

**MARVIN GAYE**  
**THE MASTER (1961-1984)**  
**Motown 31453 0492 2 1995**

Marvin Gaye probably went through more stylistic changes than any other soul singer of his era, and the classy four-CD collection "**The Master (1961-1984)**" does an excellent job of highlighting those often surprising changes. Gaye grew up in a strict, religious house, as his father was a reverend of a sect that outlawed movies, secular music and dancing. Gaye's early release came from the powerful and energetic singing allowed in his father's church. Although he often fought bitterly with his father at home, Gaye's religious upbringing would influence his songwriting throughout his career.

Gaye first hit the charts in 1962, a time when Motown was experiencing its first success with a largely teen-age audience. Many of his early records are sugary and backed with fairly annoying female vocals, but the talent in his voice is undeniable. Motown packaged Gaye as a smooth, nonthreatening lover, and he parlayed that image into a series of duets with **Mary Wells**, **Kim Weston**, and most famously, **Tammi Terrell**. It wasn't until "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" in 1968, however, that Gaye's material began to consistently match the power of his voice. The song was Motown's all-time best seller and it allowed Gaye the freedom to do exactly as he pleased in the studio. That freedom led to perhaps soul's greatest moment, 1971's "**What's Going On.**" A song cycle questioning the state of the human race and the future of the planet, "What's Going On" was a masterpiece that blew those more familiar with Gaye's popster past completely away. In 1973, however, Gaye confounded expectations once again with "Let's Get It On," a celebration of spiritual sexuality that undoubtedly infuriated his father. While the album broke down lyrical barriers and strong melodies carried it to number two on the charts, the message was somewhat disappointing in the wake of "What's Going On." Gaye's career went along in professional, but comparably unremarkable fashion from there on, returning to form with 1981's "**In Our Lifetime,**" and ending with the top 3 single "Sexual Healing" in 1982. Whether Gaye would have ever consistently returned to the themes and depth of "What's Going On" will never be answered, as Gaye's lifelong conflict with his father ended with gunshots from his father's hand, killing Motown's greatest male voice on April 1, 1984. "The Master (1961-1984)" is an incredibly valuable overview of Gaye's career, but it's also a costly investment. Newer fans without enough pocket change might want to start with the remastered version of "What's Going On" ... 9

## Music notebook

**Blur** and **Oasis** went toe to toe on Aug. 14, releasing singles on the same day to determine who was bigger in the U.K. The artificial popularity contest created a maelstrom of press interest, including U.S. network news coverage. In a bit of an upset, Blur's "Country House" topped the charts, leaving Oasis' "Roll With It" in second position. The real winners were the PR people who dreamed up the simultaneous release, attracting huge attention to a couple of so-so songs.

**Dave Coban**, vocalist for **Danache Mode**, slit his wrists