Elements of Motown in The Temptations

By

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Motown is an American record company that was founded by Berry Gordy, Jr. on January 12th, 1959. Motown played a key role in popularizing soul music, later becoming known as “The Motown Sound,” a unique sound unable to be mastered by those outside of the Motown musicians. Motown featured countless artists including The Miracles, The Marvelettes, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, The Supremes, The Contours, Marth and The Vandellas, and The Temptations, just to name a few.

There are certain elements that are specific to Motown Records. Some of these elements include the use of the tambourine and drums, bass instrumentation, syncopated rhythms, distinctive chord structure, a four-beat drum pattern, hand clapping, blaring horns, a “call and response” singing style, vocal harmonies, choreography, and much more. Motown believed in keeping their music simple yet sophisticated. They avoided complex musical arrangements and intricate vocal riffs. This one-of-a-kind soul music that Motown specialized in became known as “The Motown Sound.”

Many of the elements of Motown Records are present in The Temptations. The group is often known for its vocal harmonies and unison choreography, two elements that are very common in Motown music. My Girl, for instance, one of The Temptations’ most popular songs, features blaring horns, exchange between the main singers and back-up singers, flawless vocal harmonies, and unison choreography, all of which are common elements of Motown music. Many of The Temptations’ other most popular songs, including Papa Was a Rolling Stone, Ain’t Too Proud to Beg, I Can’t Get Next to You, and Get Ready, share many of the same unique Motown sounds.

Sources

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