

Marvin Gaye - His Music and Influence

By Shari Lewis

Every recent decade in American history has had a particular style of music with which it is associated. Every recent decade in American history has had an elite group of songs that almost everyone knows in some form. The artists themselves or the title of the song may be unknown, but the instrumentals, the voice, the pure emotion behind the voice, the words - these are some of the things about this special group of songs that are forever imbedded in America's collective memory and heritage.

Marvin Gaye is one of those fortunate artists whose work still inspires, and will likely continue to inspire for generations to come. But the longevity of Marvin Gaye's music is no fluke, extraordinary coincidence or accident. It was Marvin's destiny to be a voice, to provide a soundtrack, so to speak, for all those who feel the undeniable, urgent, heartbreaking sense of duty to speak out against cruelty and injustice.

Marvin asked a simple question: "What's Going On?" And this simple question spoke to the psyche/spirit/soul of everyone fighting for change - white/black, young/old, male/female. During the Civil Rights Movement, in the midst of policeman - those

who are supposed to serve and protect - releasing dogs on crowds of peaceful protestors, and the beginnings of the Vietnam War - which many people sincerely believed was completely unnecessary - Marvin's proclamation of, "You know we have to find a way/to bring some lovin' here today," resonated with those who wanted peace, equality and simple joy for all human beings.

In 2005, when people of all different backgrounds unabashedly preach their "indisputable" ideologies without much consideration of other opinions, Marvin's words stressing tolerance still sing truthfully. And it is his message that inspires people like me, who are perceptive enough to realize that we still have a long way to go in terms of learning to live with one another.

Marvin left his mark by creating through his music a divinely perfect expression of what everyone wants: peace and understanding. His plea: "Talk to me/so you can see/what's going on," helped to foster discussion, which in turn leads to education, which leads to awareness, which ultimately leads to change.