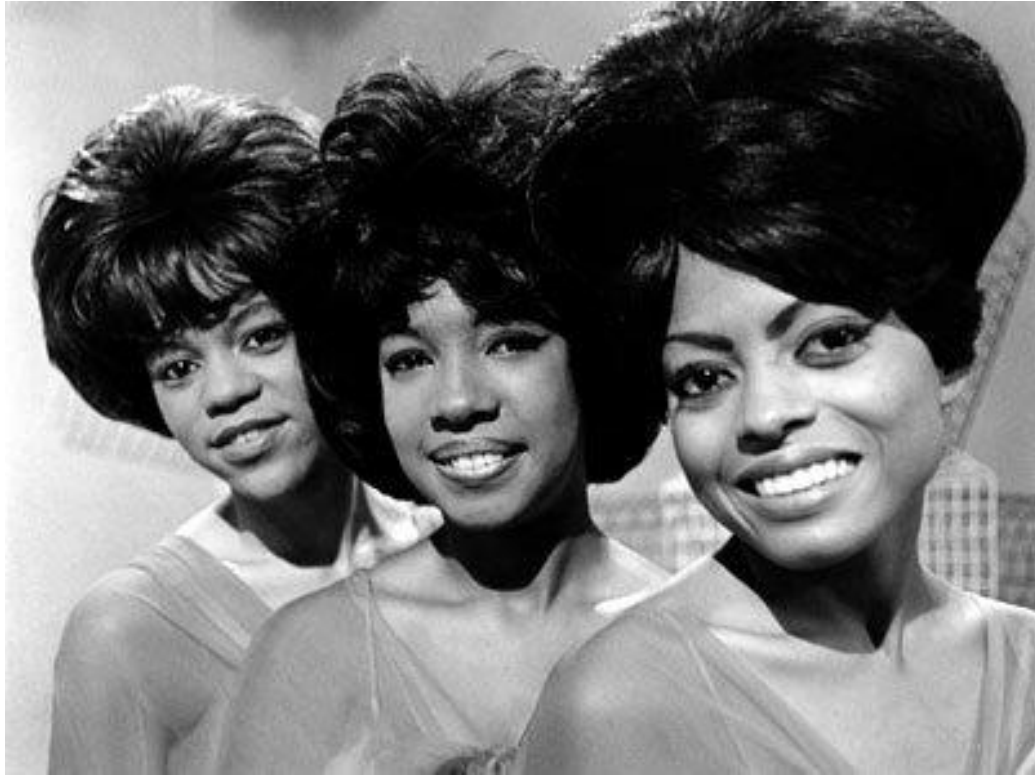




The Supremes



The Supremes

The Supremes



The Supremes: Diana Ross (right), Mary Wilson (center), Florence Ballard (left) performing "My World Is Empty Without You" on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1966.^[1]

Background information

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Also known as | The Primettes; Diana Ross & the Supremes |
| Origin | Detroit, Michigan, United States |
| Genres | R&B, doo-wop, soul, pop, disco |
| Years active | 1959–1977 |
| Labels | Lu Pine (Primettes), Motown (Supremes) |
| Associated acts | The Temptations |
| Past members | Diana Ross Mary Wilson Florence Ballard Betty McGlown Barbara Martin Cindy Birdsong Jean Terrell Lynda Laurence Scherrie Payne Susaye Greene |

The Supremes were an American female singing group and the premier act of Motown Records during the 1960s. Originally founded as **the Primettes** in Detroit, Michigan, in 1959, the Supremes were the most commercially successful of Motown's acts and are, to date, America's most successful vocal group^[2] with 12 number one singles on the *Billboard* Hot 100. Most of these hits were written and produced by Motown's main songwriting and production team, Holland–Dozier–Holland. At their peak in the mid-1960s, the Supremes rivaled the Beatles in worldwide popularity,^[3] and their success made it possible for future African American R&B and soul musicians to find mainstream success.

Founding members Florence Ballard, Mary Wilson, Diana Ross, and Betty McGlown, all from the Brewster-Douglass public housing project in Detroit,^[3] formed the Primettes as the sister act to the Primes (with Paul Williams and Eddie Kendricks, who went on to form the Temptations). Barbara Martin replaced McGlown in 1960, and the group signed with Motown the following year as the Supremes. Martin left the act in early 1962, and Ross, Ballard, and Wilson carried on as a trio.

During the mid-1960s, the Supremes achieved mainstream success with Ross as lead singer. In 1967, Motown president Berry Gordy renamed the group **Diana Ross & the Supremes**, and replaced Ballard with Cindy Birdsong. Ross left to pursue a solo career in 1970 and was replaced by Jean Terrell, at which point the group's name reverted to **the Supremes**. After 1972, the lineup changed more frequently; Lynda Laurence, Scherrie Payne, and Susaye Greene all became members of the group during the mid-1970s. The Supremes disbanded in 1977 after an 18-year run.

History

Origins



Frederick Douglass housing project in Detroit



"Baby Love"

"Baby Love", written and produced by Holland-Dozier-Holland in 1964, topped the charts in the UK and the US.

"Come See About Me"

"Come See About Me" topped the chart twice, replacing The Beatles' "I Feel Fine" in December 1964 and January 1965.

"Stop! In the Name of Love"

"Stop! In the Name of Love" was a number-one hit in the United States from March 21, 1965, through April 3, 1965.

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In 1958, Florence Ballard—a junior high school student living in the Brewster-Douglass housing projects in Detroit—met Paul Williams and Eddie Kendricks, two members of a Detroit male singing group known as the Primes. Since Ballard sang, as did Paul Williams' girlfriend Betty McGlown, the Primes's manager Milton Jenkins decided to create a sister group to the Primes called the Primettes. Ballard recruited her best friend Mary Wilson, who in turn recruited classmate Diane Ross. Mentored and funded by Jenkins, the Primettes began by performing hit

songs by artists such as Ray Charles and the Drifters at sock hops, social clubs and talent shows around the Detroit area. Receiving additional guidance from group friend and established performer Jesse Greer, the quartet quickly earned a local fan following.^[4] The girls crafted an age-appropriate style that was inspired by the collegiate dress of popular doo-wop group Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers;^[5] and, for the most part, Ballard, Ross and Wilson performed equal leads on songs. Within a few months, guitarist Marvin Tarplin was added to the Primettes' lineup – a move that helped distinguish the group from Detroit's many other aspiring acts by allowing the girls to sing live as opposed to lip-synch.^[6]

After winning a prestigious local talent contest,^[7] the Primettes' sights were set on making a record. In hopes of getting the group signed to the local upstart Motown label, in 1960 Ross asked an old neighbor, Miracles lead singer Smokey Robinson, to help the group land an audition for Motown executive Berry Gordy,^[8] who had already proven himself a capable songwriter.^[9] Robinson liked the girls and agreed to help, but he liked their guitarist even more; with the Primettes' permission he hired Tarplin, who became the guitarist for the Miracles. Robinson arranged for the Primettes to audition *a cappella* for Gordy – but Gordy, feeling the girls too young and inexperienced to be recording artists, encouraged them to return upon graduating from high school. Undaunted, later that year the Primettes recorded a single for Lu Pine Records (a label created just for them) entitled "Tears of Sorrow", which was backed with "Pretty Baby".^[10] The single, however, failed to find an audience.^[11] Shortly thereafter, McGlown became engaged and left the group.^[12] Local girl Barbara Martin was McGlown's quick replacement.

Determined to leave an impression on Gordy and join the stable of rising Motown stars, the Primettes frequented his Hitsville, U.S.A. recording studio every day after school.^[13] Eventually, they convinced Gordy to allow them to contribute hand claps and background vocals for the songs of other Motown artists including Marvin Gaye and Mary Wells.^[14] In January 1961, Gordy finally relented and agreed to sign the girls to his label – but under the condition that they change the name of their group.^[15] The Primes had by this time combined with Otis Williams & the Distant and would soon sign to Motown as the Temptations.^[16] Gordy gave Ballard a list of names to choose from that included suggestions such as "the Darleens", "the Sweet Ps", "the Melodees", "the Royaltones" and "the Jewelettes".^[17] Ballard chose "the Supremes", a name that Ross initially disliked as she felt it too masculine. Nevertheless, on January 15 the group signed with Motown as the Supremes.^[18] In the spring of 1962, Martin left the group to start a family. Thus, the newly named Supremes continued as a trio.^[19]

Between 1961 and 1963, the Supremes released eight singles, none of which charted in the Top 40 positions of the *Billboard* Hot 100. Jokingly referred to as the "no-hit Supremes" around Motown's Hitsville U.S.A. offices,^[20] the group attempted to compensate for their lack of hits by taking on any work available at the studio, including providing hand claps and singing backup for Motown artists such as Marvin Gaye and the Temptations. During these years, all three members took turns singing lead: Wilson favored soft ballads; Ballard favored soulful, hard-driving songs; and Ross favored mainstream pop songs. Most of their early material was written and produced by Berry Gordy or Smokey Robinson.^[21] In December 1963, the single "When the Lovelight Starts Shining Through His Eyes" peaked at number 23 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.^[22]

"Lovelight" was the first of many Supremes songs written by the Motown songwriting and production team known as Holland–Dozier–Holland.^[23] In late 1963, Berry Gordy chose Diane Ross - who began going by "Diana" in 1965 - as the official lead singer of the group. Ballard and Wilson were periodically given solos on Supremes albums, and Ballard continued to sing her solo number, "People", in concert for the next two years.^[24]


In the spring of 1964, the Supremes recorded the single "Where Did Our Love Go".^[1] The song was originally intended by Holland-Dozier-Holland for the Marvelettes, who rejected it. Although The Supremes disliked the song, the producers coerced them into recording it. In August 1964, while The Supremes toured as part of Dick Clark's *Caravan of Stars*, "Where Did Our Love Go" reached number one on the US pop charts, much to the surprise and delight of the group.^[25] It was also their first song to appear on the UK pop charts, where it reached number three.

"Where Did Our Love Go" was followed by four consecutive US number-one hits: "Baby Love" (which was also a number-one hit in the UK), "Come See About Me", "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Back in My Arms Again".^[26]

"Baby Love" was nominated for the 1965 Grammy Award for Best R&B Song.^[27]

Impact

The Supremes became the first black female performers of the rock era to embrace a more feminine image. Much of this was accomplished at the behest of Motown chief Berry Gordy and Maxine Powell, who ran Motown's in-house finishing school and Artist Development department.^[28] Unlike many of her contemporaries, Ross sang in a thin, calm voice, and her vocal styling was matched by having all three women embellish their femininity instead of imitate the qualities of male groups. Eschewing plain appearances and basic dance routines, The Supremes appeared onstage in detailed make-up and high-fashion gowns and wigs, and performed graceful choreography created by Motown choreographer Cholly Atkins. Powell told the group to "be prepared to perform before kings and queens." Gordy wanted the Supremes, like all of his performers, to be equally appealing to black and white audiences,^[29] and he sought to erase the image of black performers as being unrefined or lacking class.

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>"You Can't Hurry Love"</p> <p>"You Can't Hurry Love" was a number-one hit written and produced by Motown's main production team, Holland-Dozier-Holland, in 1966.</p> |
| <p><i>Problems playing this file? See media help.</i></p> | |

Public magazines such as *Time* and *The Detroit News* commented on the Supremes' polished presentation.^[30] *Time* called the Supremes the "pride of [the] Detroit [sound]" and described them as "three thrushes who have a touch of gospel and sweet lyrics like 'I'm standing at the crossroads of love'."^[30] Arnold S. Hirsch of *The Detroit News* said about the Supremes: "they don't scream or wail incoherently. An adult can understand nine out of every 10 words they sing. And, most astounding, melody can be clearly detected in every song."^[30] In addition, unlike most American vocal groups, the group members became easily identifiable by their fans, thanks partially to the cover of their album, *More Hits by the Supremes*, which each member was pictured separately on the front, with her signature above it.

By 1965, the Supremes were international stars. They toured the world, becoming almost as popular abroad as they were in the US.^{[31][32]} Almost immediately after their initial number-one hits, they recorded songs for motion picture soundtracks, appeared in the 1965 film *Beach Ball*, and endorsed dozens of products, at one point having their own brand of bread. By the end of 1966, their number-one hits included "I Hear a Symphony", "You Can't Hurry Love" and "You Keep Me Hangin' On".^[33] That year the group also released *The Supremes A' Go-Go*, which became the first album by an all-female group to reach number one on the US *Billboard* 200, knocking the Beatles' *Revolver* out of the top spot.^[34] Because the Supremes were popular with white audiences as well as with black ones, Gordy had the group cater to its middle American audience with performances at renowned supper clubs such as the Copacabana in New York.^[35] Broadway and pop standards were incorporated into their repertoire alongside their own hit songs. As a result, the Supremes became one of the first black musical acts to achieve complete and sustained crossover success. Black rock and roll musicians of the 1950s had seen many of their original hit tunes covered by white musicians, with these covers usually achieving more fame and sales success than the originals. The Supremes' success, however, counteracted this trend. Featuring three group members who were marketed for their individual personalities (a move unprecedented at the time) and Diana Ross's pop-friendly voice, the Supremes broke down racial barriers with rock and roll songs underpinned by R&B stylings. The group became extremely popular both domestically and abroad, becoming one of the first black musical acts to appear regularly on television programs such as *Hullabaloo*, *The Hollywood Palace*, *The Della Reese Show*, and, most notably, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, on which they made 17 appearances. The Supremes' cross-cultural success effectively paved the way for the mainstream success of contemporaneous label mates such as the Temptations, the Four Tops and the Jackson 5.

Name and personnel changes

Personnel problems within the group and within Motown Records' stable of performers led to tension among the members of the Supremes. Many of the other Motown performers felt that Berry Gordy was lavishing too much attention upon the group and upon Ross, in particular. In early 1967, the name of the act was officially changed briefly to "The Supremes with Diana Ross" before changing again to "Diana Ross & the Supremes" by mid-summer. The Miracles had become "Smokey Robinson & the Miracles" two years prior. The fall of 1967 saw Martha & the Vandellas become "Martha Reeves & the Vandellas".^[36] Having learned that Ross would receive top billing, David Ruffin lobbied, unsuccessfully, to have the Temptations renamed as "David Ruffin & the Temptations",^[37] although Gordy maintained that the name changes were done so that Motown could demand more money for live bookings (because they would be providing two acts—a lead singer and a group—instead of just one).^[38]

The Supremes' name change fueled already present rumors of a solo career for Ross and contributed to the professional and personal dismantling of the group. In fact, Gordy intended to replace Ross with Barbara Randolph as early as the fall of 1966, but changed his mind and instead kept Ross in the group for several more years.^[39] Gordy's caution may have been sparked by an incident in early 1966 as the group prepared to make their second appearance at the Copacabana. Angered by Ballard's erratic behavior, Gordy intended to replace her with Marlene Barrow, a member of the Motown in-house singing group the Andantes. However, when club management heard of this change, they threatened to cancel the group's appearance if Ballard was replaced, as they saw Ballard's banter with her group mates as a major part of their act's success.

As Ross became the focal point of the Supremes, Ballard felt pushed aside in the group. Depression ensued, and Ballard began to drink excessively, gaining weight until she could no longer comfortably wear many of her stage outfits. The friendship, and later the working relationship, between Ross and Ballard became strained. During this turbulent period, Ballard relied heavily upon the advice of group mate Mary Wilson, with whom she had maintained a close friendship. Wilson, while outwardly demure and neutral in hopes of keeping the group stable, privately advised Ballard that Ross and Gordy were eager to oust Ballard.^[40] Although the Supremes scored two number-one hits during the first quarter of 1967, "Love Is Here and Now You're Gone" and "The Happening", the group as a unit began to disintegrate.

By 1967, Ballard would not show up for recording dates, or would arrive at shows too inebriated to perform. For some early 1967 shows, she was replaced by Marlene Barrow. Looking for a more permanent replacement, Gordy once again thought of Barbara Randolph, possibly believing that Randolph could be groomed as lead singer for the group once it was decided to take Ross solo. However, Ross did not receive Randolph well. In April 1967, Gordy then contacted Cindy Birdsong, a member of Patti LaBelle & the Blue Belles who superficially resembled Ballard, with plans to bring her in as Ballard's replacement.^[41] He made his plans clear to Ballard and her group mates at a mid-April meeting, and Birdsong was brought in to begin rehearsals. Gordy did not fire Ballard outright at that time, asking Ballard instead to quit on her own.

Birdsong first appeared with the Supremes in Ballard's place at a benefit concert at the Hollywood Bowl on April 29, 1967.^[42] Gordy quickly learned, to his horror, that Birdsong was still contractually committed to the Blue Belles when that group's lawyers filed an injunction against him. In May, Ballard returned for what she believed was a probationary period, although in reality it was a stopgap measure until Gordy was able to buy out Birdsong's contract with the Blue Belles. During May and June, knowing that she was one step away from being dismissed, Ballard made an attempt to toe the line, slimming down and showing up to commitments on time and sober. Nevertheless, Birdsong was secretly traveling with the Supremes, studying their routines.


On June 29, 1967 the group returned to the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. What made this appearance significant was the fact that they were being billed as "The Supremes with Diana Ross", the first time in which Ross was billed separately from the group. One month later, Gordy renamed the group "Diana Ross & the Supremes," putting Ross's name ahead of the group.

The first two days of the Flamingo engagement went by smoothly. On July 1, when reporting for makeup and wardrobe before their first show of the evening, Ballard discovered an extra set of gowns and costumes that had been brought along for Cindy Birdsong. Angered, Ballard performed the first concert of the night inebriated, leading to an embarrassing on-stage incident in which her stomach was revealed when she purposely thrust it forward during a dance routine. Enraged, Gordy ordered her back to Detroit and permanently dismissed her from the group. Birdsong officially assumed her place during the second July 1 show.^[43]

Ballard's release from Motown was made final on February 22, 1968, when she received a one-time payment of US\$139,804.94 in royalties and earnings.^[44] She attempted a solo career with ABC Records, and was forced to formally reject a solo contract offered by Motown as part of her settlement.^[45] Ballard's two 1968 singles failed to chart and her solo album was shelved.^[46] In 1971, Ballard sued Motown for \$8.7 million, claiming that Gordy and Diana Ross had conspired to force her out of the group;^[47] the judge ruled in favor of Motown. Ballard eventually sank into poverty and died abruptly on February 22, 1976 from coronary thrombosis at the age of 32.^[48] At the time of her death, she had begun to make financial and personal strides and was planning to reinvigorate her solo career.

Ross' departure

Holland-Dozier-Holland left Motown in early 1968 after a dispute with the label over royalties and profit sharing.^[49] The quality of Motown's output (and Diana Ross & the Supremes' records in particular) began to falter as a result. From "Reflections" in 1967 to "The Weight" in 1969, only six out of the eleven released singles reached the Top 20, and only one of those, 1968's "Love Child",^[50] made it to number one. Due to the tension within the group and stringent touring schedules, neither Mary Wilson nor Cindy Birdsong appear on many of these singles; they were replaced on these recordings by session singers such as the Andantes.^[51] The changes within the group and their decreasing sales were signs of changes within the music industry. The gospel-based soul of female performers such as Aretha Franklin had eclipsed the Supremes' pop-based sound, which had by now evolved to include more middle-of-the-road material. In a cultural climate now influenced more than ever by countercultural movements such as the Black Panther Party, the Supremes found themselves attacked for not being "black enough", and lost ground in the black music market.^[52]

| | |
|---|---|
|  | "Love Child" |
| | "Love Child" became the number-one single on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for two weeks in 1968. |
| | "Someday We'll Be Together" |
| | The final number-one hit for Diana Ross & the Supremes, "Someday We'll Be Together". |
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In mid-1968, Motown initiated a number of high-profile collaborations for the Supremes with their old colleagues, the Temptations. Besides the fact that both groups had come up together, the pairings made financial sense: the Supremes had a mostly white fanbase, while the Temptations a mostly black fanbase. By 1969, the label began plans for a Diana Ross solo career.^[53] A number of candidates—most notably Syreeta Wright—were considered to replace Ross. After seeing 24-year-old Jean Terrell perform with her brother Ernie in Florida, Berry Gordy decided on Ross' replacement. Terrell was signed to Motown and began recording the first post-Ross Supremes songs with Wilson and Birdsong during the day, while Wilson and Birdsong toured with Ross at night. At the same time, Ross began to make her first solo recordings. In November 1969, Ross' solo career was publicly announced.

"Someday We'll Be Together" was recorded with the intent of releasing it as the first solo single for Diana Ross. Desiring a final Supremes number-one record, Gordy instead had the song released as a Diana Ross & the Supremes single, despite the fact that neither Wilson nor Birdsong sang on the record. "Someday We'll Be Together" hit number one on the American pop charts, becoming not only the Supremes' 12th and final number-one hit, but also the final number-one hit of the 1960s. This single also would mark the Supremes' final television appearance

together with Ross, performing on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on December 21, 1969. The Supremes without Ross made their final appearance altogether on *Ed Sullivan* on February 15, 1970.

The Supremes in the 1970s

Diana Ross & the Supremes gave their final performance on January 14, 1970 at the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas.^[54] At the final performance, the replacement for Diana Ross, Jean Terrell, was introduced. According to Mary Wilson, after this performance, Berry Gordy wanted to replace Terrell with Syreeta Wright. Wilson refused, leading to Gordy stating that he was washing his hands of the group thereafter.^[55] This claim is also made by Mark Ribowsky.^[56] After the Frontier Hotel performance, Ross officially began her career as a solo performer. Mary Wilson and Cindy Birdsong continued working with Jean Terrell on the first post-Ross Supremes album, *Right On*.^[57]

The Terrell-led Supremes—now rebranded as "the Supremes," and known unofficially at first as "the New Supremes", and in later years informally called The '70s Supremes—scored hits including "Up the Ladder to the Roof" (US number 10, UK number 6), "Stoned Love" (US number 7, UK number 3) and "Nathan Jones" (US number 16, UK number 5), all of which were produced by Frank Wilson. These three singles were also R&B Top Ten hits, with "Stoned Love" becoming their last No.1 R&B hit in December 1970. Songwriting/production team Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson produced another Top 20 hit for the group, a Supremes/Four Tops duet version of Ike & Tina Turner's "River Deep – Mountain High".

In 1972, The Supremes had their last Top 20 hit single release, "Floy Joy", written and produced by Smokey Robinson, followed by the final US Top 40 hit for the Jean Terrell-led version of the group, "Automatically Sunshine" (US number 37, UK number 10). "Automatically Sunshine" later became the group's final top 10 single in the UK. On both "Floy Joy" and "Sunshine" Terrell shared lead with Mary Wilson. Motown, by then moving from Detroit to Los Angeles to break into motion pictures, put only limited effort into promoting the Supremes' new material, and their popularity and sales began to wane. Cindy Birdsong left the group in April 1972, after recording the *Floy Joy* album, to start a family; her replacement was Lynda Laurence, a former member of Stevie Wonder's backup group, Third Generation (a predecessor to Wonderlove). Jimmy Webb was hired to produce the group's next LP, *The Supremes Produced and Arranged by Jimmy Webb*,^[58] but the album and its only single "I Guess I'll Miss the Man" failed to make an impact on the *Billboard* pop chart, with the single charting at number 85.

In early 1973, Laurence prevailed upon her old mentor Stevie Wonder to write and produce a hit for the Supremes, but the resulting "Bad Weather" peaked at number 87 on the US pop charts and number 37 in the UK. Laurence can be heard briefly, shouting several times at the end of the song (the only recording on which Laurence is heard). Laurence left to start a family; her replacement: a returning Cindy Birdsong.

Dismayed by this poor-performing record and the lack of promotional support from Motown, Jean Terrell left the group and was replaced by Scherrie Payne, the sister of Invictus Records recording artist Freda Payne.

Between the 1973 departures of Laurence and Terrell and the first Supremes single with Scherrie Payne, "He's My Man", a disco single on which Payne and Wilson shared lead vocal, Motown was slow in producing contracts for Payne and the returning Birdsong. Before the release of the album in 1975, the Supremes remained a popular live act, and continued touring overseas, particularly in the UK and Japan. The group's new recordings were not as successful as their earlier releases, although "He's My Man" from the album *The Supremes* was a popular disco hit in 1975. In 1976, Birdsong, dissatisfied with the management of the Supremes (handled at the time by Mary Wilson's then-husband Pedro Ferrer), left again and was replaced by Susaye Greene, another former member of Wonderlove.

This final version of the Supremes released two albums, both of which reunited the Supremes with Holland-Dozier-Holland: *High Energy*, which includes Birdsong on all of the tracks, and *Mary, Scherrie & Susaye*. During that year, The Supremes released "I'm Gonna Let My Heart Do the Walking", their final Top 40 hit on the *Billboard* Hot 100.

On June 12, 1977, the Supremes performed their farewell concert at the Drury Lane Theater in London and disbanded.

Legacy

Works inspired by the Supremes

Several fictional works have been published that are based in part on the career of the group. The 1976 film *Sparkle* features the story of a Supremes-like singing trio called "Sister & the Sisters" from Harlem, New York. The film's score was composed by Curtis Mayfield, and the soundtrack album by Aretha Franklin was a commercial success. A remake of *Sparkle* was in development in the early 2000s with R&B singer Aaliyah as the lead, but the project was shelved when Aaliyah died in 2001.^[59] A remake of *Sparkle* eventually was released to film theaters in August 2012. The remake starred Jordin Sparks and Whitney Houston, in her final film role before her death.^[60] The film was produced and directed by Salim Akil.^[61] On December 21, 1981, the Tony Award-winning musical *Dreamgirls* opened at the Imperial Theatre on Broadway and ran for 1,522 performances. The musical, loosely based on the history of The Supremes, follows the story of The Dreams, an all-female singing trio from Chicago who become music superstars. Several of the characters in the play are analogues of real-life Supremes/Motown counterparts, with the story focusing upon the Florence Ballard doppelgänger Effie White. While influenced by the Supremes' and Motown's music, the songs in the play are a broader mix of R&B/soul and Broadway music. Mary Wilson loved the musical, but Diana Ross was reportedly angered by it and refused to see it.^[62]

A film adaptation of *Dreamgirls* was released by DreamWorks and Paramount Pictures in December 2006. The film contains more overt references to Motown and the Supremes than does the play that inspired it: for example, in the film, many of the Dreams' album covers are identical in design to Supremes album covers, and the Dreams themselves hail from Detroit – not Chicago, as do their Broadway counterparts.

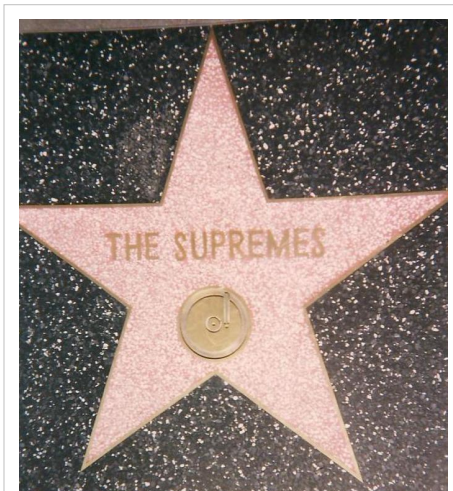
Awards and followers

The Supremes were twice nominated for a Grammy Award—for Best Rhythm & Blues Recording ("Baby Love", 1965) and Best Contemporary Rock & Roll Group Vocal Performance ("Stop! In the Name of Love", 1966)—but never won an award in competition.^[63] Three of their songs have been named to the Grammy Hall of Fame: "Where Did Our Love Go" and "You Keep Me Hangin' On" (both 1999) and "Stop! In the Name of Love" (2001).^[64]

The group's songs "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "You Can't Hurry Love" are among the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's 500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll.^[65] The Ross-Wilson-Ballard lineup was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1994, and entered into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame in 1998. In 2004, *Rolling Stone* placed the group at number 97 on their list of the "100 Greatest Artists of All Time".^[66] The Supremes are notable for the influences they have had on the black girl groups who have succeeded them in popular music, such as The Three Degrees, The Emotions, The Pointer Sisters, En Vogue, TLC, Destiny's Child and Cleopatra.^[67]

Reunions

Fan interest made the idea of a Supremes reunion tour a very profitable one during the 1980s. In 1982, around the time that Motown reunited all of the Temptations, it was rumored that Motown would reunite the Supremes. The 1974 line-up of the Supremes (Wilson, Birdsong and Payne) was considered for this reunion, which was to include new recordings and a tour. Under advisement from Berry Gordy, Wilson declined to reunite, and the idea was scrapped. Ross briefly reunited



Star on Hollywood Walk of Fame at 7060
Hollywood Blvd.

with Wilson and Birdsong to perform "Someday We'll Be Together" on the *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever* television special, taped on March 25, 1983, and broadcast on NBC on May 16, 1983.^[68]

In 2000, plans were made for Ross to join Wilson and Birdsong for a planned "Diana Ross & the Supremes: Return to Love" reunion tour. However, Wilson passed on the idea, because while the promoters offered Ross \$15 million to perform, Wilson was offered \$4 million and Birdsong less than \$1 million.^[69] Ross herself offered to double the amounts both Wilson and Birdsong had originally been offered, but while Birdsong accepted, Wilson remained adamant, and as a result the deal fell through with both former Supremes. Eventually, the "Return to Love" tour went on as scheduled, but with Payne and Laurence joining Ross, although none of the three had ever been in the group at the same time and neither Payne nor Laurence had sung on any of the original hit recordings that they were now singing live. Susaye Greene was also considered for this tour, but refused to audition for it. The music critics cried foul and many fans were disappointed by both this and the shows' high ticket prices. Though the tour did well in larger markets including near capacity at the opening night in Philadelphia and a sellout at Madison Square Garden in New York, it under performed in smaller/medium markets. The tour was canceled after playing only half of the dates on itinerary.^[70]

Post-Supremes groups

In 1986, Jean Terrell, Scherrie Payne and Lynda Laurence began to perform as "The FLOS": Former Ladies of the Supremes. When Terrell quit in 1992, Sundray Tucker, Laurence's sister, stepped in for a short time, but was replaced by Freddi Poole in 1996. More recently in September 2009, Poole was replaced by Joyce Vincent, formerly of Tony Orlando and Dawn. The group, now called Former Supremes Scherrie Payne and Lynda Laurence with Joyce Vincent, are working on a new recording.

Kaaren Ragland performed with Mary Wilson from 1978 though the mid-1980s. In 1989 she formed her own group called "the Sounds of the Supremes". She has claimed numerous times that she was a member of the Supremes because of her performances with Wilson, but she was never signed by Motown and performed with Wilson only after the Supremes disbanded in 1977 and is not considered as a member of The Supremes.^[71]

Personnel

The Supremes (aka the Primettes and Diana Ross & the Supremes)

- Florence Ballard (1959–1967)
- Mary Wilson (1959–1977)
- Diana Ross (1959–1970)
- Betty McGlown (1959–1960)
- Barbara Martin (1960–1962)
- Cindy Birdsong (1967–1972, 1973–1976)
- Jean Terrell (1970–1973)
- Lynda Laurence (1972–1973)
- Scherrie Payne (1973–1977)
- Susaye Greene (1976–1977)

Lineups

| The Primettes | The Primettes/The Supremes |
|--|---|
| 1959–1960 | 1960–1962 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florence Ballard • Diana Ross • Mary Wilson • Betty McGlown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florence Ballard • Diana Ross • Mary Wilson • Barbara Martin |

| The Supremes | Diana Ross and the Supremes |
|---|---|
| 1962–1967 | 1967–1970 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florence Ballard • Diana Ross • Mary Wilson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diana Ross • Mary Wilson • Cindy Birdsong |

| The Supremes | The Supremes |
|---|---|
| 1970–1973 | 1973–1976 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Wilson • Cindy Birdsong • Jean Terrell • Lynda Laurence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Wilson • Cindy Birdsong • Scherrie Payne |

The Supremes

1976–1977

- Mary Wilson
- Scherrie Payne
- Susaye Greene

Filmography

- *T.A.M.I. Show* (1965) (concert film)
- *Beach Ball* (1965)

Television

- *Tarzan* (1968)
- *T.C.B.* (1968)
- *G.I.T. on Broadway* (1969)

Videography

- *Reflections: The Definitive Performances (1964–1969)* (2006)
- *Greatest Hits: Live in Amsterdam* (2006)

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