boulevard in Detroit, where Motown was headquartered when it rose to glory in the early-to-mid-1960s. Studio A, the most renowned of the studios Motown used, is here and part of the museum.

**Important Record Labels:**

**Chess:** Though it didn't have nearly as distinct a house sound as Motown or Stax, Chess was pretty successful in the soul market in the 1960s with acts like Etta James, Billy Stewart, Fontella Bass, and quite a few others.

**Motown:** Not just the most successful soul label, but the most successful independent label in history; one of the biggest African-American-owned businesses ever founded; and the only label whose name become synonymous with a major style of soul and popular music.

**OKeh:** Columbia's R&B-oriented subsidiary was home to major Chicago soul artists Major Lance, Billy Butler, and Walter Jackson.
**Scepter:** Home of the Shirelles and what was labeled "uptown" New York pop-soul by Dionne Warwick, Chuck Jackson, and Maxine Brown.

**AV Clips:**

Mary Wells: My Guy (DVD)
Miracles: Mickey's Monkey (DVD)
Miracles: Ooo Baby Baby (DVD)
Martha & the Vandellas: Dancing in the Street (DVD)
The Supremes: Where Did Our Love Go (DVD)
The Supremes: Stop in the Name of Love (DVD)
The Supremes: You Keep Me Hangin' On (DVD)
The Temptations: The Way You Do the Things You Do (DVD)
The Temptations: My Girl (DVD)
Four Tops: Baby I Need Your Loving (DVD)
Four Tops: I Can’t Help Myself (DVD)
Four Tops: The Same Old Song (DVD)
Four Tops: Reach Out (DVD)
Junior Walker: Shotgun (DVD)
Marvin Gaye: Hitch Hike (DVD)
Marvin Gaye: Can I Get a Witness (DVD)
Stevie Wonder: Fingertips (DVD)
Stevie Wonder: Uptight (DVD)
Brenda Holloway: Every Little Bit Hurts (DVD)
The Isley Brothers: Testify (CD)
The Isley Brothers: This Old Heart of Mine (CD)
The Isley Brothers: Behind This Painted Smile (CD)
Martha & the Vandellas: Heat Wave (CD)
Candy & the Kisses: Do the 81 (CD)
Fontella Bass: Rescue Me (DVD)
Barbara Lewis: Baby I’m Yours (DVD)
The Impressions: It's All Right (DVD)
The Impressions: I’m the One Who Loves You (CD)
The Impressions: People Get Ready (DVD)
Major Lance: Monkey Time (DVD)
Billy Butler: Found True Love (CD)
Betty Everett: The Shoop Shoop Song (DVD)
Etta James: Something’s Got a Hold of Me (DVD)
Koko Taylor: Wang Wang Woodle (DVD)
Doris Troy: Just One Look (DVD)
Maxine Brown: Oh No Not My Baby (CD)
Garnett Mimms: Cry Baby (CD)
Dionne Warwick: Walk on By (DVD)
Dee Dee Warwick: You're No Good (CD)
Dee Dee Warwick: Standing By (CD)
Nina Simone: Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood (DVD)
The Animals: Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood (DVD)
Solomon Burke: Cry to Me (CD)
Solomon Burke: Everybody Needs Somebody to Love (CD)
Sam Cooke: Shake (CD)
Sam Cooke: A Change Is Gonna Come (CD)
Gladys Knight & the Pips: Giving Up (DVD)