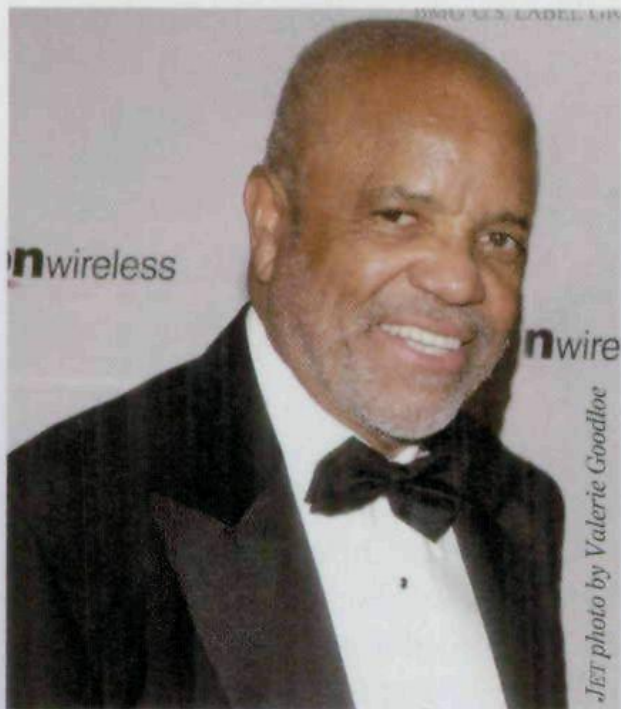


Berry Gordy Speaks Out On 'DREAMGIRLS'



▲ Motown founder Berry Gordy wasn't flattered by Jamie Foxx's performance in *Dreamgirls*, where the film obviously patterned Foxx to be a Gordy clone who guides the career of three young singers, à la the Supremes. This scene in the film has the trio standing in front of an album that is similar to an earlier Supremes album.

“I have no question that we will prevail because the truth is the truth,” Motown founder Berry Gordy Jr. calmly told JET only days before a public apology would come from *Dreamgirls* filmmakers. “The thing about the truth is it will always come back to bless you if you fight it long enough or if you defend it long enough.”



For 50 years Gordy has fought to preserve the legacy of the music empire that he says was “built on integrity and with character.” Needless to say he was “shocked” to see how the film *Dreamgirls* used Motown for the basis of the movie and how Jamie Foxx’s character, Curtis Taylor Jr., a slick manager who oversees a girl trio and uses underhanded

schemes to build a top music company, appeared to be patterned after him.

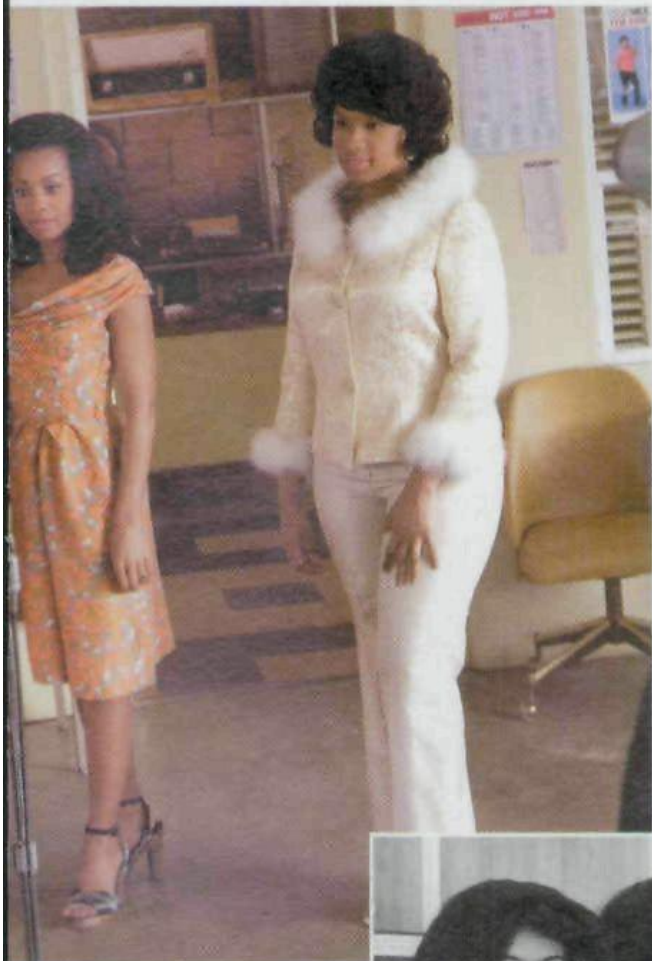
"They had me 100 percent wrong," Gordy told JET a few days before the Oscars. "I felt it would send a message that a Black person could not do some-

thing and build something like a Motown...if they were Black, or that they would have to be a crook.

"The legacy of Motown is about a Black man doing something with his own money, and no one could believe that Motown was the success it was, so those rumors started many, many years ago."

Dreamworks and Paramount Pictures, the studios that released the movie, publicly apologized by placing full-page ads in two trade magazines and later in the Los Angeles Sentinel. This happened only days before the Oscars.

"*Dreamgirls* is a work of fiction," the ad stated. "It is also an homage to Motown. We used many wonderful accomplishments that belong to the rich Motown history. For any confusion that has resulted from our fictional work, we apologize to Mr. Gordy and all the incredible people who were a part of that great legacy. It is vital that the public understand that the real Motown story has yet



Shown in this early file photo, Gordy is shown with the real-life Supremes, who included (l-r) Mary Wilson, Diana Ross and Florence Ballard. Ballard died in 1976.



► Soul legend Smokey Robinson went public with his disapproval about the film's inaccuracy in recreating Motown. Robinson demanded that filmmakers apologize and they did. "Like a Black man can't do something with integrity and build an empire and build a dream with integrity," Robinson told JET. "It's always gotta be some undercover stuff. No, that's not acceptable to me."

to be told."

Gordy, in a written statement, accepted their apology and wished them the best at the Oscars.

The apology came after Smokey Robinson, the man Gordy calls "the soul of Motown" and the "tornado beneath my wings," publicly expressed his disapproval about the film's inaccuracy.

"The writers and creators of that movie blatantly painted a negative picture of Motown and Berry Gordy and of the Supremes," Robinson told JET. "That is not acceptable. That is my heritage...I brought the Supremes to Motown. I've known Diana Ross since she was 12 years old. Florence Ballard was never, ever the lead singer. Never."

Robinson wasn't the first person to express concern about the movie's inaccuracy. He was the first person whose cries were heard. Prior to the film's release, cast members of the 1981 Tony-winning musical voiced their concerns, but were ignored (JET, Dec. 11, 2006).

Though it's been said that the movie is based on the Broadway production, Bill Condon told JET it was his "interpretation" of the original. He also took the liberty of changing the original setting from Chicago to Detroit, the birthplace of



Motown, and killing off one of the characters, singer James Thunder Early, played by Eddie Murphy.

Gordy said, "This was something much deeper than what it appeared. There's been no other Black institution that has done it with their own money and gone as long as Motown...and the fact that a Black man did do it and did it with honesty, with integrity, and with character.

"It was unfortunate to me because many people have come to me and they were so proud that I could get away with being a gangster and do all these wonderful things and they were going to do companies just like mine. No, I'm sorry, but Motown was built with integrity. This is a long battle. It's not about me. It's about the future generations of Black people."

When asked if he planned to file a lawsuit, Gordy told JET, "As to what I would do or won't do, it kind of remains to be seen." □

—Margena A. Christian