

HOLLYWOOD THE SOUL SIDE

by Walter Burrell

(Ed. note: This is the first of a two-part exclusive interview with Diana Ross and The Supremes, number one female vocal group in the world.)

THE SUPREMES - NO. 1

ANY SINGING group having seven million-seller records in less than a two-year period certainly deserves the title of "number one," and that's just what Diana Ross and The Supremes have managed to accomplish.

Their renditions of "Where Did Our Love Go," "Baby Love," "Come See About Me," "Stop In the Name of Love," "Back In My Arms Again," "I Hear A Symphony" and "You Can't Hurry Love" each sold a million or more copies and soared to the tops of record charts.

Yet, despite the fact that The Supremes are indisputably tops in their field when it comes to fame and money, their astronomical success hasn't left them smothered in egos and drifting along on clouds of conceit.

In fact, Diana Ross, Mary Wilson and Cindy Birdsong have retained a humbleness which is refreshing and are quick to recall their less-than-bourgeois backgrounds.

Diana and Mary, the original members of the group, came from a ghetto-type section of Detroit called the Brewster Projects and, as Diana points out, "people with money just don't come from there, and many of the Motown people come from similar backgrounds."

Cindy, the newest member of the group, boasts a like origin. She hails from a nearly identical neighborhood more than 1,000 miles away in Camden, New Jersey.

DIANA AND Mary began singing together when they were both 14. They were neighbors in Detroit, went to the same church and attended public schools together. They soon found, through gospel singing and other amateur functions, that their voices blended well. This religious singing carried over into R&B and pop tunes at school parties and soon they were performing in community centers just for the fun of it.

In 1960, during their senior year in high school, the girls auditioned for Berry Gordy, Jr., who was at that time getting his Motown Recording Company off the ground.

Of course, at that time the girls weren't The Supremes. They were just three excited young girls who wanted more than anything to sing. Gordy told them to come back after graduation.

The girls couldn't see at that time how they could possibly get through another year of school and teachers and books before auditioning for Motown again. However, today when they meet with eager teenagers who want to emulate The Supremes, they echo Gordy's words.

DURING THAT year of waiting, the girls were given some work with Motown as background singers. Then Gordy listened to them again and the rest, at the risk of sounding trite, is history.

Individually, The Supremes have diversified and captivating interests. Diana's chief hobby is fashion designing. In the early stages of their careers, she designed and frequently made the trio's costumes. Now, all of their gowns are specifically designed for them by leading couturiers. "But I still get in there with a needle and thread once in a while," quips Diana.

Mary is an unceasing reader, enjoys cooking and picks up foreign languages easily. On the group's international tours, Mary has endeared herself to fans in many countries by addressing them in their native languages.

Cindy is the song writer in the group and, when time permits, also takes piano lessons and bowls. "When I'm home in Camden," she says, "I get the chance to pursue another hobby: cooking. I'm the oldest of nine children, seven of whom still live at home, and feeding them is both fun and a challenge."

Any marriages in the near future? Mary Wilson was recently dating Ronnie Eckstine (son of crooner Billy Eckstine) and is currently being seen occasionally with UCLA basketball star Mike Warren, but none of the girls has any serious marital plans.

As one of them put it recently: We've had

"Supreme" Treat For Television Fans



HARMONIZING -- Supremes Cindy Birdsong, Diana Ross and Mary Wilson are caught harmonizing with Ernie Ford during rehearsal for "The Tennessee Ernie Ford Special," to air Dec. 3 on CBS-TV.

Election Victories Soar

NEW ORLEANS - (NPI)--While the world's eyes were on mayoral victories in Gary and Cleveland, equally significant selections were made in three Southern legislatures, which were integrated for the first time since Reconstruction days.

In New Orleans, Ernest M. Morial won a close election victory, thus becoming the state's first black legislator in this century.

At first, it was thought that there might have to be a runoff. But a late official check showed that Morial by a majority of 192 votes over three opponents.

The young attorney, backed strongly by New Orleans Negro voters, was endorsed by the city's two daily newspapers.

In Richmond, Va., Dr. William Ferguson Reid, one of eight Democratic nominees, became the first black man elected to the state's general assembly in this century.

In Jackson, Robert G. Clark, a 37-year-old black man, captured a house seat, after being supported by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party.

CLARK RAN as an independent in Holmes county (Lexington, Miss.), where recent voter registration has concentrated. The Mississippi Legislature thus will have a Negro in its midst, for the first time in recent history, when it convenes in January.

The election victory was a sweet comeback for MFDP, which has been largely dormant lately.

Meanwhile, Robert J. Booker became the first black man to be elected in this century to the state legislature from East Tennessee.

The first nonwhite Tennessee legislator, since Reconstruction days, was A.W. Willis, who ran unsuccessfully for Memphis mayor.

Booker, a Democrat, is a 32-year-old former school teacher who attended Knoxville College. In 1961, he represented the student body in Guinea, West Africa, in Operation-Crossroads Africa.

He was elected to Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities.

Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Virginia are not the only Southern states with black legislators. Several also served in Georgia and Texas.

the dream of singing for so long and now we're fulfilling it. We can only live one dream at a time."

Next week: A closer look at Diana Ross; her thoughts on money, individuality, and extension of her career--as a serious actress.

Negro Spending Power

CHICAGO - (NPI)--Negro purchasing power should shoot up from its present \$30 billion to \$45 billion in 1970, according to Ebony magazine publisher, John Johnson.

This would give every black person in the nation an average purchasing power of \$2,000.

Negroes constitute 28 per cent of the overall population in 78 of the country's largest cities, the publisher said.

AS THE average black city-dweller is younger than his white counterpart, he spends more of his income on goods and services, Johnson added.

The publisher called for a "complete re-vamping of marketing and advertising strategy in the neglected Negro market."

He did not specify what changes might be made, although he noted that the American market is racially segregated.

MCDONALD'S HOST XMAS KIDDIE PARTY

McDonald's Restaurants, Las Vegas, will co-host a 3-theater Children's Christmas Party on December 23, it was announced today by McDonald's Area Supervisor, Bob Bishop.

Co-host of the Children's Party is Radio Station KLUC. This will be KLUC'S 6th annual participation in the holiday event.

The 3-hour party which will include full length cartoons and movies, special guest Ronald McDonald, free gifts, and of course, Santa Claus himself, will be held simultaneously at the Guild, Fremont, and Huntridge Theaters from 9:30 to Noon.

Free tickets are available at all 5 McDonald's. The Las Vegas McDonald's are located at: 2830 E. Charleston Blvd., 4840 W. Charleston Blvd., 3910 Maryland Parkway, 1000 E. Lake Mead Blvd., and 2230 W. Bonanza Road.

CELEBS SALUTE EVERS

HOLLYWOOD - (NPI)--Charles Evers, Mississippi NAACP field secretary and brother of martyred Medgar Evers, was cited for his civil rights work in Dixie at a \$25-a-plate testimonial dinner recently.

Among the 700-odd persons attending were Mrs. Maria Cole, widow of the late singer, Nat "King" Cole; actors Barry Sullivan and Mrs. Gregory Peck, and singer Nancy Wilson.

Singers Billy Daniels and Carmen McRae entertained.