

= Let 's Get It On =

Let 's Get It On is the thirteenth studio album by American recording artist Marvin Gaye , released August 28 , 1973 , on Tamla Records . Recording sessions for the album took place during June 1970 to July 1973 at Hitsville U.S.A. and Golden World Studio in Detroit , and at Hitsville West in Los Angeles . Serving as Gaye 's first venture into the funk genre and romance @-@ themed music , Let 's Get It On incorporates smooth soul , doo @-@ wop , and quiet storm . It has been noted by critics for its sexually suggestive lyrics , and was cited by one writer as " one of the most sexually charged albums ever recorded " .

Following the breakthrough success of his socially conscious album What 's Going On ( 1971 ) , Let 's Get It On helped establish Gaye as a sex icon and furthered his mainstream appeal . It produced three singles ? the title track , " Come Get to This " , and " You Sure Love to Ball " ? that attained Billboard chart success . Let 's Get It On became the most commercially successful album of Gaye 's recording career , and it further expanded his creative control during his tenure with Motown . Its sexual balladry , multi @-@ tracking of Gaye 's vocals , and seductive , funk sound influenced later R & B artists and production .

The album has been regarded by many music writers and critics as a landmark recording in soul music . It furthered funk music 's popularity during the 1970s , and its smooth soul sound marked a change for his record label 's previous success with the " Motown Sound " formula . Let 's Get It On has been ranked on many critics and publications ' lists of the best albums of all time . In 2001 , it was reissued by Motown Records as a two @-@ disc deluxe edition release .

= = Background = =

In the spring of 1972 , Marvin Gaye was suffering from writer 's block . Following the release of his most commercially successful album up to that point , What 's Going On ( 1971 ) , and the soundtrack album to the blaxploitation film Trouble Man ( 1972 ) , Gaye had struggled to come up with new material after Motown Records had renegotiated a new contract with him . The contract provided him with more creative control over his recordings . The deal was worth \$ 1 million , making him the highest @-@ earning soul artist , as well as the highest @-@ earning black artist , at the time . He was also struggling with deciding whether or not to relocate to Los Angeles , following Motown @-@ CEO Berry Gordy 's move of the record label and replacement of the Detroit @-@ based Hitsville U.S.A. ( Motown Studio A ) recording studio with the Hitsville West studio in Los Angeles . Amid relocation and his lack of material , Gaye was struggling with his conscience , as well as dealing with expectations from his wife , Gordy 's sister Anna . Gaye 's separation from Gordy pressured him emotionally . During this time , he had also been attempting to cope with past issues that had stemmed from his childhood .

During his childhood , Gaye had been physically abused by his preacher father Marvin Gay , Sr. , who disciplined his son under extremely moralistic and fundamentalist Christian teachings . As a result , the meaning and practice of sex had later become a disturbing question for Gaye . As an adult , he suffered with sexual impotence and became plagued by sadomasochistic fantasies , which haunted him in his dreams and provoked some guilt in his conscience . According to Gaye 's biographer David Ritz , " his view of sex was unsettled , tormented , riddled with pain " . Gaye learned to cope with his personal issues with a newly found spirituality . He began incorporating his new outlook into his music , as initially expressed through the socially conscious album What 's Going On , along with promotional photos of him wearing a kufi in honor of African traditional religions and his faith .

By winning over record executives with the success of What 's Going On , Gaye attained more creative control , which he would use , following his brief separation from wife Anna Gordy , to record an album that was meant to surface themes beyond sex . As with What 's Going On , Gaye wanted to have a deeper meaning than the general theme that was used to portray it ; in the case of the former , politics , and with its follow @-@ up effort , love and romance , which would be used by Gaye as a metaphor for God 's love . In his book Divided Soul : The Life of Marvin Gaye , David Ritz

wrote of Gaye and the musical inspiration behind Gaye 's second landmark record :

If the most profound soul songs are prayers in secular dress , Marvin 's prayer is to reconcile the ecstasy of his early religious epiphany with a sexual epiphany . The hope for such a reconciliation , the search for sexual healing , is what drives his art ... The paradox is this : The sexiest of Marvin Gaye 's work is also his most spiritual . That 's the paradox of Marvin himself . In his struggle to wed body and soul , in his exploration of sexual passion , he expresses the most human of hungers ? the hunger for God . In those songs of loss and lament ? the sense of separation is heartbreaking . On one level , the separation is between man and woman . On a deeper level , the separation is between man and God .

In the album 's liner notes , Gaye explained his views on the themes of sex and love , stating " I can 't see anything wrong with sex between consenting anybodies . I think we make far too much of it . After all , one 's genitals are just one important part of the magnificent human body ... I contend that SEX IS SEX and LOVE IS LOVE . When combined , they work well together , if two people are of about the same mind . But they are really two discrete needs and should be treated as such . Time and space will not permit me to expound further , especially in the area of the psyche . I don 't believe in overly moralistic philosophies . Have your sex , it can be exciting , if you 're lucky . I hope the music that I present here makes you lucky . "

= = Recording = =

Gaye proceeded to record some more politically conscious material at the Golden World Records studio , known as Motown 's Studio B , as well as the preliminary vocals and instrumentation for some of the material to be featured on Let 's Get It On . Following the earlier sessions in Detroit at Golden World , Gaye recorded at Hitsville West in Los Angeles from February to July 1973 . Accompanied by an experienced group of session musicians called The Funk Brothers , who had contributed to Gaye 's What 's Going On , and received their first official credit , Gaye recorded the unreleased songs " The World is Rated X " and " Where Are We Going " and the single " You 're the Man " ( 1972 ) at Golden World . " Where Are We Going " was later covered by trumpeter Donald Byrd . Gaye had planned the release of an album titled You 're the Man , but it was later shelved for unknown reasons . The songs that were to be included on it , along with other unreleased recordings from Hitsville West and Golden World , were later featured on the 2001 re @-@ release of Let 's Get It On .

The album 's first recording , " Let 's Get It On " , was composed by Gaye with friend and former Motown label mate Ed Townsend . It was originally written by Gaye as a religious ode to life , but Motown singer @-@ songwriter Kenneth Stover re @-@ wrote it as a more political first draft . Upon hearing Gaye 's preliminary mix of Stover 's draft , Townsend protested and claimed that the song would be better suited with sexual and romantic overtones , particularly " about making sweet love . " Gaye and Townsend rewrote the song 's lyrics together with the original arrangements and musical accompaniment of the demo intact . The lyrics were inspired by Janis Hunter , whom Gaye had become infatuated with after meeting each other through Ed Townsend during the initial sessions . Townsend has cited Hunter 's presence during the album 's recording as an inspiration for Gaye . Gaye 's intimate relationship with Hunter subsequently became the basis for his 1976 album I Want You . While recording the title track , he was inspired to revive unfinished recordings from his 1970 sessions at the Hitsville U.S.A. Studio .

Townsend assisted Gaye with producing the rest of the album , whose recording took place at several sessions throughout 1970 to 1973 . They worked on four songs together , including the ballad " If I Should Die Tonight " , while Gaye composed most of the other songs , including those from past sessions . " Just to Keep You Satisfied " was originally recorded by several Motown groups , including The Originals and The Monitors , as a song dedicated to long @-@ standing love . With re @-@ recording the song , he had re @-@ written the arrangement and lyrics to address the demise of his volatile marriage to Anna Gordy Gaye , who happened to be the original song 's co @-@ writer . The background vocals for the album were sung by Gaye , with the exception of " Just to Keep You Satisfied " , which were done by The Originals . Most of the instrumentation for the

album was done by members of The Funk Brothers , including bassist James Jamerson , guitarists Robert White and Eddie Willis , and percussionist Eddie " Bongo " Brown . Gaye also contributed on piano during the sessions .

= = Music and lyrics = =

" Let 's Get It On " features soulful , passionate lead vocals and multi @-@ tracked background singing , both by Gaye . It has a 1950s @-@ styled melody and begins with three wah @-@ wah guitar notes and centers on simple chord changes , while its arrangements are centered on an eccentric rhythm pattern . Its signature guitar line is played by session musician Don Peake . Music journalist Jon Landau dubs the song " a classic Motown single , endlessly repeatable and always enjoyable " . The song is reprised on the fourth track , " Keep Gettin ' It On " . It expands on the title track 's sensual theme with political overtones : " won 't you rather make love , children / as opposed to war , like you know you should . "

" Distant Lover " has Gaye crooning over serene instrumentation , leading to soulful screams near the end ; from a heartbroken croon to an impassioned wail . The song 's lyrics chronicled the yearning its narrator feels for a lover who is " so many miles away " , as he pleads for her return and laments the emptiness he feels without her . Music writer Donarld A. Guarisco later wrote of the song 's sound , in that " Marvin Gaye 's studio recording enhances the dreamy style of the song with stately horn and strings , tumbling drum fills that gently nudge the song along , and mellow , doo wop @-@ styled background vocals that echo " love her , you love her " under his romantic pleas . The song later became a concert favorite for Gaye and a live concert version , featuring female fans screaming in the background , was released as a single from his Marvin Gaye Live ! album in 1974 .

" You Sure Love to Ball " is one of Gaye 's most sexually overt and controversial singles , with its intro and outro featuring moaning sounds made by a man and woman engaged in sex . The sexual @-@ explicit and risqué nature of the album 's content were , at the time , controversial , and the recording of such an album was deemed as a commercial risk by Motown A & R 's ( Artists and Repertoire ) and label executives .

= = Release and reception = =

Released on August 28 , 1973 , Let 's Get It On surpassed Gaye 's previous studio effort , What 's Going On , as the best @-@ selling record of his tenure with Motown . The album peaked at number two on the US Billboard Top LPs chart , succeeded by The Rolling Stones 's Goats Head Soup ( 1973 ) , while it also managed to reach number one in Cash Box for one week , as well as two weeks at the top of Record World 's music charts . Let 's Get It On charted for 61 weeks on the Billboard charts , and remained at the top of the Billboard Soul Albums for 11 weeks , becoming the best @-@ selling soul album of 1973 . The album 's lead single , " Let 's Get It On " , became one of Gaye 's most successful singles , as it reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart on September 8 , 1973 . It remained at number one for two weeks , while also remaining at the top of the Billboard Soul Singles chart for eight weeks . On June 25 , 2007 , the Mastertone version of " Let 's Get It On , " which was released in 2004 , was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America for one million downloads in the United States .

Two of the album 's singles reached the top 40 of the Billboard Hot 100 , including " Let 's Get It On " , which became Gaye 's second number @-@ one US single , and the top @-@ 30 hit " Come Get to This " , which peaked at number 23 on the chart . The album 's third single , " You Sure Love to Ball " , charted at number 50 on the Hot 100 and at number 13 on the Soul Singles chart . Along with the album 's music and sexual content , Let 's Get It On 's commercial success and promotion helped establish Marvin Gaye as a sex icon , while helping further expand his artistic control during his tenure at Motown . This commercial success also lead to a much publicized tour for Gaye to promote Let 's Get It On and expand on his repertoire as a live performer . Successful concert performances of the album 's material helped Gaye gain an increasing popularity and fan base in

the pop market , while earning him a reputation as one of the top live performers of the time . His performance at the Oakland Coliseum during the 1973 @-@ 1974 tour was released on the 1974 LP Live ! , which would serve as Gaye 's only release during his sabbatical period in the mid @-@ 1970s .

Let 's Get It On received positive reviews from music critics . Billboard called it " fine in terms of vocal attack and material [ ... ] touches on the excellent in terms of instrumental support " , while citing the title track and " Distant Lover " as the album 's best recordings . Jon Landau of Rolling Stone found Gaye 's performance on @-@ par with that of What 's Going On and wrote that " he continues to transmit that same degree of intensity , sending out near cosmic overtones while eloquently phrasing the sometimes simplistic lyrics " . Although he viewed that it " lacks that album 's series of highpoints " , Landau commented that " it ebbs and flows , occasionally threatening to spend itself on an insufficiency of ideas , but always retrieved , just in time , by Gaye 's performance . From first note to last , he keeps pushing and shoving , and if he sometimes takes one step back for every two ahead , he gets there just the same ? and with style and spirit to spare " . In Creem magazine , Robert Christgau called the album " post @-@ Al Green What 's Going On , which means it 's about fucking rather than the human condition , thank the wholly holey " . He found its title track to be " as much a masterpiece as ' Inner City Blues ' " and quipped , " this album prolongs its seductive groove to an appropriate thirty minutes plus " .

Since its initial reception , Let 's Get It On has been viewed by writers as a milestone in soul music . In The Best Rock ' n ' Roll Records of All Time , Jimmy Guterman writes that the album was " a bit more conventional musically ( soul crossing into mild funk ) and much more focused lyrically than its predecessor , What 's Going On " . Chicago Tribune writer Greg Kot commended Gaye for using " the multi @-@ tracked vocals perfected on ' What 's Going On ' , this time to convey his most intimate desires " , commenting that " while the album is replete with erotic imagery , both implied and explicit , it is also as much preoccupied with distance and unfulfilled need " . Jason Ankeny of Allmusic called it " a record unparalleled in its sheer sensuality and carnal energy " , writing that " Gaye 's passions reach their boiling point [ ... ] With each performance laced with innuendo , each lyric a come @-@ on , and each rhythm throbbing with lust , perhaps no other record has ever achieved the kind of sheer erotic force of Let 's Get It On " . Ankeny also dubbed it " one of the most sexually charged albums ever recorded . " Allmusic 's Lindsey Planer cites it as a " hedonistic R & B masterpiece . " BBC Music 's Daryl Easlea found Gaye " in supreme command of his material " , and viewed it as " much more than an album about simple lust " , but an " iconic , rapturous work " .

= = = Accolades = = =

Much like What 's Going On , Let 's Get It On has been included in a significant amount of " best album " lists by critics and publications . It was ranked number 58 on The Times 's 1993 publication of the 100 Best Albums of All Time . Blender magazine ranked the album number 15 on its list of the 100 Greatest American Albums of All Time . In 2003 , it was ranked number 165 on Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time publication , his second highest entry on the list , as well as one of three Marvin Gaye albums to be included ; What 's Going On ( number 6 ) and Here , My Dear ( number 462 ) . In 2004 , Let 's Get It On was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame and cited by The Recording Academy as a recording of " historical significance " .

= = Legacy and influence = =

Because of the album and its singles ' initial sales and response , Let 's Get It On marked a change and transition in sound and production for Motown , which had previously enjoyed success with its trademark " Motown Sound " . The label 's well @-@ known sound , however , was beginning to fade in popularity among the majority of R & B and soul listeners , while experiencing commercial pressure from contemporary styles that incorporated more diverse elements , such as Philly soul and funk . The Motown sound was typified by characteristics such as the use of tambourines to accent the back beat , prominent and often melodic electric bass guitar lines , distinctive melodic

and chord structures , and a call and response singing style that originated in gospel music . In addition , pop production techniques were simpler than that of Gaye 's 1970s concept albums . Complex arrangements and elaborate , melismatic vocal riffs were avoided by Motown musicians . Following his breakthrough with What 's Going On , an " experiment in collating a pseudo @-@ classical suite of free @-@ flowing songs " , Gaye used his artistic control to modify the sound and incorporate funky instrumentation , melismatic vocalization , and heavy vocal multi @-@ tracking , in much contrast to the established production style at the label . In contrast to Motown 's previously successful process of emphasizing an artist 's single releases rather than their album , Gaye and fellow producer Ed Townsend followed a similar formula previously used on What 's Going On , in which the album 's songs flow together in a suite @-@ form arrangement , opposing label CEO Berry Gordy 's strong emphasis on hit single success .

The album also affirmed Gaye 's influence over later R & B styles and artists . Gaye 's change of musical style and production soon became contemporary and popular , prior to the disco era of the late 1970s . Several successful Motown artists , including Lionel Richie and Rick James , were influenced by many of the elements of Gaye 's recording style for their work in the late 1970s and early 1980s . The slow jam sound and contemporary R & B production in general were greatly influenced by the album 's use of vocal multi @-@ tracking and instrumentation . Allmusic calls the album " the blueprint for all of the slow jams to follow decades later ? much copied , but never imitated . " Renown engineer Russell Elevado 's work in the neo soul genre , including his production for D 'Angelo 's Voodoo ( 2000 ) and Erykah Badu 's Mama 's Gun ( 2000 ) , has been influenced by Gaye 's and Townsend 's production techniques and sound .

The music atmosphere of the 1970s was heavily influenced by its success and sexual content , as its sexual @-@ explicitness bent creative barriers in the music industry and led to an increased popularity of sexual themes in music at the time . Music writer Rob Bowman later cited Let 's Get It On as " one of the most erotic recordings known to mankind . " The album 's success helped spark a series of similarly styled releases by such smooth soul artists as Barry White ( Can 't Get Enough ) , Smokey Robinson ( A Quiet Storm ) and Earth , Wind & Fire ( That 's the Way of the World ) . The commercial success of such recording artists led to a change of trend from socially conscious aesthetics to more mainstream , sensually themed music . Gaye himself experienced subsequent success with his follow @-@ up release I Want You ( 1976 ) , featuring more sexually explicit lyrics and expanded use of vocal multi @-@ tracking , and with Here , My Dear ( 1978 ) , which he based entirely on his tumultuous marriage to Anna Gordy . In an interview with music author Michael Eric Dyson , hip hop artist Q @-@ Tip discussed the album 's influence and significance to its time period , stating :

Although there was a ' conscious ' revolution , there was also a great sexual revolution ... I think Let 's Get It On was Marvin wanting to make commentary on what was happening . I think there was a big ' love @-@ in ' that was going on . And with him quoting T.S. Elliot [ in his liner notes , that life amounts to " Birth , copulation and death " ] , and the young lady moaning [ on the album ] , we hadn 't heard that before . That was another first , as well as him capturing erotica like that , and weaving it into the music the way he did ; it was mind blowing . I think it was a natural progression , because we were having a revolution with our minds , and then with our bodies at that time .

Following the success of funk records such as Sly and the Family Stone 's There 's a Riot Goin ' On ( 1971 ) and James Brown 's late 1960s and early 1970s singles , Gaye 's Let 's Get It On helped further the funk genre 's reach and influence in the music industry , as well as increase its mainstream appeal . Several contemporary R & B musicians , such as Prince , D 'Angelo , and R. Kelly , were greatly influenced by its vintage sound and seductive themes , incorporating much of Gaye 's musical style into their music .

= = Track listing = =

= = = Original LP = = =

== Deluxe edition ==

On September 18 , 2001 , Let 's Get It On was reissued by Motown as a two @-@ disc deluxe edition release , featuring 24 @-@ bit digital remastering of the original album 's recordings , previously unissued material and a 24 @-@ page booklet which contains the original LP liner notes by Marvin Gaye , as well as essays from Gaye biographers David Ritz and Ben Edmonds .

== 2002 remaster bonus tracks ==

== Personnel ==

Arrangement , Conduction ( Orchestra ) : David Van De Pitte ( tracks : 5 to 6 , 8 ) , Gene Page ( track : 5 ) , René Hall ( tracks : 1 to 4 ) , David Blumberg ( track : 7 )

Bass : James Jamerson , Wilton Felder

Bongos : Bobbye Hall Porter

Bongos , Drums : Eddie " Bongo " Brown

Drums : Paul Humphrey , Uriel Jones

Engineer : William McKeekin , Art Stewart , Steve Smith , Lawrence Miles , Cal Harris

Guitar : David T. Walker , Eddie Willis , Lewis Shelton , Melvin Ragin , Robert White , Don Peake

Percussion ( Mallettes ) : Emil Richards

Percussion ( Special Treatment ) : Bobbye Hall Porter , Ernie Watts , Plas Johnson

Piano : Joe Sample , Marvin Gaye , Marvin Jerkins

Photography : Jim Britt , Motown Archives

Production , lead vocals , background vocals : Marvin Gaye , except where noted :

Background vocals : The Originals ( " Just to Keep You Satisfied " )

Co @-@ production : Ed Townsend ( tracks : 1 to 4 )

Vibraphone : Emil Richards , Victor Feldman

== Charts ==