



11-9-2009

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Recommended Citation

Webb '13, Katie, "Performance to Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Motown" (2009). *News and Events*. 456.

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November 9, 2009

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Performance to Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Motown

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – A performance in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Motown record label will be held in the Young Main Lounge of Memorial Center on Nov. 20. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. and the show begins at 7 p.m.

The event is free for all Illinois Wesleyan faculty, staff, and students and \$5.00 for the general public.

Illinois Wesleyan's acapella groups, A Touch of Class and Suspended, will be performing along with Illinois Wesleyan sophomore Stefan Riley, faculty member Erin Mulliken, Associate Professor of Music Carren Moham, and special guest, Indiana University's Soul Revue. There will also be door prizes, raffles, trivia games, and displays set up around the room to encourage audience participation.

"Since this is in celebration of Motown's 50th anniversary, I feel like we need to educate and not just entertain," said Roshaunda Ross, director of Multicultural Student Affairs. "This generation is losing an important part of history. Rap and pop stars sample parts of these Motown songs. Young people hear it and they like it, but they don't know the history behind it."

Motown was a group of record labels founded by Berry Gordy, Jr. in 1959 in Detroit as Tamla Records and incorporated as Motown Record Corporation in 1960. As the first record label to be owned by an African-American to primarily feature African-American artists who achieved cross-over success, is said to have played an important role in the racial integration of popular music. Over the next decade, Motown had 110 top 10 hits with artists such as Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, The Supremes, The Four Tops, and The Jackson 5 all working under their label.

Although they are most famous for a pop influenced style of soul music classified as "The Motown Sound," Motown has owned or distributed releases from over 45 different subsidiaries in varying genres, including country, gospel, spoken word, rock, rap, and R&B. The trademark "Motown Sound" was characterized by the use of tambourines to accent the back beat, prominent but melodic electric bass guitar lines, distinctive melody and chord structures, and a

call and response style singing that originated in gospel music. Traces of all of these can still be seen in popular music today.

In 1972, Motown moved its headquarters to Los Angeles and became involved in the movie industry, producing hits such as *Lady Sings the Blues*, *Mahogany*, *Thank God It's Friday*, *The Wiz*, and *Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon* in the mid-70s and 80s. During the 1990s, Motown was home to successful artists such as Boys II Men and Brian McKnight, and in 1999 it became a part of the Universal Music Group.

For additional information, contact Ross at (309) 556-3412 or mcaffaris@iwu.edu.

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