

The Cambridge Companion to

POP AND ROCK

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Star profiles I

ELVIS PRESLEY, THE BEATLES, BOB DYLAN,
JIMI HENDRIX, THE ROLLING STONES, JAMES BROWN,
MARVIN GAYE

The history of popular music is a history of pop stars. The music industry is organised around star-making: stars are the best guarantors of sales to a fickle public. Pop fans are almost always fans of particular musicians who seem to speak specially to them. Dance music remains unusual in not being star-based (and even here the top disc jockeys are at the top because they attract personal followings). Stars embody the shifts of taste, the changing musical alliances, the new ways of doing things that mark pop history. And the paradox here is that much as record companies seek to make and market stars, the biggest pop acts have always been surprising, their success revealing to the money-makers market needs and interests they hadn't previously understood. The biggest pop stars change the way pop works and their careers are worth noting – and celebrating – for that reason.

Few people would dispute the key names in the making of rock 'n' roll and then rock as new forms of popular music in the 1950s and 1960s: Elvis Presley still stands best for rock 'n' roll itself, a glorious, flawed, youthful hybrid of American sounds – rhythm and blues, country, bluegrass, black and white church music, easy listening ballads, novelty numbers. Between them the Beatles and Bob Dylan (moving from opposite ends of the popular musical spectrum: everyday commercial hits, deep-rooted folk songs) delineated a new kind of pop cultural ambition, while the Rolling Stones best symbolise the resulting marketing of rock as the most successful commercial popular music ever. And even while the new rock stars reached unprecedented levels of wealth, power and hedonistic indulgence, none of these musicians forgot that their music was made in dialogue with ever challenging African-American sounds – with funk (and, especially, James Brown), with the jazz-inflected, improvisational genius of Jimi Hendrix, above all with soul music, with Motown, with a kind of emotive singing which by the 1970s had become a white pop norm. Marvin Gaye's career seems exemplary here, if only because of the drama of his own shifting sense of what black American pop music meant.

*Fritzsche et al., Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock
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Elvis Presley

Elvis Presley was one of the great popular singers of the twentieth century. As a musician he had two particular qualities. First, he sang with a remarkable physicality. His body was in his voice, so to speak, whether in the full voluptuousness of his ballad singing, or in the skittering playfulness of his up-tempo tracks. Second, he had a remarkable range of singing styles (to match his unusual tonic range – from bass to falsetto). Rock 'n' roll is often characterised as a blend of country music and rhythm and blues, but Elvis threw much more into the mix – religious and secular songs, Tin Pan Alley and Neapolitan pop, novelty numbers and folk tunes. As a young man he had not so much the ambition as the confidence to remake every kind of music to his own ends, and the results in the first three years of his recording life, from 1955–8, as Presley entered his twenties, is an uninhibited showcase of American popular song. Presley sang without the introspection of a Frank Sinatra, but with an equal mastery of a song's rhythmic dynamics and an unprecedented pleasure in the act of singing itself. The result (particularly when he was seen performing too – on stage or television screen) was sexually electric. Presley may not have been the first pop idol, but he was the first singer to embody the appeal of youthfulness for its own sake (at the same time as James Dean was doing the same thing as a film star).

In pop terms, then, Presley very quickly became first a phenomenon (in terms of records sold and fan devotion) and then a myth. The story of talent wasted, innocence perverted, came to be the rock story. Rock musicians (unlike country or rhythm and blues or mainstream pop performers) are expected to do their best work at the start of their careers, to sell out to commerce and to be corrupted by fame, and Presley's career was the archetype: signed up as a young man to a local independent label, Sun Records, which refused the genre and racial musical distinctions which were then the music biz norm; taken over by a shrewd but unimaginative manager, Colonel Tom Parker, who had no interest in music but a sharp eye for a quick buck; sold by Sun to a major label, RCA, which (with the help of the army) curbed Presley's more anarchic musical tendencies and sold him globally as a slick white entertainer, the good natured, unthreatening star of countless bad Hollywood films. And even when Presley did briefly assert his own musical interests, in his famous Television Special in December 1968, these were soon to be corrupted once more, into a bloated self-parodying Las Vegas routine. By the time Presley died there seemed to be something grotesque about him. It's no wonder that 'Dead Elvis' became a pop phenomenon in his own right, an object for tabloid excess and bizarre impersonation.

achievements all the more remarkable (not least in his denial of a cultural colour bar) it was taken to mean that everything he did was irredeemably trashy. It also means, though, that Presley's career is better understood in terms of country music than rock. Elvis Presley died, at the age of forty-two, in Memphis, Tennessee, a city to which he had moved at the age of thirteen. He had rarely travelled abroad, and for all his Hollywood and Las Vegas success his friends were old buddies, family, rather than stars or fellow musicians. One reason why Graceland became, after his death, the most visited historic site in the United States was, as Karal Ann Marling has noted, not because it is particularly exotic but because it is precisely the kind of house that Southern working-class Americans would have built if they'd come into a bit of money – it's furnished from catalogues! Presley, to put this another way, was a particular kind of populist. His remarkable self-taught musical skills were put to the end of a sentimentality, a religiosity, a patriotism, but also of a loyalty, a *joie de vivre*, a tolerance that remain the organising foci of country music. Elvis Presley was a superstar, a media phenomenon who remained, literally, the boy next door. Of all pop stars he was the one who could have had everything but (and this is what rock critics have never understood) didn't really want it.

The Beatles

The Beatles were the most important twentieth-century pop stars not simply because of their legacy of songs nor even because of the scale of their commercial success but because they forever changed pop's social and musical meanings and possibilities. At the heart of their impact on pop history were two qualities that are taken for granted now but were unusual then, in the 1960s. First, autonomy. The Beatles were a remarkably self-contained unit, writing their own songs, determining their own production values, making their own career moves. Contrast Cliff Richard, who was part of the same generation and began by following the same skiffle/rock'n'roll route. Second, ambition. The Beatles were the first pop musicians to challenge the clear distinction between high and low cultural spaces, to treat pop music as an art world. They were thus instrumental in the late sixties emergence of rock music. The Beatles were a phenomenon, in short, not only because of their own musical talents but because of the particular historical and social circumstances in which these talents were developed. In effect, the Beatles had three quite different careers. They were remarkable because of the way in which these careers meshed, but at any one career moment the next stage could not have been predicted. From 1957–62 the Beatles were essentially a cover band. Starting as a



Figure 1 Elvis Presley
© Redferns. Photo: RB

The truth of this Elvis story is less important than its mythical weight, but there's no doubt too that Presley was treated all his life with a class-based contempt, as obvious in the tone of his television show hosts at the start of his career as in Albert Goldman's posthumous biography. Presley was 'Southern white trash', a 'redneck' and rather than this making his

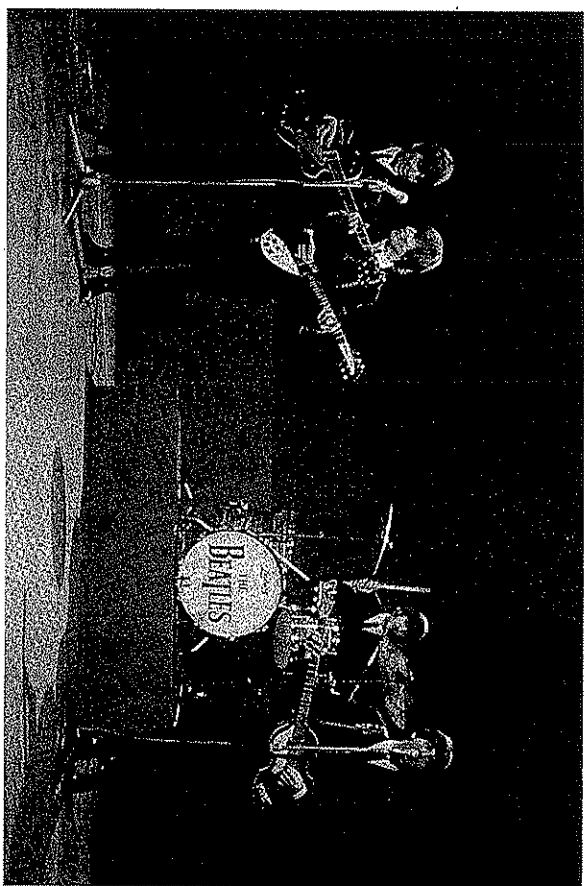


Figure 2 The Beatles
© Redferns. Photo: David Redfern

schoolboy skiffle group, by their late teens they could just about make a living playing the clubs of Liverpool and Hamburg. The skills they learnt were performing skills: developing a sound insistent enough to cut through club conversation, distinct enough to give the Beatles an edge among the competing cover bands, clever enough to reproduce the studio effects of American rock 'n' roll and rhythm and blues and Motown with minimal technology and resources. At this stage the Beatles were learning a trade (the Dutch scholar, Lutgart Mutsaers, has argued persuasively they were in fact influenced by the Moluccan bands that dominated the Northern European club circuit at the start of the 1960s) and all that made them unusual was their tinge of bohemia – John Lennon and then guitarist, Stuart Sutcliffe, were art school students who were inspired by the distinct Liverpool and Hamburg nightlife mix of sailors, drinkers, painters and teenagers.

From 1962 to 1966 the Beatles rewrote the rules of British pop. Their local Liverpool popularity was translated into first national and then international stardom; for the first time ever there was a mass United States market for a British act. While the Beatles needed the selling power of Britain's biggest record company, EMI, and the promotional support of a national broadcaster, the BBC, for their commercial success, their career was unusual in several respects. Their manager, Brian Epstein, from a

Liverpool music retail company, was not part of the London showbiz scene; their EMI producer, George Martin, was not a pop hack but a versatile engineer – he had been producing Peter Sellers. The Beatles themselves were not naive teenagers but seasoned musicians who were confident that they could write songs for themselves better than any Denmark Street pro. They also had distinct personalities and an intelligence that made them a joy for journalists and radio programme producers; their success defined a new kind of pop audience. The contrast of old and new is obvious in the covers of the group's first two LPs: from chirpy working-class entertainers in sharp suits to moody students in black polo necks. The quality of their songs and the timing of their rise – coinciding with a Labour government and a new kind of youth-fixated liberal consumerism – obviously underpinned their phenomenal success, but just as important was their ability to use this success, rather than be used by it. The Beatles became part of a musicians' community that was more influenced by art school than show biz thinking, by the competition for peer prestige than for chart places.

In 1966 the Beatles played their last concert and became hippies. In retrospect this seems inevitable but at the time it marked a positive and startling decision to trade in their status as pop leaders to become youth cultural followers. Socially this meant public engagement with the trappings of hippie culture, most significantly drugs; musically it meant the final move from crowd-pleasing pop stars to studio-based artists. *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *The White Album* pleased the crowds anyway, but these LPs also symbolised the Beatles' commitment to making music that was experimental, eclectic and, in the newly coined late sixties term, 'progressive'. And if the Beatles lacked the instrumental virtuosity and compositional sophistication of the new breed of progressive rockers, they retained their melodic gifts and sense of humour. When the band broke up in 1970 they were still at the forefront of a pop cultural revolution that would have been inconceivable only ten years earlier, when they took to the stage in Hamburg.

Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan was born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Minnesota in 1941, moved to New York City in 1961, and by 1964 had helped revitalise that city's folk scene as the charismatic voice of a new singer-songwriter movement that soon spread across the Atlantic. Dylan then went electric, and in 1965–6 made three albums, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde* that can still be claimed as the greatest single body of work in rock's history. They certainly had a profound effect

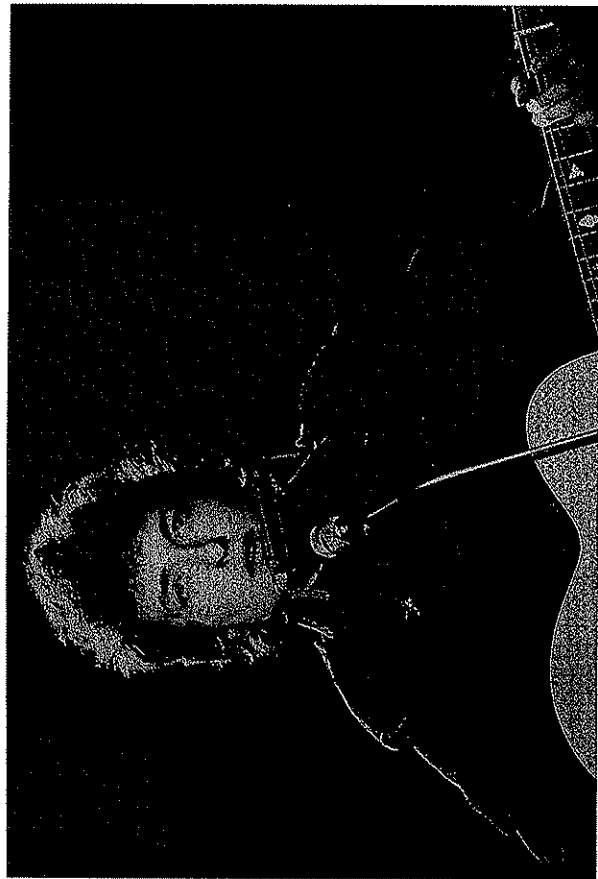


Figure 3 Bob Dylan
© Redferns. Photo: Val Wilmer (?)

on Dylan's musical peers, and equally inspired a new sort of writing, rock criticism, and a new sort of pop fan, the pursuer of meaning rather than pin ups. In commercial terms, though, Dylan never sold records at the unprecedented rate of the rock superstars, which may account for one of the odder aspects of his later career, an almost obsessive touring life of live performances, performances marked as much by Dylan's unconventional and even contemptuous account of his own songs as by the need to connect with his remarkably faithful fans.

Dylan emerged from the folk world and there can be no doubting his love of and sensitivity to the history of American popular music, whether in his initial admiration of Woody Guthrie, in his impressive repertoire of songs in his first folk club and festival performances, in the exploration of the byways of the American vernacular in the sessions with the Band eventually released as *The Basement Tapes*, or simply in his refusal to take much note of genre distinction – blues, commercial country and pop songs were all grist to his mill. But the folk music scene in which Dylan was first involved was not exactly the traditional and political scene that had been sustained by left-wing ideologues in the 1940s and 1950s (which was one reason why Dylan was greeted with both excitement and hostility, in the pages of *Sing Out!*, for example). The New York club scene which Dylan occupied is better understood as a bohemian than a folk community. On

the one hand, it was marked by an anti-establishment politics that had more to do with hedonism than socialism, and which was as sceptical of class solidarity as of any other social convention. Dylan wrote political songs and helped bring the term 'protest' into the pop lexicon, but his politics were not organisational. On the other hand, New York's bohemia was haunted by romantics, by would-be poets and performance artists, and it was with these figures (rather than, say, Pete Seeger) that Dylan most obviously identified. What counted here was an individual sensibility expressed with a personal style, using elliptical imagery, a poetic diction, a degree of mystery.

Bob Dylan's great contribution to rock was to suggest that here was a form of music as adept as any other as such a romantic art form. But in doing this (and here Dylan was himself a sixties figure, a Beatles fan) he also utilised these aspects of the pop process that the folk world had defined itself against in the 1950s – not just the use of amplified instruments, but the trappings of stardom, packaging and promotion. These were an aspect of Dylan's original success just as his refusal even now to fall into rock routines is an aspect of his artistic credibility. It is fitting that the American musician with the best understanding of the traditions of vernacular American song should have the most individual, variable and cursed voice in rock. There's no singer-songwriter in the last thirty-five years who doesn't owe something of their craft to Bob Dylan; nobody else has written such an astonishing variety of songs; and there's no one who has been such a loved star while remaining so true to the bohemian ideal of being beholden to nothing but oneself.

Jimi Hendrix

Jimi Hendrix was born in Seattle in 1942 and played guitar in bands throughout his time at high school and in the United States Airborne Division, before making his living as a musician in various rhythm and blues singers' backing groups. He was brought to Britain in 1966 and the Jimi Hendrix Experience, with Noel Redding on bass and Mitch Mitchell on drums, was put together to showcase Hendrix's technical skills. From the start, with the hit singles 'Hey Joe' and 'Purple Haze' in 1966–7, the Jimi Hendrix Experience had a major impact on the British musical scene. On the one hand, the group's success suggested the commercial possibilities of psychedelic pop. The trio was put together if not cynically then at least with an eye to the market (it hardly sprang organically from a musical scene or network); great care was taken with the trio's image – not least by exploiting awed British attitudes towards a real African-American! At a



Figure 4 Jimi Hendrix
© Redferns. Photo: Michael Ochs Archives

pop moment of beat groups, Hendrix offered a new type of individual stardom: applying the lessons he'd learnt on the rhythm and blues circuit he brought a sense of spectacle to the actual act of guitar playing – his first appearance on *Top of the Pops* was a genuinely transforming moment. On the other hand, there could be no doubting Hendrix's musical skills, his versatility and invention as an electric guitarist, his demonstration that the instrument was central for adapting the expressive power of the blues to the vast spaces of the stadium show. Following Hendrix, the electric guitar (rather than the voice) became the key rock instrument, the symbol of the music's sexual power and live performance (in which records were just the starting point for a show of instrumental aggression) became the key rock ritual. In the short term this meant the formation of other guitar-focused supergroups like Cream and Led Zeppelin; in the longer term it led to heavy metal and mainstream hard white rock.

Hendrix was a black American musician, though, and in some ways his most significant effects were on his own musical heritage rather than on British or European rock fantasies. For a start his recorded legacy is a reminder that rock was as much a black as a white musical form: Hendrix's

influence as a sonic pioneer was carried through funk to rap. But the essence of Hendrix's musical approach – the emphasis on improvisation, the exploration of amplification as itself a source of new sorts of sound and sound effect – was as a jazz man and, in consequence, he was the first rock musician to interest jazz performers like Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock, both in their 1970s pursuit of 'jazz rock' and in their general pursuit of the improvisational possibilities of volume, distortion, noise.

Hendrix died in 1970. For all his acknowledged influence on rock music he was never really happy with the starring role that had been written for him, and for the last couple of years of his life he had, with old airforce friend, Billy Cox, and a new group, the Band of Gypsies, been trying to make a more dense and darker music. Most rock musicians who die young do so with a sense of a career finished – the death (Elvis Presley, Brian Jones, Janis Joplin, even John Lennon and Kurt Cobain) is more regretted for what has been than for what was likely to come. Hendrix's death was different. There is a real sense that in his case his best music was still to come, if only because he'd never really worked with musicians with anything like his own technical or imaginative skills.

The Rolling Stones

The Rolling Stones are the archetypal rock group, not least because of the seemingly effortless way in which they've absorbed the contradictions of rock stardom: art vs commerce, rebellion vs conformity, artifice vs authenticity, etc. Formed in 1962–3 in the London rhythm and blues scene of trad jazz purists and art school stylists, the Stones were very quickly paying equal attention to the credible pop success of the Beatles and, under the canny guidance of their equally young manager, Andrew Loog Oldham, they became the first British blues group to translate the non-conformist values of the blues scene into the terms of youth culture (through the all-purpose notion of rebellion, for example). As live performers they appealed as much for the charisma of singer, Mick Jagger, and guitarists, Keith Richards and Brian Jones, as for their musical commitment, and the key to their rise as number two British group to the Beatles was the unexpectedly crafty songwriting skill of Jagger/Richard. Employing a more sardonic and contemptuous tone of voice than the Beatles, and fusing Jagger's rather camp sexuality with Richard's single-minded sense of rhythm (discarding Jones' prissier, more progressive ambitions on the way), the Stones developed a uniquely threatening pop style that culminated in the United Kingdom and United States success of 'I Can't Get No (Satisfaction)'.

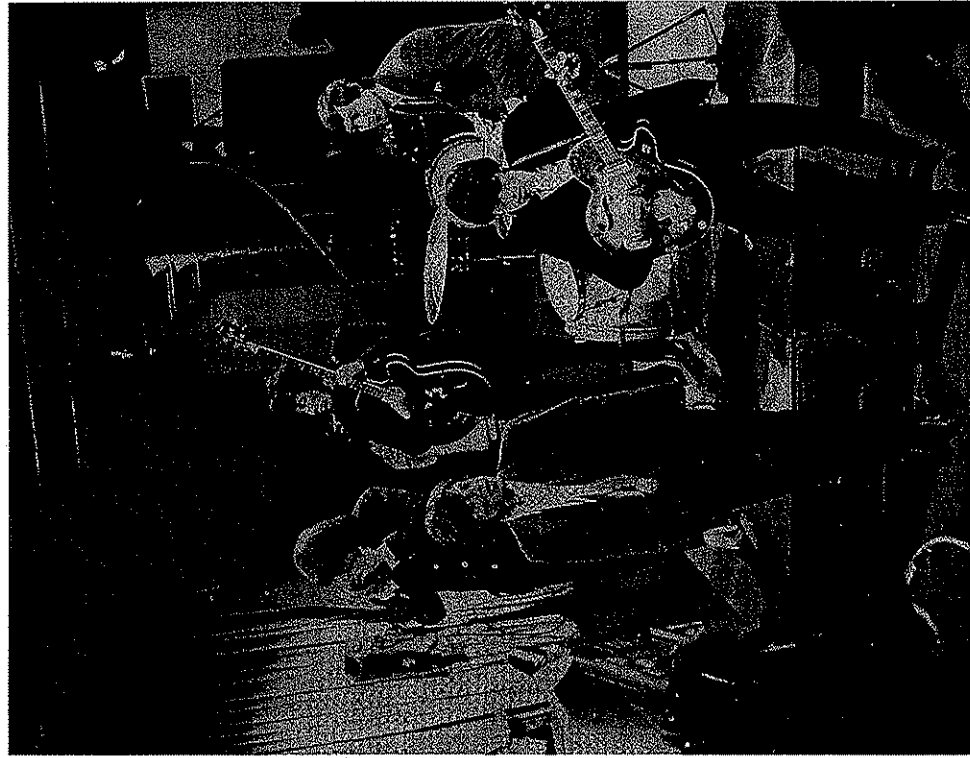


Figure 5 The Rolling Stones
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In the later 1960s, although the Stones made gestures at both the frillier end of psychedelia and mod pop, their music developed in darker and more universal ways, both reflecting Keith Richard's genuine obsession with the odder back alleys of black American (and Caribbean) music, reflected most clearly on *Beggars Banquet*, but also as a marketing ploy: the Stones as the baddies to the Beatles as goodies (a ploy which had its own personal consequences – the Stones were pursued by police and press in ways the Beatles weren't). The Stones' image as dangerous degenerates was confirmed in 1969 by the murderous violence during their performance at the Altamont Festival in California but, in the end, the association of the

Stones with hedonistic excess cemented their place as a rock legend, a place best mapped out by perhaps their greatest record, *Exile on Main Street*.

Thereafter the Stones' menace became a matter of performing style rather than either musical adventure or abandoned lifestyle. Since 1972 the Stones have made little music that has had either commercial or emotional impact; they have paid scant attention to changes in musical fashion; their various solo projects have been matters of self-interest only. And yet even at the end of the century they remained the biggest grossing act on the live circuit. Every two or three years the Stones release an album simply as a way of promoting a world tour on which they can enact once more 'The Rolling Stones'. At one level the sight is ridiculous – a bunch of ageing millionaires, long part of the showbiz establishment – playing out an unconvincing stage version of rebellion. But even if Mick Jagger's vocals get ever more perfunctory, the band's rhythmic power, driven by stoker extraordinary, Keith Richard, is as insistent as ever, and the Stones' live show remains the first rock concert choice of high and low life alike.

James Brown

James Brown occupies an uneasy place in the pop pantheon. A great entertainer, of course, but one is also reminded, tactfully, that he's been to prison, had woman and money trouble, and musically too his reputation is rough rather than respectable. There's a disruptive force to his act. It makes demands on life – for excitement, pleasure, oblivion – that by their nature can't be satisfied but which, in Brown's case, aren't therefore sublimated as individual songs of love and sex (or God and redemption) but remain urgently social. It's as if Brown gives voice to the groundlings of frustration, to the popular refusal of routine that has always haunted the bourgeoisie. Brown is treated even by rock historians with a certain wariness. In all those Q lists and customer surveys of the greatest records of the twentieth century it's Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder and Miles Davis even, who get to be the token black rock names. Not James Brown. Not the Godfather of Soul.

Brown's musical career began in the 1940s, in a musical era when an audience, a following, was still put together by live rather than television appearances, by nonstop touring of the chitling circuit. Success was not a matter of market research and calculated crossovers but depended on a hustler's instinct for popular demand and on a performer's rhetorical power to persuade a crowd that he could meet the demand. It was then that Brown developed his ability to make time stop, to suggest that nothing mattered outside the setting of his show. In fact, his career exemplifies the continuity between jazz and soul: Brown was as much



Figure 6 James Brown
© Reederns. Photo: David Ellis

bandleader/arranger/taskmaster as he was singer/showman, and his concerts were as much focused on ensemble toughness and precision, on the controlled aggression of his instrumental soloists, as on his own showmanship. His Famous Flames became a finishing school for generations of session musicians, and alongside the even more eccentric figures of Sun Ra and George Clinton, James Brown kept going the most important of all African-American musical traditions – collective improvisation – long after it was economically feasible to do so.

Crudely speaking, the history of black American music since 1950s rhythm and blues can be divided between two strands – soul (as developed by Ray Charles) and funk (as developed by James Brown). The same musical elements (jazz, blues, gospel) were developed to different social ends. Soul music is a form of seduction, music as a language of personal persuasion, performance as ingratiation. Funk is in your face, the sound of musicians strutting, challenging you to resist the power of their desires not yours. By and large (because it better suits commercial sales processes) soul is now the dominant mode of contemporary pop; funk remains unsettling. No James Brown track could be classified as easy listening.

James Brown is still the musician most likely to be sampled – his voice (over which he's managed to keep some sort of legal control), his riffs (over which he hasn't). His sampling value isn't so much that his sound is

distinctive – the James Brown shriek sending a shiver down the spine even in a snatched moment on the dance floor, but that his music was the precursor of both rap (in its vocal tone) and drum and bass (in its rhythmic form). The characteristic James Brown sound might be labelled drum'n'bass'n'horns: a music constructed from beats rather than melodies, from the emotional effects of small shifts in pulse rather than from balladic changes of chord. Brown (this is his place in twentieth-century pop history) first mapped the funk aesthetic, in which repetition, the changing same, is a source of exhilaration. This is not by any definition primitive art but there is something about Brown's show and his persona that doesn't square with modernism. For all the obvious sophistication, the cosmopolitanism of funk, it retained something of its rural African-American origins, a sense of different, stranger rhythms than those of modern city life.

Marvin Gaye

Marvin Gaye had the classic soul career. He began singing in a church choir (his father was a minister); joined a secular singing group, the Marquesses; was recruited into the more successful Moonglows; and followed the Moonglows' leader/producer, Harvey Fuqua, into the new Motown records set-up in Detroit, being employed initially as a session drummer and backing singer. He played drums on Little Stevie Wonder's first records, co-wrote Martha and the Vandellas' 'Dancing in the Streets', and was first promoted under his own name as a kind of uptown pop ballader. In the 1960s he became the epitome of Motown's version of soul, both with his own hits like 'How Sweet It Is To Be Loved by You' (1965) and 'I Heard Through the Grapevine' (Motown's best-ever selling single, first released in 1968) and in his duets, particularly with Tammi Terrell. The late 1960s rise of a new black political consciousness and a new use of soul music was best reflected at Motown by Gaye's album, *What's Going On*, in 1971 and film soundtrack, *Trouble Man*, in 1972. 'Let's Get It On', released in 1973, marked another new era – sexual politics, disco and a new dance floor sensibility. Gaye's personal troubles (and his move from Motown) limited his impact for the rest of the decade but 1982's *Sexual Healing* influenced another generation of producers. In 1984 Gaye died, murdered by his father.

There are many artists who could claim to represent 'the Motown sound' (no other record label has come close to assembling such an astonishing roster of writers, players, producers and singers), not least the label's female stars, like Diana Ross and the Supremes. But Marvin Gaye's

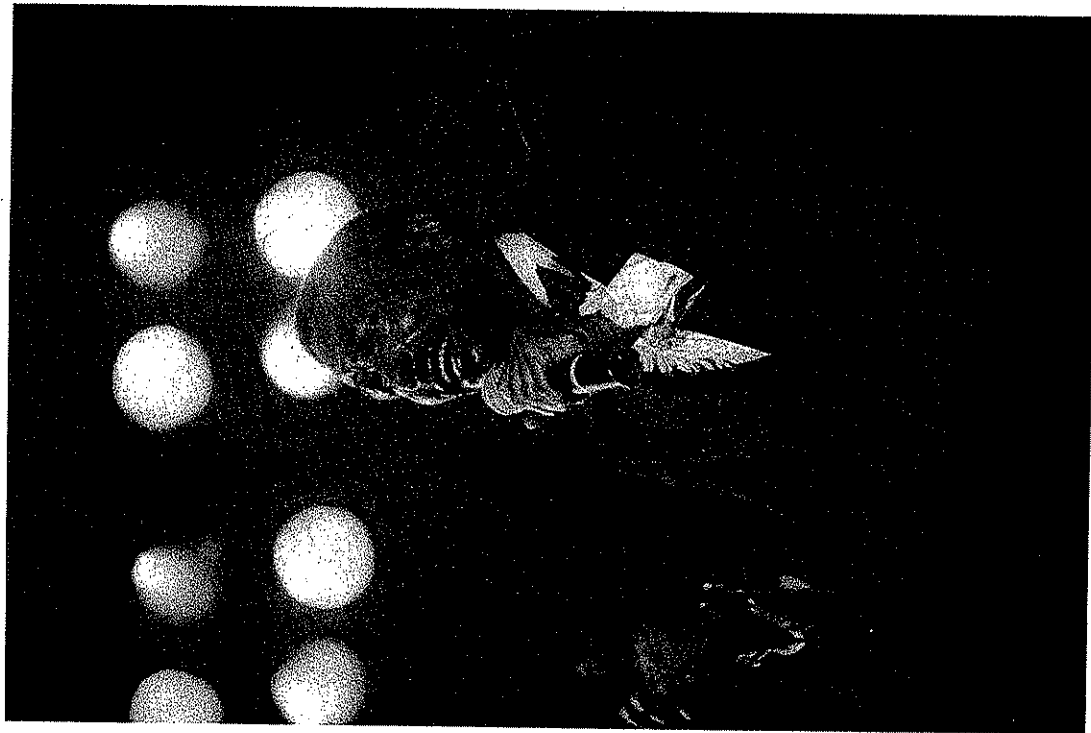


Figure 7 Marvin Gaye
© Redfern. Photo: David Redfern

career (in its sloughs as well as its highs) does touch on all aspects of the Motown story and, in particular on the tensions of sex and race and commerce. He had, to begin with, the perfect Motown voice, at once light and intense and with a rhythmic nimbleness which enabled him to cover all bases of sexual feeling. Like the crooners before them, soul singers were essentially intimate, taking a particular kind of submissive aggression

from soul music and (following the lead of Sam Cooke) adapting it to the conventions of pop courtship. And, again as with the crooners, the soul voice represented an ambiguous masculinity: soul singers seemed feminised in their vocal delicacy, their offered vulnerability, even as they pulled all the strings of the seduction scene. And it was Gaye (rather than, say, Smokey Robinson or David Ruffin) who put soul music at the heart of the explicit sexual politics of the 1970s and 1980s. The issues here can't be separated from race, on the one hand, and money, on the other. Motown was founded by Berry Gordy precisely as a label which would sell black music to white audiences. Its politics lay in keeping control of the production (and profit-making) process but its economic success depended on giving white listeners what they wanted. In terms of the politics of race – and in the context of the Civil Rights movement and the development of Black American consciousness – this was always a policy which made sense economically (Motown was indeed one of the most successful black enterprises ever and almost unique as a major black-owned record company) but with confusing consequences culturally: who were Motown acts performing for? And in the context of rock and its ideology of anti-commercialism (by the end of the 1960s it was Motown records that were most often dismissed by rock fans and critics as 'commercial rubbish') even the label's success in the white market place was a political issue. Gaye, like the label itself, never really solved this problem – how to be a credible commercial success in a rock-dominated market – and he died before the white dance floor reclaimed Motown as one of its inspirations.

Gaye's death itself – its very horror – suggests one final way in which Gaye can stand for Motown: in the role of family in his career. Motown's success depended on the extraordinary web of family and friendship ties which brought its musicians together in the first place and kept them all involved with each other thereafter. Gaye himself was married to Berry Gordy's sister; much of the music he made was an effect of longstanding loyalties and commitments. This sort of networking is important for popular music careers generally, but in Motown and other black music scenes, with long experience of being exploited and well aware that American music business regulation, whether copyright laws or union rules, were racially biased, trust was inevitably based more on personal than contractual ties (which meant in turn that breaches of trust were tangled up with a personal sense of betrayal). For Gaye as for many Motown acts a musical career meant both escaping from the Motown family and the resulting sense of drift. And it remains an indictment of the American music business that for all the magnificent music he made, Marvin Gaye somehow was a musician whose promise was never properly fulfilled.