

R.I.P. Mary Wilson



Mary Wilson Hollywood Walk Of Fame March 11, 1994

Mary Wilson, one of the co-founders of The Supremes passed at age 76 on Monday at her home in Henderson, Nevada. Wilson hailed from Detroit's Brewster Projects along with Florence Ballard who she met in middle school at a talent show. It was Ballard who encouraged Wilson to audition for The Primettes which was the girl group counterpart to The Primes. Wilson contacted Diana Ross to also try out for the group and the fated meeting brought them all together with Betty McGlown to work as The Primettes. McGlown was later replaced by Barbara Martin who exited the group and left them as a trio. They were signed to Motown Records in 1961 and by 1964 were worldwide superstars. By the late '60s, they were Diana Ross & The Supremes. During their rise at Motown, they were the label's most successful act achieving 12 number one hits and fulfilling Gordy's vision of appealing to a mainstream American audience. Their breakthrough in the United States also took place abroad and they challenged The Beatle's popularity. The success of The Supremes set the blueprint for groups like TLC and Destiny's Childs decades later. They brought a new kind of glamour and poise to Black music which allowed them to appear on programs like the Ed Sullivan Show, The Della Reese Show, Hullaboo and The Hollywood Palace. They endorsed products like their own bread and performed for the British Royal Family.

The group began to change when Florence Ballard was dropped by Motown in 1967 for personal issues and would tragically pass in 1976. Ross left for a solo career in 1970. Wilson departed the group in 1977 and despite the additions of Jean Terrell, Lynda Laurence, Scherrie Payne, Cindy Birdsong and Susayne Green this was the official ending of The Supremes. Wilson

released a solo album for Motown in 1979 and she spent a large part of her time in the '80s working in musical theater. She had huge success as an author with the 1986 release of her memoir *Dreamgirl: My Life As A Supreme* which became a bestseller. Four years later she had another memoir, *Supreme Faith: Someday We'll All Be Together*. There were two more autobiographies; *Dreamgirl & Supreme Faith: My Life as a Supreme* from 1999 and *Supreme Glamour* released in 2019. She was also heavily involved in charity work that included raising awareness about the NAACP, UNICEF, the American Cancer Society, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and the Easter Seals Foundation.Â

There was a brief Supremes reunion at theÂ *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever* television special. An attempt at a proper reunion fell through in 2000 when Wilson declined the offer because of a disagreement over the terms of payment and a lack of creative input. Diana Ross, Scherrie Payne and Lynda Lawrence started the tour but it was later canceled because of low ticket sales.Â Â

Wilson never stopped performing and competed on season 28 of *Dancing With The Stars*. She had made a video just days before her death to tell her fans about new music she recorded and was hoping to see released before her March 6th birthday.Â