

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

White House Jams to the Motown Sound

Musical pioneers perform with current stars

(AP) -- The White House reverberated like a long-ago basement sound studio in Detroit as the likes of John Legend, Seal, Jamie Foxx, Nick Jonas and Sheryl Crow channeled their inner Motown before Michelle and Barack Obama.

Musical pioneers Smokey Robinson and Stevie Wonder joined in for the celebration of all things Motown.

Obama on Thursday called Motown's music "the soundtrack of the civil rights era," and credited the pioneering record label's tight lyrics, catchy melodies and deep soul with helping to "blur the line between music that was considered either black or white."

Foxx, Seal, Legend and Jonas launched the East Room concert celebrating the Motown sound with a high-energy medley in which the four took turns as backup dancers, complete with some smooth dance moves to the likes of "Get Ready," "The Way You Do the Things You Do," "Can't Get Next to You" and "Ain't Too Proud to Beg."



Seal performs during "The Motown Sound: In Performance at the White House" program on Thursday in Washington, D.C.

Not to be outdone, the trio of Natasha Bedingfield, Jordin Sparks and Ledisi took a Supremes-esque turn singing "Stop! In the Name of Love."

Legend delivered a soulful rendition of "Heard It Through the Grapevine" that left Foxx, who also served as the program's host, to joke that nowadays the story was more likely to be "heard it through my Twitter."

"I'm going to tweet it right now," he joked.

he joked

Obama and the singers paid homage to the genuine Motown greats in the lineup: Robinson and Wonder.

And Motown founder Berry Gordy was in the audience to hear Obama recount his record label's modest beginnings in a basement on West Grand Boulevard in Detroit, decorated with a banner outside that read "Hitsville, USA."

"At concerts in the South, Motown groups literally brought people together — insisting that the ropes traditionally used to separate black and white audience members be taken down," Obama recounted.

Robinson teamed up with Crow to sing one of his earliest hits, "You've Really Got a Hold On Me."

And then he turned the stage over to "another guy who was here right from the beginning" — Wonder.

Wonder performed "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" and kicked off the finale that brought all the artists back on stage for "Dancing in the Street."

Earlier on Thursday, Legend and Jonas performed before cheering teenagers at a workshop in the State Dining Room that served as a tutorial on the history of the genre.

"Times have changed but the amazing thing is that that music is still relevant," Legend told reporters after he had delivered a room-filling rendition of Wonder's "Love's in Need of Love Today."

Michelle Obama told the young people that the color-barrier-shattering music of her youth "was so much more than just a soundtrack. It was a heartbeat."

"As Motown rose, so did the forces of change in this country," she said.

The first lady introduced Robinson and Gordy as "true trailblazers," adding: "There wouldn't be an Usher if there wasn't a Smokey Robinson. You know, there wouldn't be an Alicia Keys without a Gladys Knight."

And she confessed to a soft spot for one Motown artist in particular: "Who's my favorite?" she asked aloud.

"Stevie Wonder, yes indeed."



Shannon Sanders

One on One with Shannon Sanders

Award winning musician coming to SEI

Two time Grammy award winning singer, songwriter and producer Shannon Sanders will be in town this weekend doing a free music seminar where local artists and mu-

sicians can ask questions of him regarding the music business.

The event on Saturday, March 5 at 1 p.m. in the Self Enhancement, Inc. auditorium, 3920 N. Kerby Ave.,

is free and open to the public, however space is limited and you will have to RSVP for the program at soulinthepearl.com.

"One on One: Where Purpose Meets Passion with Shannon Sanders," is sponsored by Soul in the

Pearl and Baseline Entertainment. The seminar will be moderated by Vursatyl of Lifesavas.

Sanders alongside his songwriting and production partner Drew Ramsey, has been credited for creating chart-topping mainstream hits.

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Will Smith's Daughter as 'Annie'

(AP) -- Another child of Will and Jada Pinkett Smith is set to star in the remake of a Hollywood classic.

Ten-year-old Willow Smith is set to play the title role in "Annie."

The film is being developed by Overbrook Entertainment, which the Smiths co-own, along with Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter and Sony Pictures.

Last year, 12-year-old Jaden Smith starred in a remake of "The Karate Kid," which raked in \$343 million worldwide.

Sony's Columbia Pictures first brought "Annie" to theaters in 1982.

The movie was based on the Broadway musical in which a red-headed orphan's life is transformed.