

# SUPERBAD!

## THE SOUL OF THE CITY



1. **THEME FROM SHAFT**  
*Isaac Hayes*
2. **FREDDIE'S DEAD  
(THEME FROM SUPERFLY)**  
*Curtis Mayfield*
3. **TROUBLE MAN**  
*Marvin Gaye*
4. **THEME FROM CLEOPATRA JONES**  
*Joe Simon featuring the Mainstreeters*
5. **MASTERPIECE**  
*The Temptations*
6. **LOW RIDER**  
*War*
7. **ACROSS 110TH STREET**  
*Bobby Womack*
8. **THE PAYBACK**  
*James Brown*
9. **BROTHER'S GONNA WORK IT OUT**  
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10. **BACK STABBERS**  
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11. **ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH**  
*Four Tops*
12. **INNER CITY BLUES (MAKE ME WANNA HOLLER)**  
*Marvin Gaye*
13. **SUPERFLY**  
*Curtis Mayfield*
14. **SUPER BAD**  
*James Brown*
15. **PAPA WAS A ROLLING STONE**  
*The Temptations*
16. **CHECK OUT YOUR MIND**  
*The Impressions*
17. **SWEETBACK'S THEME**  
*Melvin Van Peebles*
18. **BE THANKFUL FOR WHAT YOU GOT**  
*William DeVaughn*

# SOLID GOLD SOUL SUPERBAD!

THE SOUL OF THE CITY

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SOLID GOLD SOUL

# SUPERBAD!

THE SOUL OF THE CITY

TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

UNIVERSAL MUSIC  
CORPORATION

CD

8838-30  
314556948-2

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2. FREDDIE'S DEAD  
(THEME FROM  
SUPERFLY)

3. TROUBLE MAN

4. THEME FROM  
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5. MASTERPIECE

6. LOW RIDER

7. ACROSS 110TH STREET

8. THE PAYBACK

9. BROTHER'S GONNA  
WORK IT OUT

10. BACK STREBBERS

11. ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH

12. I'M HERE  
GODDARD'S  
(THEME FROM  
MIRAGE CITY  
DARKNA BROTHERS)

13. SUPERBAD

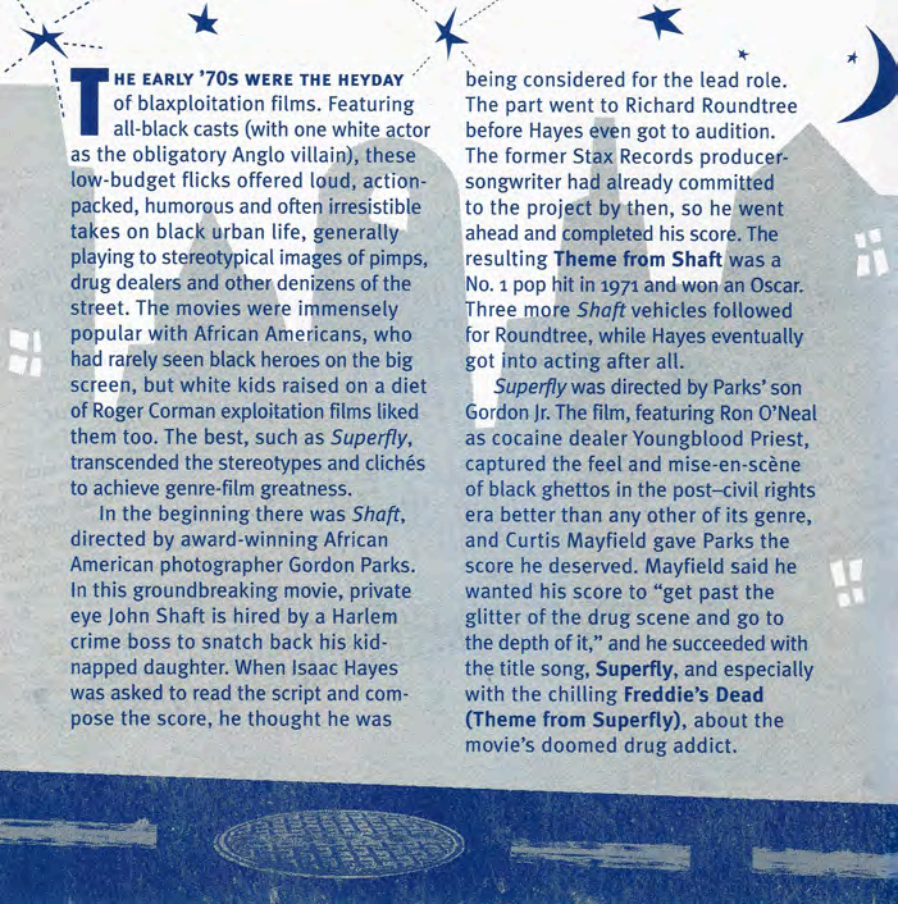
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**T**HE EARLY '70S WERE THE HEYDAY of blaxploitation films. Featuring all-black casts (with one white actor as the obligatory Anglo villain), these low-budget flicks offered loud, action-packed, humorous and often irresistible takes on black urban life, generally playing to stereotypical images of pimps, drug dealers and other denizens of the street. The movies were immensely popular with African Americans, who had rarely seen black heroes on the big screen, but white kids raised on a diet of Roger Corman exploitation films liked them too. The best, such as *Superfly*, transcended the stereotypes and clichés to achieve genre-film greatness.

In the beginning there was *Shaft*, directed by award-winning African American photographer Gordon Parks. In this groundbreaking movie, private eye John Shaft is hired by a Harlem crime boss to snatch back his kidnapped daughter. When Isaac Hayes was asked to read the script and compose the score, he thought he was

being considered for the lead role. The part went to Richard Roundtree before Hayes even got to audition. The former Stax Records producer-songwriter had already committed to the project by then, so he went ahead and completed his score. The resulting **Theme from Shaft** was a No. 1 pop hit in 1971 and won an Oscar. Three more *Shaft* vehicles followed for Roundtree, while Hayes eventually got into acting after all.

*Superfly* was directed by Parks' son Gordon Jr. The film, featuring Ron O'Neal as cocaine dealer Youngblood Priest, captured the feel and mise-en-scène of black ghettos in the post-civil rights era better than any other of its genre, and Curtis Mayfield gave Parks the score he deserved. Mayfield said he wanted his score to "get past the glitter of the drug scene and go to the depth of it," and he succeeded with the title song, **Superfly**, and especially with the chilling **Freddie's Dead (Theme from Superfly)**, about the movie's doomed drug addict.

Bobby Womack wrote and performed **Across 110th Street** for the gruesomely violent admonitory movie of the same title. To round out his score for *Shaft in Africa*, Johnny Pate had the Four Tops sing Dennis Lambert and Brian Potter's **Are You Man Enough**. Another Motown figure, Willie Hutch, contributed **Brother's Gonna Work It Out** to *The Mack*, featuring Richard Pryor. Melvin Van Peebles not only wrote, directed and starred in *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*—perhaps the lowest-budget film in the genre—he took care of **Sweetback's Theme** as well. Joe Simon's **Theme from Cleopatra Jones** enlivened the first of Tamara Dobson's three movies from the '70s. Dobson was the second-biggest female

blaxploitation star, after Pam Grier, even though Dobson had far superior martial arts moves. **Trouble Man**, from the 1972 film of the same name, was Marvin Gaye's contribution to the blaxploitation movement. The song is the only vocal effort on a jazzy sound-track album that reflects Gaye's fascination with the Moog synthesizer. The LP is one of only two for which Gaye wrote all the songs, and his performance on it leaves little doubt that he considered himself a hero-victim just like the movie character. Gaye liked the title song enough to open his live show with it for the next few years.

*Black Caesar's Revenge* was to be the second collaboration between James Brown and director Larry Cohen—Brown had scored Cohen's *Black*



BOBBY  
WOMACK

# DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest *Billboard* R&B chart position

## 1. THEME FROM SHAFT

*Isaac Hayes* • Music and lyrics by Isaac Hayes. Enterprise 9038 (1971) No. 2\* Irving Music Inc. BMI. Courtesy of Fantasy, Inc.

## 2. FREDDIE'S DEAD (THEME FROM SUPERFLY)

*Curtis Mayfield* • Music and lyrics by Curtis Mayfield. Curtom 1975 (1972) No. 2\* Warner-Tamerlane Publ. Corp. BMI. © 1972 Curtom Records Of Atlanta Inc. Produced Under License From Rhino Entertainment Co. By Arrangement With Warner Special Products.

## 3. TROUBLE MAN

*Marvin Gaye* • Music and lyrics by Marvin Gaye. Tamla 54228 (1973) No. 4\* Jobete Music Co. Inc./Twentieth Century-Fox Music Corp. ASCAP. © 1972 Motown Records, a Division of UMG Recordings, Inc.

## 4. THEME FROM CLEOPATRA JONES

*Joe Simon featuring the Mainstreeters* • Music and lyrics by Joe Simon. Spring 138 (1973) No. 3\* Warner-Tamerlane Publ. Corp. BMI. © 1973 Ace Records Ltd. Courtesy of Ace Records Ltd.

## 5. MASTERPIECE

*The Temptations* • Music and lyrics by Norman Whitfield. Gordy 7126 (1973) No. 1\* Stone Diamond Music Corporation. BMI. © 1973 Motown Records, a Division of UMG Recordings, Inc.

## 6. LOW RIDER

*War* • Music and lyrics by Thomas Allen, Harold Brown, Morris Dickerson, Lonnie Jordan, Charles Miller, Lee Oskar, Howard Scott and Jerry Goldstein. United Artists 706 (1975) No. 1\* Far Out Music Inc. ASCAP. Henstone Publishing/Musicworks. BMI. © 1975 Avenue Records/Far Out Productions, Inc. Courtesy of Avenue Records/Far Out Productions, Inc.

## 7. ACROSS 110TH STREET

*Bobby Womack* • Music and lyrics by J. J. Johnson and Bobby Womack. United Artists 196 (1973) No. 19\* ABKCO Music Inc./EMI Unart Catalog Inc. BMI. © 1972 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc. Courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Music, Inc.

## 8. THE PAYBACK

*James Brown* • Music and lyrics by James Brown, Fred Wesley and

John Starks. Polydor 14223 (1974) No. 1\* Dynatone Publishing Co. BMI. © 1974 Universal Records, a Division of UMG Recordings, Inc.

## 9. BROTHER'S GONNA WORK IT OUT

*Willie Hutch* • Music and lyrics by Willie Hutch. Motown 1222 (1973) No. 18\* Jobete Music Co. Inc. ASCAP. © 1973 Motown Records, a Division of UMG Recordings, Inc.



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#### 10. BACK STABBERS

*The O'Jays* • Music and lyrics by Leon Huff, Gene McFadden and John Whitehead. Philadelphia International 3517 (1972) No. 1\* Warner-Tamerlane Publ. Corp. BMI. © 1972 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a division of Sony Music, A group of Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

#### 11. ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH

*Four Tops* • Music and lyrics by Dennis Lambert and Brian Potter. Dunhill/ABC 4354 (1973) No. 2\* EMI Hastings Catalog Inc./Universal Duchess Music Corporation. BMI. © 1973 MCA Records.

#### 12. INNER CITY BLUES (MAKE ME WANNA HOLLER)

*Marvin Gaye* • Music and lyrics by Marvin Gaye and James Nyx. Tamla 54209 (1971) No. 1\* FCG Music/Jobete Music Co. Inc./MG III Music/NMG Music, ASCAP. Courtesy of Motown Records, under license from Universal Music Enterprises.

#### 13. SUPERFLY

*Curtis Mayfield* • Music and lyrics by Curtis Mayfield. Curtom 1978 (1973) No. 5\* Warner-Tamerlane Publ. Corp. BMI. © 1972 Curtom Records Of Atlanta Inc. Produced Under License From Rhino Entertainment Co. By Arrangement With Warner Special Products.

#### 14. SUPER BAD

*James Brown* • Music and lyrics by James Brown. King 6329 (1970) No. 1\* Crited Music Inc. BMI. Courtesy of Universal Records, a Division of UMG Recordings, Inc.

#### 15. PAPA WAS A ROLLING STONE

*The Temptations* • Music and lyrics by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong. Gordy 7121 (1972) No. 5\* Stone Diamond Music Corporation. BMI. © 1972 Motown Records, a Division of UMG Recordings, Inc.

#### 16. CHECK OUT YOUR MIND

*The Impressions* • Music and lyrics by Curtis Mayfield. Curtom 1951 (1970) No. 3\* Warner-Tamerlane Publ. Corp. BMI. Produced Under License From Warner Bros. Records Inc.

#### 17. SWEETBACK'S THEME

*Melvin Van Peebles* • Music and lyrics by Melvin Van Peebles. Stax 0097 (1971) Did not chart. Yeah Inc. ASCAP. Courtesy of Fantasy, Inc.

#### 18. BE THANKFUL FOR WHAT YOU GOT

*William DeVaughn* • Music and lyrics by William DeVaughn. Roxbury 0236 (1974) No. 1\* Delicious Apple Music Corp./EMI Jemaxal Music Inc./H&R Lastrada Music/Melomega Music Ltd./Music Sales Corp. ASCAP. © 1974 Dominion Entertainment, Inc. Under License from Dominion Entertainment, Inc.

★

MELVIN  
VAN  
PEEBLES

★



\* *Caesar*—and **The Payback** was to be the opening song for the movie. Brown's musical director, trombonist Fred Wesley, wrote the words and music based on a rough cut he'd seen, but Cohen felt the finished track wasn't funky enough. The miffed Brown promptly took it back and put it out on his own, while Cohen, who'd changed the name of the movie to *Hell Up in Harlem*, used Willie Hutch for the sound track. Brown got the last laugh, though; his single went to the top of the black charts.

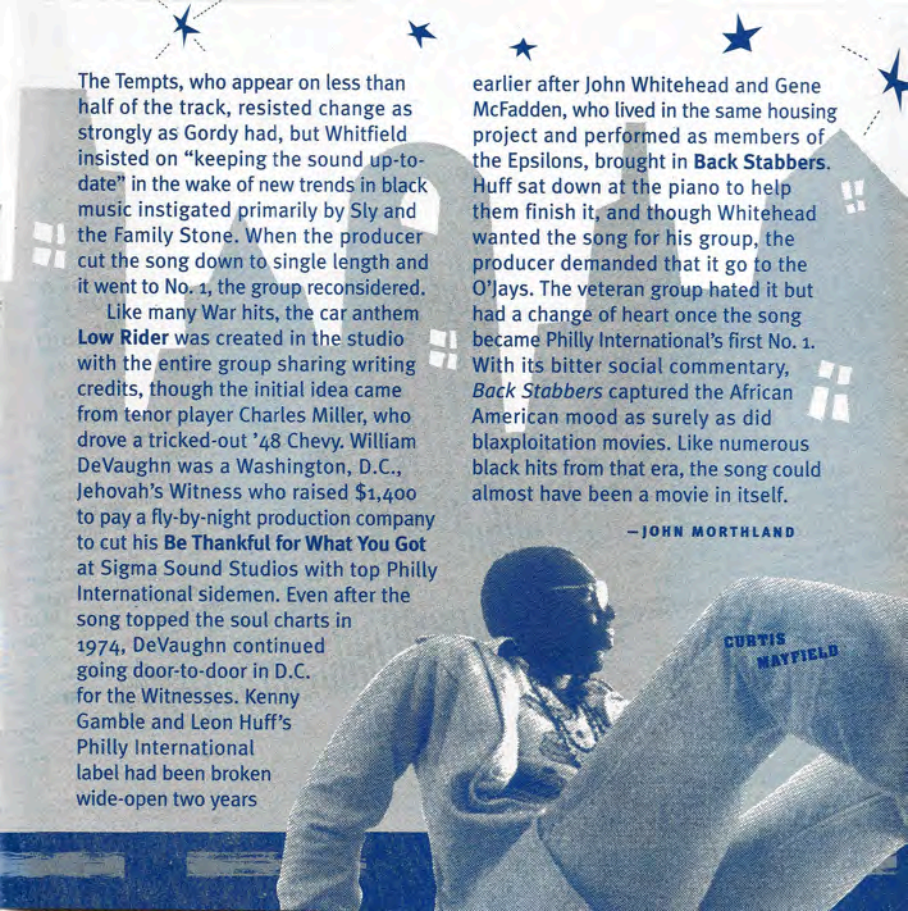
\* **Super Bad** was the second track Brown cut with his '70s band, which featured bassist Bootsy Collins and other former King Records sidemen. (Brown had hired them on the spot backstage after his '60s band quit en masse just before a concert.) Brown forged his new groove with this group by keeping the emphasis "on the one" (on the downbeat), a phrase that later became a rallying cry for Parliament-Funkadelic.

The Impressions' **Check Out Your Mind**, powered by Curtis Mayfield's incisive guitar, was the group's last hit before Mayfield released his first

solo album. Marvin Gaye wrote **Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)** with James Nyx. The obscure Nyx had previously helped out on work that Gaye produced for the Originals, and had apprenticed under Gaye mentor Harvey Fuqua. The single became the third top-10 hit off *What's Going On*, the 1971 song cycle in which Gaye declared his artistic independence from the Motown machinery. Though label boss Berry Gordy predictably hated that album, Gaye's success with it opened Motown up to further experimentation. Writer-producer Norman Whitfield first produced the bluesy **Papa Was a Rolling Stone**, a ballad of broken black family life that he co-wrote with Barrett Strong, for the *Undisputed Truth* in 1972. But the song achieved its full potential later the same year when the Temptations rode it to the top of the pop charts. (It was their first No. 1 after Damon Harris replaced Eddie Kendricks.) Whitfield said that he was trying to make music "with the scope of a movie"—maybe even a blaxploitation flick—when he put together the 14-minute **Masterpiece**, the title song to a Temptations album.







The Tempts, who appear on less than half of the track, resisted change as strongly as Gordy had, but Whitfield insisted on “keeping the sound up-to-date” in the wake of new trends in black music instigated primarily by Sly and the Family Stone. When the producer cut the song down to single length and it went to No. 1, the group reconsidered.

Like many War hits, the car anthem **Low Rider** was created in the studio with the entire group sharing writing credits, though the initial idea came from tenor player Charles Miller, who drove a tricked-out '48 Chevy. William DeVaughn was a Washington, D.C., Jehovah's Witness who raised \$1,400 to pay a fly-by-night production company to cut his **Be Thankful for What You Got** at Sigma Sound Studios with top Philly International sidemen. Even after the song topped the soul charts in 1974, DeVaughn continued going door-to-door in D.C. for the Witnesses. Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff's Philly International label had been broken wide-open two years

earlier after John Whitehead and Gene McFadden, who lived in the same housing project and performed as members of the Epsilons, brought in **Back Stabbers**. Huff sat down at the piano to help them finish it, and though Whitehead wanted the song for his group, the producer demanded that it go to the O'Jays. The veteran group hated it but had a change of heart once the song became Philly International's first No. 1. With its bitter social commentary, *Back Stabbers* captured the African American mood as surely as did blaxploitation movies. Like numerous black hits from that era, the song could almost have been a movie in itself.

— JOHN MORTHLAND

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**PICTURE CREDITS:** Artist photos courtesy Michael Ochs Archives.com.

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