

THE TEMPTATIONS R·E·U·N·I·O·N

DAVID RUFFIN

Ruffin used to trip me out," recalls Otis Williams," cause he could throw the mike up and do all that stuff."

Melvin Franklin concurs. "We'd be walkin' down the street and David would just turn a flip. Walkin' down the street and just turn a flip! He was very agile and athletic. A person with that kind of athletic ability who had the presence of mind to coordinate it with his singing was an amazing thing. He was quite an asset.

Although Eddie Kendricks sang lead on the Temptations' very earliest singles, David Ruffin soon established his own credentials with leads on smashes like "My Girl", "Ain't Too Proud To Beg" and "I Know I'm Losing You". Folks didn't quite know what to make of David Ruffin. He could jump, he could spin do splits and, on top of it all, he combined it with a gruff, emotional tenor so distinctive it's still being copied today by folks like Rod Stewart, Teddy Pendergrass and L.J. Reynolds (formerly of the Dramatics).

David was born in a cabin in the tiny town of Whyknot, Mississippi, only a few miles out of Meridian.

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His mother Ophelia died when David was 11 months old, leaving his father Eli and, later, stepmother Earlene to preside over the young star-to-be. David started singing early, appearing on gospel shows at age six with the likes of the Five Blind Boys, Mahalia Jackson, the Soul Stirrers and Clara Ward. He left home at 14, heading to Memphis, where he attended high school and sang in talent shows. David joined the Dixie Nightingales for a two year tenure, then took off on his own again, this time ending up in Hot springs, Arkansas. There, he met a man who later took him to Detroit, where he became friends with Gwen Gordy, whose brother Berry was in the process of putting together a record company.

For about a month David, too, was involved in putting Motown together, so to speak. He worked for a construction company run by Berry "Pops" Gordy, Sr., doing odd jobs around a fledgling company that would become Motown.

Eventually, David found himself in the studios for Motown, where he cut records like "You And I", "Actions Speak Louder Than Words: and "Mr. Bus Driver." Around New Year's of 1964, the Temptations were casting about for someone to replace Elbridge Bryant. David attended a rehearsal, things clicked, and for four years, he made sweet music as a featured singer in the Tempts.

Since going solo, David has managed to keep his name before the public with hit records like "My Whole World Ended", "Walk Away From Love" and "Break My Heart". David is a Detroit resident, who says he enjoys motorcycle and horseback riding in his spare time.