

THE TEMPTATIONS

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BIOGRAPHY OF THE TEMPTATIONS

The most amazing thing about the Temptations is not the fact that the group has been recording for over two decades. Neither is it the fact that the group has won three Grammys and numerous gold and platinum awards for landmark songs like "The Way You Do The Things You Do", "My Girl", "Get Ready", "Ain't Too Proud To Beg", "Cloud Nine", "Can't Get Next To You", "Papa Was A Rolling Stone", "Glasshouse" and "Power". Nor, for that matter, is the most amazing thing about the Tempts the fact that they are considered by many the ultimate personification of a male singing team...the very best there is.

No, the really amazing thing about the Tempts is the fact that they have been able to accomplish all of the above despite a series of personnel changes that would have left any other group on the ropes. The lineup that rose to fame in the early sixties included David Ruffin, Otis Williams, Eddie Kendricks, Paul Williams and Melvin Franklin (real name: David Melvin English). The group carrying on that tradition today includes veterans Otis and Melvin along with Richard Street, Dennis Edwards and Glenn Carl Leonard.

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While the look of the Temptations has changed quite a bit over the years, the most dramatic change is the new one. After respective absences of 11 and 14 years, Eddie Kendricks and David Ruffin have come back home. The resulting album, produced by funk superstar Rick James, Smokey Robinson (who had a hand in many of the early Tempts classics) and Motown Board Chairman Berry Gordy, is entitled, fittingly, REUNION.

Is REUNION a hot one? With seven Tempts performing and three of the industry's best producers running the board, how could it be anything less? The Tempts themselves describe the new album as a potpourri of driven funk and uptempo tunes, balladry, and some of that old time Temptations magic. As Melvin puts it, "You'll hear great blending. Around my house, when I put it on, I see it in the kids and my lady and all like that. The product is good."

The long, and complicated history of the Temptations begins in the middle of the late-50's and is tied in with a number of singing groups that were popular in Detroit at the time. Otis Williams, Elbridge Bryant and Melvin Franklin sang together in groups like the Questions, the Elegants and Otis Williams and the Distant. From a trio called the Primes came Paul Williams and Eddie Kendricks. The early '60s found all five together on Motown as the Elgins, where they recorded for several years without much success. In December of 1963 Bryant, disappointed with the group's lack of progress went his own way and slid promptly into obscurity. David Ruffin abandoned a promising solo career to replace Bryant and the group hit big with a quirky tune called "The Way You Do The Things You Do". True to the lyric of another early hit, they haven't looked back since.

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In 1968, David Ruffin's departure made room for Dennis Edwards to come aboard and the Temptations enjoyed psychedelic soul hits like "Cloud Nine", "Psychedelic Shack", "Don't Let The Joneses Get You Down" and more. In 1971, both Eddie Kendricks and the late Paul Williams left the group. Replacements Damon Harris and Richard Street kept things humming and the Tempts hit big with songs like "Superstar", "Plastic Man", "Papa Was A Rolling Stone", "Masterpiece", "Shakey Ground" and "Glass House". Harris' 1975 departure brought on Glenn Leonard and, with the exception of two years off for Dennis in the late '70s, the group has remained intact since then.

Each grouping of Temptations has been special in its own way, and a little different from the one that came before. Yet one ideal has always remained intact--five voices representing every shading on the human scale have always come together to create impeccable harmony. From the cool baritone of Otis Williams to the versatile, sinuous tenor of Richard Street, from the soaring, gentle tenors of Eddie Kendricks and Glenn Leonard to the gritty, emotion-charged sounds of Dennis Edwards and David Ruffin and all the way down to the rock-steady bass of the one and only Melvin Franklin, the Temptations have always been uniquely and identifiably...the Temptations.

Now, they're all together celebrating an historic Reunion and one can't shake the feeling that we ain't seen nothin' yet.