

Up Close

Four Tops: Still making 'Magic'

Levi Stubbs, Abdul "Duke" Fakir, Renaldo "Obie" Benson and Lawrence Payton have been together for 31 years, constantly producing songs of love, happiness and romantic heartbreak in the quintessential Detroit sound/Motown tradition. No other popular quartet has stayed with original personnel intact for as long as the legendary Four Tops. And no other group associated with the American 60s sound has succeeded in remaining as fresh, joyful, lively and timely. The Four Tops created a special magic which continues to delight

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audiences from 5 to 50 the world over, and their reign as the Grand Gentlemen of rock and roll is far from over.

The Four Tops have a list of Top 10 hits, many of them gold records and No. 1 chart-toppers, to their credit. These include "Baby I Need your Loving," "I Can't Help Myself (Sugarpie, Honeybunch)," "It's the Same Old Song," "Reach Out (I'll Be There)," "Bernadette," "Walk Away, Rene," "Standing in the Shadows of Love," "Shake Me, Wake Me" and "Still Waters Run Deep." They have recorded 33 albums in their illustrious career -- 20 of them for Motown.

Levi, Duke, Obie and Lawrence were teenage school friends in their native Detroit when they joined together in a singing group called the Aims.

It was the mid-50s, and their early career was spent largely in jazz and R&B circles. By the time they had recorded their first single for Chess Records in 1956, the Aims were performing as an opening act or back-up singers with artists such as Della Reese, Brook Benton, Billy Eckstine, County Basie, Betty Carter, Redd Foxx, Richard Pryor and Flip Wilson.

Levi's cousin, the great Jackie Wilson, was so impressed with their mellow harmonies and naturally smooth style that he invited them to perform with him on a regular basis, which they did for several years. Times were hard and the group's first years were difficult, typified by heavy travel and light money. But the spirit which has allowed them to stay together for more than three decades was already in place. They were never greedy, never riddled by egotism or impatience and never lost sight of what they wanted to do most: sing.

It was also in 1956 that the Aims became "reincarnated." It had been suggested that they might be confused with the then popular Ames Brothers. Since they had chosen their name because they were "reaching for the top," they changed it and, without realizing that they were giving name to a legend, became the Four Tops.

It was in 1963 that they were truly discovered and signed by Berry Gordy for Motown Records. Their first single was "Baby, I Need your Loving," and as the song skyrocketed up the charts, the Four Tops established themselves as the crown princes of Motown. Life during Motown's heyday was both exhilarating and exhausting. It was there that their style was honed to perfection and blended with the spectacular songwriting team of Holland/Dozier/Holland.

In addition to their own records, members of Please see page B8



Broadway Is My Beat

Black actresses can now play bitchy roles on TV, says Carroll

By JOEY SASSO
Syndicated Columnist

Observations in covering the Night Beat: **Diahann Carroll**, the haughty Dominique of "Dynasty," declares that she's spent enough money on LSD to buy a five-star hotel. The 49-year-old TV temptress says it was part of drug therapy and analysis she went through for four years in the 1950s.

"I spent enough on it to buy the Savoy," she admitted during an interview at the exclusive London hotel. "My problem was that I wanted to be a Hollywood star -- but there were no black stars, and I came up against a wall. The drug therapy helped me confront and understand myself. And the irony is that 'Dynasty' may achieve for me what I failed to achieve in the 50s.

"For Third World actresses, there was no middle ground," she explains. "You were either a hooker, or the most wonderful mother the world has ever seen. It became nauseating. We could never play villains, because the producers were afraid of being accused of racism."

Carroll says that a black actress can now play the biggest bitch on the block. She can be strong, powerful, demanding and pivotal to the story, instead of waiting for her husband to come home

and tell her what an exciting day he had. "I was a strong, opinionated black American woman with a desire to break new ground in her



Diahann Carroll: TV's newest bitch.

profession," she said. "When it didn't happen, I was confused, and I went into drug therapy to find answers and get some help. People would say, 'You're crazy. You're doing very well as a singer.' ...

Top comic **Bill Cosby** says that fellow funny-men **Richard Pryor**, **Redd Foxx** and **Jonathan**

Winters can make him roll with laughter any time. "In the movie **Peters Sellers** puts me on the floor," declared **Cosby**, who now stars in his own series. He finds **Buster Keaton** and **Charlie Chaplin** the funniest of the old-timers, while **Sid Caesar** and **Jackie Gleason** get his nod from the early days of television.

Cosby says making people laugh is serious business that requires a lot of hard work. "You need to practice, practice and practice to get it best and right," he noted. "Just like Olympic gymnasts or jumpers. Just like a professional ballplayer or boxing champion."

He said he tries out raw routines on himself, refining and honing them until he's satisfied they're funny. "I think about who my audience is going to be for the material and plan what I'm going to do and say, and how I'm going to move, gesture and mug in order to get the best response out of my audience. Very little you see me do on stage or especially on the TV show is spontaneous, even though it may look that way." ...

The curtain of secrecy that surrounds super rock star **Prince** has been torn aside by a kiss 'n' tell gal pal. **Shapely British model Ashe** told me that she dated **Prince** while in Los Angeles. The

two met in a nightclub, she recalled, adding that she was dressed only in strips of leather tied around her gorgeous body.

The sight quickly lured **Prince** to her side, and he asked **Ashe** to come to a party with him. **Ashe** said she turned him down because she didn't want him to get the idea that she was overeager to go with him. **Prince** then asked her if she'd meet him at his recording studio the next day, and she agreed.

The following morning she met him, listened to some of his tapes and then had lunch with him. She recalled being so awed that she couldn't recall what she'd eaten. A few days later **Prince** took her to the movies to see "Terms of Endearment," and for the first time the two cuddled up together.

The day before the stunning model was scheduled to leave for home, the couple had another date. They snuggled again, this time in the back seat of his limousine, which she described as being big enough to live in. "He told me how he liked the muscles above his knees being touched, and we had a long cuddle. It was great ..."

When **Madge Sinclair** left her sons and her husband in Jamaica and headed to America in 1968 to seek her fame and fortune, a cousin castigated her

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Remembering Marvin

Hours before **Marvin Gaye** died, **Stevie Wonder** wrote the song "Lighting Up the Candles." The song has since become a tribute to **Gaye**. **Wonder** will discuss the song and his reasons for writing it on "Tony Brown's Journal" this Sunday at 6:30 p.m. on Channel 26.

Musical Notes

CBS pays USA for Africa \$6.5 million for relief fund

CBS Records has made a \$6.5 million initial payment to USA for Africa, the non-profit foundation set up to channel funds to suffering people in Africa and the United States. The sum represents the company's net proceeds to date from U.S. sales in March of the Columbia Records single "We Are the World." The presentation was made by **Walter Yetnikoff**, president, CBS/Records Group, and **Al Teller**, senior vice president and general manager, Columbia Records, to event producer **Ken Kragen** in ceremonies at CBS headquarters in New York.

CBS Records' arrangement with USA for Africa calls for future payments from sales of the "We Are the World" recordings to be made quarterly. CBS Records will also analyze net sales figures each month against anticipated payments for prior sales by its accounts to determine whether additional monthly payments may be made ahead of the quarterly schedule.

Payments from sales of "We Are the World" outside the United States will be made by CBS Records International on a timely basis -- at least quarterly. All CBS Records International net proceeds will go to the foundation's African famine-relief

efforts. (Ten percent of U.S. net proceeds will be reserved to aid the hungry and the homeless in this country.)

Total worldwide sales of "We Are the World" have passed 7.3 million singles and 4.4 million albums. The album is just now appearing in many international markets. On May 3, "We Are the World" became the first single to be certified multi-platinum under the new standards set by the Recording Industry Association of America for U.S. sales of more than four million units. In April, the album was certified gold, platinum and multi-platinum, the first time a recording has been certified in all categories in one month.

The song, co-written by **Michael Jackson** and **Lionel Richie**, was recorded by 45 American recording stars Jan. 28 under the direction of **Quincy Jones** and released on the Columbia label March 11. The album, which also features the song "Tears Are Not Enough," recorded by a group of Canadian stars under the name of Northern Lights as well as tracks donated by such artists as **Bruce Springsteen** and **Prince**, was released April 1.

Coca-Cola USA and the Coca-Cola Bot-

ling Co. of New York saluted **Francis "Doll" Thomas**, the 82-year-old and still active manager of the world-famous Apollo Theater. The May 4 salute to **Thomas** was in conjunction with the recent reopening of the theater. A broadcast of that reopening gala was shown on the NBC television network on Sunday, May 19, and was hosted by entertainer and Coca-Cola spokesman **Bill Cosby**.

"Doll **Thomas** has been a mainstay at the Apollo since it opened in 1933," said **Chuck Morrison**, director of black consumer markets, Coca-Cola USA. "His dedication and unselfish commitment to the theater and the thousands of entertainers who have performed there certainly deserves a tribute."

The plaque was presented during an "A-train" reception, sponsored by Coca-Cola USA, in a midtown Manhattan subway station in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Apollo Theater. More than 500 guests attended a champagne reception in the specially redecorated mezzanine of the station, then "took the A train" for the ride uptown and red-carpet walk through the streets of Harlem to the gala reopening.

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