



THE SOUNDS OF DETROIT





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A short booklet by Madelyn Ohrynn
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MOTOWN

Many people know Detroit as the forefront for the music known as Motown. Some of the artists who were working under this genre were people like Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson, and Stevie Wonder. Motown is a genre that was founded by a man named Berry Gordy, who is still alive to this day, at 91 years of age.

Gordy started the record label with only a few hundred dollars to his name, it soon became a multi-million dollar franchise. The label was based out of a home on Grand Boulevard in Detroit. Many buildings on this same street were home to the workings of the Motown franchises.

Liveabout.com quotes Motown's music as "A strong, steady four-beat drum tempo."



Motown was more than just music - it was, and still is so special to the people of Detroit. This type of music in the sixties and seventies told stories and brought communities together. It was something that challenged a lot of the racism and divergence that existed within cities like Detroit. It was soul.

Berry Gordy became so successful he eventually left Detroit for Los Angeles in the early seventies. The studio, Hitsville USA as shown in the previous page was left to his sister, who then turned it into a museum that remains open for visits today.

Motown also eventually became a musical on Broadway, and according to the playbill website, "... over 5 million people have experienced Motown the Musical."



I had the chance to interview Dewane Hall, a music producer who founded Abrodos Music - a music store 20 minute outside of Downtown Detroit. Abrodos specializes in a wide variety of vinyls as well as cds and cassettes.

I asked Dewane about vinyls - how he feels they are important to preserve and experience music in a special way. Dewane said, ...“There is definitely a different sound with albums, and I believe that that’s why - and I hate to keep saying its “coming back” because for us it never went away but that’s why vinyl I feel, we feel have lasted so long. and people that usually collect vinyl, they usually have a lot of them. you know what I mean? For me, it’s a lifetime love affair.”

WHAT IS IT ABOUT DETROIT THAT CREATES MUSICIANS?

Throughout my interviews a few months back- my target question was pretty much - Why? Why has Detroit been such a special place for breeding all kinds of musicians, in the past, and even today?

I was interested in hearing what different people from Detroit would have to say about this. The next few pages are some of their words.

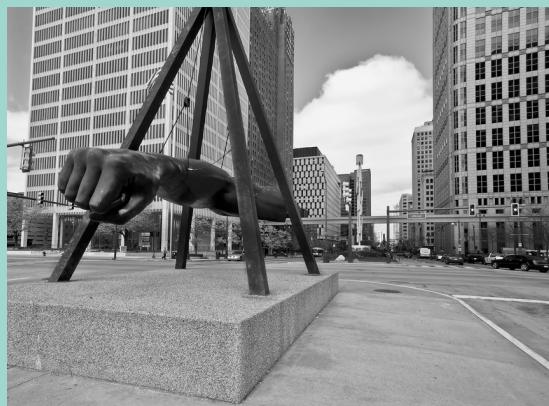


Jeff Milo, Detroit-based freelance journalist says, “We have nothing to lose. We’re inherently a scrappy bunch. We’re not a glamorous city, or not really a destination city, this was a city of industry. Blue collar, not a place people usually vacation to. And in the 60s and 70s and 80s. It was a place that kind of felt forgotten. So there was this sort of, “we can do anything or get away with anything” mentality and sort of energy and excitement.

Dave Peoples - founder of VCN Media (Vigilante Cartel Network). A music video production studio in Detroit.

"What I think the key point to that was, at least we were coming up doing music, that you had to be a true musician to try to play and we always it was always a friendly competition, but you know, who can manage their instrument the best, who can entertain people? So, it's just really that raw competition that we had. Among ourselves that kind of drove a lot of people in Detroit. And in Detroit, it's really, we were free.

You know, we had a lot of, like I said, my music, a lot of times, is you may say you more fusion or acid jazz, we just try to blend it. We didn't try to say what set rules. It was whatever felt good to you at the time. And I think a lot of producers, and especially a lot of the younger kids, they kind of tried to follow these formulas. You know, you have to have things come in for buyers, and "do these buyers will need to change"? Says who? Do what feels good to you. And I think that's what's lacking with some of the some of the newer musicians, they follow the rules....."



Melody Baetens - Detroit-based musician and journalist.

"I think broadly, when you think of all the genres, and all over all the decades of the last century, I think a lot of it is the authenticity of the city, the assess of accessibility. And then definitely the authenticity, the blue-collar-ness, like I said, the chance to kind of, you know, make your leap.

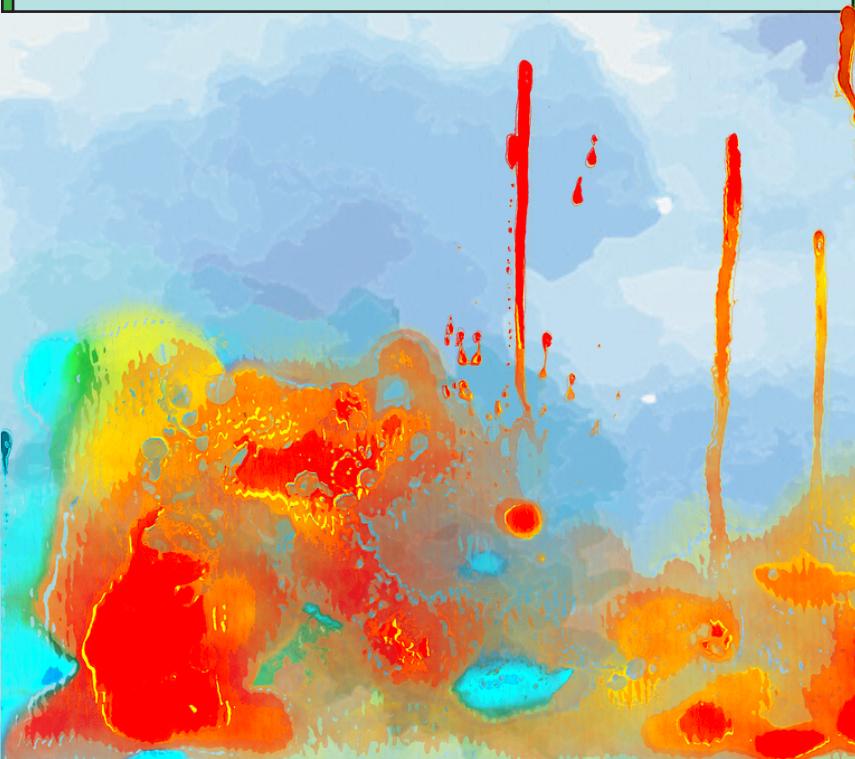
The techno DJs had raves and clubs, they could play, the garage rock scene had small clubs that would take a chance on them and do different things. You had Motown when it was here. It was a label that was based in Detroit, where local people could come and record and they were involved in that label and became recording stars. And then decades later, like, I feel like when a lot of people from Detroit get famous, they come back and they get their friends, or the people that they played with and they put them on their label, or they tell their major label about them. And that's kind of like a it's a thing about going back and dipping in your hometown and pulling talent from there and promoting people that helped you along the way or that may be coming up after you."



Jamal Carter - Musician

"It's the energy in Detroit I think. It never goes away – it impacts every industry. There are so many sectors of Detroit, you know east side, west side, downtown – there is so much to Detroit.

And all of these sectors have their own things, their own sounds, their own histories. And beyond that there's so much culture in Detroit, so much deep history that people reflect in what they make, and I think it's that connection that allows people from here to do so well – people from the past and even musicians today as well sit on so much history in the city. So, I guess that's my answer. It's the history that has created such a vibrant energy that is unforgettable."



**UP AND
COMING
DETROIT
MUSICIANS!**

CURTIS ROACH

Curtis Roach is a Detroit musician who you may know from his popular tiktok “Bored in the House” - he released this song featuring rapper Tyga earlier in quarantine. I interviewed Curtis a few months back, and he is crazy talented. You can check out his discovery on Spotify!



NIGEL SANDERS



I went to highschool with Nigel. Music is a big part of his life, he told me. Some of his earliest memories are playing piano with his mom.

He has worked on music with Curtis, and produces what he would describe as, “soulful, hip-hop, and r&b” music.

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