

Title:

My Dozen

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Summary:

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Article Body:

These albums were happening along the time that I was happening. I was really into real R&B and I still am. These type of tunes were very truthful – there's an honesty that went with them. Those artists communicated to people, they were about the times and what was going on in our country at the time. You listen to those tunes, you know what was happening at that time. They were great musicians because they played from the heart.

It wasn't a lot of polish on those records. Motown was great in its way but down in Memphis we didn't have the polish, we didn't try to do it that way. Motown they had their methods of recording and we just came right from the hip, with honesty – whatever it took, we did it. Like Rufus Thomas used to say, "Up north it's Motown, but below the Mason-Dixon Line your ass is mine!"

The Essential Collection

Artist: Ray Charles

Release Date: 2002

I first found out about Ray way back in the '50s. I just saw a guy with sunglasses on and I thought that was cool. He sounded kind of gospel at first, with the call-and-response, but he kind of revolutionized that stuff with the electric Wurlitzer piano – it was a different sound, I'd never heard anything like it. Or seen anything like it – the body of that piano of that piano looked like papiér mache. He's got these tunes on there, like "What'd I Say" and "I Got

a Woman" and "Georgia on My Mind," "Baby Won't You Please Come Home," that are just so very emotional. That came through, it communicated. He has some standards on there, he has some funk and R&B and even some country. Unfortunately, Ray is not with us but this album could introduce him to the younger generation. And some of his long-time fans might find certain tunes here that they'd been searching for.

When A Man Loves A Woman

Artist: Percy Sledge

Release Date: 1966

I was playing in Bowlegs Miller's band when that song came out. We used to be on the road a lot and "When a Man Loves a Woman" would be all you'd hear on the radio. The music is simple, the lyric line is simple, the whole tune is very repetitive but it drives the point home: When a man loves a woman – really loves her – all these things can really happen. And he kind of empowers the woman by saying that. It's like a covenant. It's a classic. That song didn't really influence me musically, but it opened me up to falling in love.

Shaft

Artist: Isaac Hayes

Release Date: 1971

I just had to put this in. The collection of tunes – a lot of hits came out of that. I like "Love Theme," where Shaft is making love to his woman, and also "Café Reggiao." And "Soulsville," that plays during the montage of shots when Shaft is walking through Harlem – people can still relate to that song, because the ghetto is still like that. "Do Your Thing," people will always relate to that. "Bumpy's Lament" came after one Saturday night when I worked until dawn on the score in LA and in the morning I drove home down La Cienega and there was all this paper blowing down the streets from what happened the night before; as soon as I got home I wrote that tune. Shaft is still relevant, still alive – and part of what keeps it alive is sampling. Hip-hoppers sample a lot of my things so the music stays in people's minds after all these years. The subject matter of the tunes is still current, and the sound is still there because of the sampling.

Remember Me

Artist: Otis Redding

Release Date: 1992

Otis is important because he was such a powerhouse back in the day. He was exciting to see and his sound was unique. Even his voice was unique. Most of the

pop world remembers him from "Dock of the Bay," about when he went out to Monterey to play for the hippies at that festival. Otis could really milk a tune out. He had a begging thing to his voice. He would get every ounce of emotion out of one word. Whatever Otis does, he makes it his.

#### Funky Chicken

Artist: Rufus Thomas

Release Date: 1997

Rufus believed in singing humorous songs. He could take a nursery rhyme and make something about it – in fact he did that with "Old McDonald Had a Farm" – parts one and two! Rufus came out of vaudeville, and he honed his craft there, so he was doing humor from the jump, like "The Preacher and the Bear" or "Itch and Scratch." And he had some funky rhythms in there, like "Boogie Ain't Nuttin' (But Gettin' Down)" and "Turn Your Damper Down," and if you ever heard him do a slow tune, he had a nice vibrato. People need to hear some raw R&B with some humor in it and Rufus provided that. He was a communicator. It made you feel good, really made you feel good.

#### Absolutely The Best

Artist: Ike And Tina Turner

Release Date: 1998

Tina is from Nutbush, Tennessee, less than twenty miles from where I was born. She is the most exciting person to see on stage. And Ike, people forget that he is one of the forebears of rock & roll – Sam Phillips had him at Sun Studios very early on and Ike had a thing called "Rocket '88," one of the first rock & roll tunes. And he put a lot of that experience to use with Tina. "I Idolize You" is one of their earlier tunes and they use the Ikettes very well on that one. Same with "Work Out Fine" – that's also a good use of the backup singers; they use reverb in the vamp really well there, too, like Phil Spector used to with that "wall of sound." Spector did "River Deep, Mountain High" with them and Tina just made it her own, it's a masterpiece. Same with the Stevie Wonder tune, "Living for the City." Ike was a great producer, too – you might not agree with his methods but he got results, know what I'm sayin'?

#### Seventh Wonder

Artist: James Brown

James always took advantage of what was going on at the time, like the hotpants fad. On tunes like "Cold Sweat" and "I Got the Feelin'," those rhythms and the way they combined with the horns, he just had it down. One of his great ballads

that dominated the airwaves was "It's a Man's World" – it's a minor key thing on the piano, and another tune that glorifies the woman. The world would be nothing without a woman or a girl. James always knew the right things to say. On "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" he was saying he's got something new – whatever he does the best, well, now he's got a brand new one. That was one of the great things about James, was that he kept evolving. My daughter sang with James for six years. She would always tell me she learned a lot from Mr. Brown. He had such command, especially live – when he'd play, people went crazy. That's what you hear on these tunes.

McLemore Avenue

Artist: Booker T. And The M.G.'s

Release Date: 1970

They cover some songs from the Beatles' Abbey Road album and the cover is a reference to the picture on the cover of Abbey Road, except they're crossing McLemore Avenue, which was the street that Stax was on. At Stax, we used to listen to everybody and we were really moved by the Beatles. We used to listen to some of those breaks they did, like on "Day Tripper," and that would find its way into our music. The way they did their rhythms was influential, like on "Here Comes the Sun," that rhythm was offbeat, but still on the beat like some jazz tunes. When the Stax group went to England, it was a huge hit – Booker T., Otis, Sam & Dave, we started a great kinship with British music and British audiences. A year or so later the Beatles were supposed to come to Stax but somebody let it slip out and it spread like wildfire and girls camped out and everything, and they had to cancel.

Only The Strong Survive

Artist: Original Soundtrack

Release Date: 2004

D.A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus made a documentary about some of us Stax people that came out a couple of years ago, and everybody was still great. That whole film was a slice of the '60s and '70s. R&B had a huge reigning position in popular music then. You hear the tunes on this album, you can hear that. This is the unadulterated R&B – it's right there in the chords and the rhythms and subject matter – the things that went on in the hood, the thing that people loved about the hood, it's all in there. In the live show, people stretch the tunes out a bit – they want to capture the whole essence of the moment, maybe talk about what they saw go down backstage and the whole scene. You have a live audience and you have to work your audience. It's not like a record – it's a beautiful exchange. You get so much from the audience and you take your time and do it... do it 'til you're satisfied.

Best of the Staple Singers

Artist: The Staple Singers

Release Date: 1990

That music just makes you feel real good. The Staple Singers came out of true raw gospel and they were a family and they had their harmonies the way a family would have. It was raw and it was pure – "I'll Take you There," that bass line, it's raw, man. And Mavis, her vocalizing, oh man, she made those different sounds, guttural sounds down deep down in the throat, or she could improvise and scat. Pops played his guitar with that tremolo, the way you sing in church. It took me back to the old country days when I was a kid in church – you'd tap your feet and it would kick up little clouds of dirt on the floor. That's what it makes you want to do. Thank God Stax had the know-how to capture that and present it to the world. They came along at a time when the Civil Rights struggle was in full bloom and they were thinking about better days. It was about brotherhood, which was needed in those times.

Mr. Big Stuff

Artist: Jean Knight

Release Date: 1971

That tune "Mr. Big Stuff," that's what it's all about. Just listen to those horn lines – Stax was always known for its horn lines. You know, Jean was different. She wasn't fat but she was full-figured and yet her voice had a sound to it that was very feminine. In a lot of her songs she's someone who was trying not to get beat out of something, a feisty character. Like in "You City Slicker," she's a country girl and defending against this city guy, or on "Call Me Your Fool If You Want To" – she just doesn't care what people say about her. Those tunes she chose, they meant something to her, like "Why I Keep Living These Memories," it's obvious those were good memories and she was going to keep going back to them.

Ultimate Isaac Hayes: Can You Dig It? (Disc 1)

Artist: Isaac Hayes

Release Date: 2005

This is a great collection from the early Stax days, very comprehensive. It contains so many poignant tunes and shows how I became Black Moses and the #1 seller at Stax. It's how I got to where I am today – the beginning of the journey. These tunes depict the times and express true soul music, too. As well as songs that I myself wrote, there are things I wrote with my writing partner Dave Porter ("Help Me Love"), duets (myself and Dionne Warwick on "By The Time I Get To Phoenix/Say A Little Prayer") and something I also became famous for:

reinterpreting other artist's songs, like Burt Bacharach's "The Look Of Love" and "I Can't Help It (If I'm Still in Love With You)" which was originally a country song by Hank Williams. There are some film themes in there, too: "Shaft" (of course!) and "Theme from the Men." Also check out "Title Theme from Three Tough Guys" which was recently used in Kill Bill: Volume One and Two.