



Detroit 67: The Year That Changed Soul

Stuart Cosgrove

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The Epic Story of Motown and Detroit's Independent Soul Music Scene

It's January 1967—and one of the worst snowstorms in decades is blanketing Detroit, Michigan. Berry Gordy, owner of Motown Records, is trapped in his home, unable to do anything about the internal war ravaging his most successful group, The Supremes. Diana Ross, Mary Wilson, and Florence Ballard are imploding as Ballard battles alcoholism and the aftermath of rape. But soon, even more chaos will descend on Detroit. As the year heats up, melting the snow, Gordy and his city face one of the most challenging periods of its existence.

Detroit 67 is the story of Detroit in the year that changed everything. Twelve monthly chapters take you on a turbulent year long journey through the drama and chaos that ripped through the city in 1967. Over a dramatic 12-month period, the Motor City was torn apart by personal, political and inter-racial disputes. It is the story of Motown, the breakup of The Supremes and the implosion of the most successful African-American music label ever.

Set against a backdrop of urban riots, escalating war in Vietnam and police corruption, the book weaves its way through a year when soul music came of age, and the underground counterculture flourished. LSD arrived in the city with hallucinogenic power and local guitar-band MC5 -self-styled "holy barbarians" of rock went to war with mainstream America. A summer of street-level rebellion turned Detroit into one of the most notorious cities on earth, known for its unique creativity, its unpredictability and self-lacerating crime rates.

1967 ended in social meltdown, personal bitterness and intense legal warfare as the complex threads that held Detroit together finally unraveled. *Detroit 67* is the story of the year that changed everything.

Detroit 67: The Year That Changed Soul Details

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From Reader Review Detroit 67: The Year That Changed Soul for online ebook

Blaine Morrow says

Cosgrove tells the story of Detroit, Motown, the Supremes (especially Florence Ballard), the Vietnam War, John Sinclair and the MC5, and dozens of other musicians and history-makers in a month-by-month chronicle of 1967 in the Motor City. It's exciting to read (and for this reader, remember) a time of change, dissent, revolution, and recklessness.

Jeff Howells says

One of the most engrossing micro history books I've read. This one focusing on not just a particular year but a specific city. Detroit in 1967. The book takes a chronological month by month approach, starting with an extremely wintery January. Unsurprisingly the music of Motown looms large, the main core of the book is the story of The Supremes...teetering on the edge of implosion as we count down to Florence Ballard being ousted from the group. There are also occasional glimpses of the Detroit rock group the MC5, but this is very much a Motown - and an Afro American story.

The author Stuart Cosgrove says right at the start that he didn't want to pick sides in the book - and his achieves this, however it's very difficult to come to the conclusion that Ballard was more sinned against than sinning. Arguably the original leader of the group & possessing a better voice than Diana Ross it was sadly inevitable that she would be marginalised once the relationship between Ross and Motown boss Berry Gordy took hold. By the end you think more of Ballard, less of Ross and just think Gordy is weak.

The book builds up to the riots that engulfed the city during the summer the city effectively being under siege with the National Guard on the street. It paints a horrifying picture of the police & national guard being at best trigger happy & at worse corrupt where a number of innocent people were needlessly (most notably the Algiers Motel executions, shortly to be a film directed by Kathryn Bigelow).

That's not to say that there wasn't looting - largely a result of the dire economic straits the city was in - but it is clear that the people who were supposed to be enforcing the law stepped a long way over the mark.

By the end of the year Ballard had left Motown, Tammi Terrell had collapsed on stage and one of the main drivers of Motown's success - the writing team of Holland -Dozier - Holland had begun legal proceedings against the company. Whilst there were further high points for the company & more great music to come, the Detroit heyday was coming to an end, as Berry Gordy looked West.

Bill McFadyen says

I really enjoyed reading this book although there seems to be a few errors in the writing. Hendrix burned his guitar at Woodstock not the US Flag. The story of Motown , MC5 and the Civil Right Movement combined with the Detroit Police , the Vietnam War and the city riots is very well told. At times I thought I was reading pages from a James Elroy thriller.

Stuart Cosgrove is a talented guy .

Mark says

A thorough look at a single year in Detroit.

Covers Motown, especially the disintegration of The Supremes' first line-up, as well as wider social and political unrest.

Cosgrove was more interesting on the music than the politics, and did get a bit bogged down in some of the later chapters, but this was still a very good read.

Alan Taylor says

Detroit 67: The Year That Changed Soul is an excellent month-by-month chronology of the momentous political and social events which took place in the city in that year. Stuart Cosgrove hangs his history on Motown, the fantastically successful Hitsville USA, which was in 1967 rocked by internal events which mirrored those in the city of Detroit and the wider USA. He concentrates largely on the breakdown within The Supremes and the ousting of Florence Ballard but also covers the sacking of David Ruffin from The Temptations, Holland-Dozier-Holland's divorce from the label and the achingly sad story of Tammi Terrell.

Cosgrove is a very talented writer, particularly when covering the soul music he clearly loves, both the Motown artists and those in the wider Detroit soul scene. He is less convincing when writing about the emerging garage-rock scene and the MC5 - and Jimi Hendrix did not burn the American flag at Woodstock; he didn't need to, his incendiary rendition of the Star Spangled Banner was protest enough against the ongoing Vietnam war. But the book is largely successful and reads at times like a thriller. The sections detailing the murders of 3 black youths and the torture of others by Detroit police officers in the Algiers motel are harrowing.

1967 was the year that Motown began the move away from Detroit to LA and became less the purveyor of 'the Motown sound' but it led to the more overtly political and social commentary of Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and the Norman Whitfield era Temptations. I am really looking forward to Cosgrove's take on the southern soul scene in his follow up, Memphis '68.

ROGER says

Stuart Cosgrove book about Detroit in the year of 1967 is just...INCREDIBLE!

Like many people all over the world, I have always recognised Motown as one of the most incredible American soul music that emerged in the 1960's. A music that was generally created for a white demographic of the American public. A music though, that with black American music artists was able to promote an incredible reality or rather a possibility of black-American music enterprise in an era where that could not even seem a possibility because America was segregated in racial lines.

I have NEVER truly come across a CLASSIC book written about Motown. I have read about moments about Motown Records in other books by music writers, but NEVER in as much depth of information as the way author Stuart Cosgrove has written in this book. I can only imagine that this book will become the definitive book in future about the life and creativity of records. Stuart Cosgrove has also documented Detroit in the

context of the year 1967, and the way he weaves his artistic prose from documenting Detroit at specific times in the month of 1967 and weaving back to the AME moments at Motown Records is Incredibly moving for the reader of this book. His prose is never technical, it is written in a way that THE WHOLE WORLD can truly understand. That is Stuart Cosgrove's GREATEST achievement with this book. Quite frankly...This is for me, just one of the greatest biographical music books I have EVER read.

Gilbert Merciez says

Too many inaccuracies

Wrong street names, calling the Sheraton Cadillac the Sheraton Chrysler. One of the characters in the book was described as living next to the Hamtramck Poletown Assembly Plant when it wouldn't be built for another 15 years. Claiming Jimi Hendrix burned an American flag when it was actually his guitar. Hendrix never burned an American flag. Numerous grammatical mistakes. I ha

Susan says

It is 1967 in Detroit and the year starts out with the city hunkered down under heavy snow. In this month by month history of the city, author Stuart Cosgrove, takes us through a place, and people, in crisis. It is a year of Vietnam protests, of social unrest, rising crime rates, growing social awareness, riots, violence and police corruption. It is the year that 'the Supremes', the most successful girl group at Motown, become 'Diana Ross and the Supremes.' It is a year seething with tension and resentments...

Cosgrove takes the Supremes, and the unrest at Motown, as the central point of this book; with Motown as the focus from which all other stories and issues weave and intersect. Berry Gordy's attempts to make Motown popular across the country, and, indeed, across the world, often looks like 'selling out,' to the more socially aware in the city. As he attempts to get his acts to record a tribute album to Walt Disney, or gain places on major television shows, his acts are crumbling under the pressure of incessant tours, shows and work. His control has helped create an empire, but there is dissent in the ranks and he is, frankly, not dealing with the issues among his songwriters or acts. Some resent being shunted aside for bigger names, while Gordy pushes his head more firmly into the sand. In the Supremes, founding member Florence Ballard, is resentful of Gordy's pushing Diana Ross into central place.

This is a very human book. The conflict within these pages is political, but it is also very personal. Gordy and Ross were having an affair and Florence Ballard felt side-lined and personally humiliated. There are other members of Motown in this book, many linked by romances, affairs and family relationships, which made for a tangled and unhappy web, which is danger of unravelling by 1967. Ballard is in self destruct mode at this point – drinking too much, arguing with the other members of the group (you feel for Mary Wilson, stuck between her and Ross), signing legal agreements without any real advice, that she will later regret, and with no real plan for the future – for her future.

Along the way, and interspersed with the story at Motown, are the wider stories surrounding the city. Of hippies, drugs and social unrest. The summer in Detroit saw violence on the streets, which culminated in the notorious 'Algiers Motel Incident,' during which Detroit police officers and National Guardsmen, executed

three black teenagers in a soul-music hangout. It is easy to see how those in Detroit saw the ethos of Motown, trying hard to get their music into the mainstream, as out of step with the current mood. We hear of guitar band MC5, of John Sinclair and the Steering Committee and of young band, The Dramatics, who find themselves tragically caught up in the horrific events at the Algiers Motel.

This is a fascinating portrait of a city, at a certain time, and of the people affected by the events of a momentous year. This is the first in a trilogy and I will certainly be reading the second, "Memphis 68: The Tragedy of Southern Soul." A proposed third instalment is to be set in Harlem in 1969. Excellent music and social history, with Cosgrove showing a real passion, and sympathy, for those he writes about.

Vincent Houston says

Extensively researched book. Great read.

Incredibly well written book on a year that really did change soul music forever. Politically and culturally 1967 was one helluva year in Detroit's history. Just about to begin the 2nd book in Stuart's trilogy.

Andrew says

Fairly races along, mingling personal stories with cultural and political earthquakes

This is a very well-written and researched book which manages to chart personal stories of success, mismanagement, jealousies and conflict alongside the big political issues of the day; racism, poverty, anti-war protest, pop culture and changing fashions in music. Great analysis, well-judged

Adrian says

Contrasting the peak of Motown with the Detroit riots and the events at the Algiers motel is a great concept. And while the story of how some of the greatest music ever recorded came from a deeply divided city is fascinating, I think there are problems with the structure. It's split into 12 roughly equal chapters for each month of the year, but given that we know the key events all happen in July, the early sections feel padded, and could definitely use a better edit. And then the July and August chapters seem way too short when you get to them. Plus the sections on the MC5 and the counter culture never really intersect the other themes, and there are sections about events on the west coast for reasons which are not made clear. Needed more focus on the key protagonists and the city of Detroit, and a less rigorous structure, but well worth reading anyway if you love Motown music.

Russ says

this is a very good book. Focussing on one year, 1967, in the city of Detroit, whilst concentrating on Motown records and the ousting of Florence Ballard from the Supremes, this also takes in the 1967 riots, the anti-war movement, the MC5 and a truly horrible case of Police brutality in a Detroit hotel, where several young men, some from a local soul band are beaten and executed in the wake of the riots whilst Police demand information on snipers that never existed. A number of historic legends are refuted, particularly in relation to how Berry Gordy ran Motown & if he had an actual plan to make his lover Diana Ross the main focus of the Supremes. It doesn't really end well for anyone, but is a thoroughly recommended read for anyone

Phil Brett says

Looks at the year in Detroit and synthesises the internal politics of Motown, the growth of civil unrest, the soul scene, police racism, opposition to the Vietnam War and the bust ups in the Supremes. It's quite a diverse brew and the contrasts sometimes work well, brimming with interesting detail. I'm interested in both the politics and the music of the era however the juxtaposition of the two is sometimes smoother than at others. I'm not sure that swiftly shifting from police torture and murder to jealous tiffs between Florence Blanchard and Diana Ross is always affective. Certainly, I do feel that sometimes there is too much repetition and detail of the latter to warrant the amount of space it is given. That said, I enjoyed the book and it did make me want to read more on many of the subjects raised here. I also will be going back to my Supremes records...

Allan Heron says

Thoroughly engrossing review of 1967 from a Detroit perspective. Focusing largely on soul and with particular emphasis on Motown (for whom 1967 proved a bit of a tipping point) it takes in the tumultuous impact of the Detroit riots and also the radical left of John Sinclair and the MC5.

Stuart Cosgrove maintains a gripping narrative as he goes through events month by month with appropriate reference past and future as appropriate. It also provides better context to Motown recordings that encourages me to seek out many of the records again.

He will be doing a similar book based in Memphis in the year 1968. This will be looked forward to by this reader.

Moira McPartlin says

I have been a fan of Motown my whole life (almost). This account of 12 months in Detroit which heavily features Motown is a fantastic epic. Part biography part social history, Cosgrove has taken the music, racial tension and issues around the war in Vietnam and threaded them together to create one of the most interesting and fully researched books I've read in a while.

