



Sweet Honey In The Rock will perform at Smith Center Ballroom, Portland State University on July 26, 1980.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

By Nyewusi Askari

On July 26, 1980 at 8 P.M., at Smith Center Ballroom, Portland State University, 1855 SW Broadway, the vocal quartet "Sweet Honey In The Rock" will perform in concert.

"Sweet Honey In The Rock," is a all-female Black acapella group, originating out of Washington, D.C. The songs they sing, reach way back into the roots of traditional Black folk music of the Black church and community. While listening to them, one can feel the movement of the ages coming alive. Their concept stress us of the voice as rhythmic instrumentation, accented by foot-tapping, hand-clapping, and thigh-patting. There are the complex variety of vocal effects, unexpected but mellow phrasing, the changing of octaves, slurring, supporting harmonies, the switching of leads and rhythmic interjections. These Black women are Black storytellers, warriors of protest of the highest order.

In order for the listener to truly appreciate the songs of "Sweet Honey In The Rock," he/she must understand that this group is not about boggie. It is not about disco or Rappers Delight. This group is political, is about the reconstruction of historical periods and events utilizing the cultural products of the oral community.

Most groups we hear today are commercial; are about the making of money. "Sweet Honey In The Rock," is about the making/keeping our history alive. Where most groups are null and void of political direction, "Sweet Honey In The Rock," is pure political dynamite. Listen to sister Bernice Reagon, leader of the group, break it way down to the bone.

"American protest song tradition stretches the full range of this nation's history in time and experience. Songs articulating the dreams and bemoaning the poverty and oppression of the old came with the first settlers. The Nation of the original peoples of this land also registered their anger and anguish in

their laments and drum prayers as they saw their land, culture and people displaced by the new settlers. black people, brought in chains from Africa have produced one of our richest and most articulate body of protest songs. The lyric and music of their field hollers, worksongs, spirituals, blues, resound with expressions for a better and freer day.

One area of protest song spanning people, culture and language gave voice to the ideas and expectations of the country's working people. Honest work has long been held as the way to the American dream of success and freedom. Working people registered their struggles, organized and individual, in songs and actions that began a process that was aimed at giving more power to the laborers. Whether factory hands, or tillers of the soil, the songs of the workers can be found in every culture that exists within this society."

She continues: "The group's name stems from a refrain in a traditional Black spiritual that refers to a land so sweet honey flows from the rocks. Honey, symbolizing warmth and sweetness; and rock symbolizing strength and consistency, which is what we try to convey in our song."

And there is that spirit of community. "When we were forming, it was agreed that we would cover a range of material as wide as we were. We are still seeking out audiences, still finding out exactly where our music can be received and appreciated. We've done funerals and weddings, and we've developed a children's repertoire for school programs. We love performing at places in the community where music is needed to help people get through certain events in their lives," she said.

We here at the *Portland Observer* welcomes "Sweet Honey In The Rock," to Portland, and urge our readers and supporters to lend their spirits to this up-coming concert July 26, 1980. In the words of writer Greta Graham, "Experience Sweet Honey In The Rock," of your soul.

SMOKEY ROBINSON: "The world's greatest living love poet."

Recording and producing one hit record is a strenuous, demanding task that requires an inordinate amount of talent, energy and luck. Recording and producing a string of hit records that spans two decades and weathers innumerable trends is an amazing feat. And recording and producing a string of hit records that not only spans 20 years of trends, but also has a hand in shaping some of those trends is...incredible -- something only a handful of artists have done.

Smokey Robinson is one of that handful. Smokey Robinson is incredible. Pop music giant Bob Dylan is said to have once called Smokey "the world's greatest living love poet." Music critic Vince Aletti wrote that Smokey is "one of the finest contemporary lyricists." And music lovers the world over continue to pay him perhaps the highest compliment of all -- the lush romance

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It started in the late 50s when high-school pals William Robinson, Claudette Rogers, Bobby Rogers, Ron White and Pete Moore -- Smokey Robinson and the Miracles -- auditioned a fledgling songwriter/producer named Berry Gordy. Gordy, who would soon go on to found Motown Records, was impressed by the group's songs - Smokey Robinson originals -- and took them under his wing.

In 1958, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles released their -- and



Smokey Robinson will be at the Paramount Theatre Friday, August 8, 1980, 8pm. check ad below for more information.

Motown's -- first record, "Got A Job," which was a hit in the Detroit area. Soon after that came "Way Over There" (the first nationally - distributed Motown disc) and then, the breakthrough record -- 1960's "Shop Around." That smash hit record began for the Miracles and Smokey a 10 year stay at the top, with such Robinson gems as: "You Really Got A Hold On Me," "Mickey's Monkey," "Ooh, Baby, Baby," "Track Of My Tears," "Yesterday," "Satisfaction," and "Tears Of A Clown" following.

In addition to hits for the Miracles, Smokey found time to craft a huge number of hits for other Motown artists as well. The Temptations' "My Girl" and "Get Ready," Mary Wells' "My Guy," Marvin Gaye's "Ain't That Peculiar" and a truckload of others all sprang from the prolific pen of Smokey Robinson. Even today, Smokey is intricately involved in the career of his nephews, Motown artists Keith and Darryl, and his songs have been redone by stellar artists as Linda Ronstadt, Gladys Knight and the Pips and Eddie Rabbit.

In 1971, a road-weary Smokey left the Miracles to concentrate on his position as a vice-president at Motown. But executive pursuits ultimately didn't fill the hole his retirement had left and soon, Smokey was back in the studio again. The results produced some of the finest musical moments of the decade.

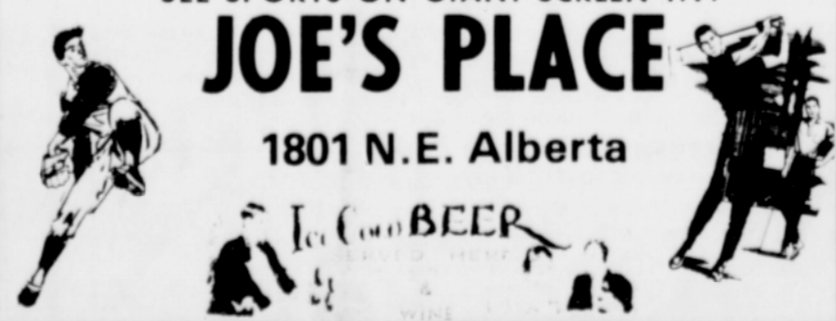
After so many years of hits and what he likes to call the "peak and valleys" of showbusiness, Smokey Robinson is especially at ease now. Or, as smockey noted in an interview with *Soul Magazine*, "I can go into a studio and record my version of 'Three Blind Mice,' if I want, cause if it doesn't work, I've only hurt Smokey Robinson, dig? I'll just keep on makin good music and release records 'til the people are tired of me and want me to stop."

And if that's the case, it looks like the warm, personable music of Smokey Robinson will be part of our lives for a long, long time to come.

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