Age 44

Marvin Pentz Gay Jr.,
b. 2 April 1939, Washington, DC,
d. 1 April 1984

Gaye was named after his father, a minister in the Apostolic Church. The spiritual influence of his early years played a formative role in his musical career, particularly from the "70s onwards, when his songwriting shifted back and forth between secular and religious topics. He abandoned a place in his father's church choir to team up with Don Covay and Billy Stewart in the R&B vocal group the Rainbows. In 1961, he married Berry Gordy's sister, Anna, and was offered a solo recording contract. Renamed Marvin Gaye, he began his career as a jazz balladeer, but in 1962 he was persuaded to record R&B, and notched up his first hit single with the confident Stubborn Kind Of Fellow, a Top 10 R&B hit. In 1965, Gaye dropped the call-and-response vocal arrangements of his earlier hits and began to record in a more sophisticated style. Gaye allowed his duet recordings to take precedence over his solo work, but in 1968 he issued the epochal I Heard It Through The Grapevine, the record represented a landmark in Motown's history—not least because it became the label's biggest-selling record to date. But his career was derailed by the insidious illness and eventual death of Tammi Terrell in March 1970. Devastated by the loss of his close friend and partner, Gaye spent most of 1970 in seclusion. The following year, he emerged with a set of recordings which Motown at first refused to release, but which eventually became his most successful solo album, WHAT's GOING ON. Gaye's next project saw him shifting his attention from the spiritual to the sexual with LET's GET IT ON. Its explicit sexuality marked a sea change in Gaye's career; as he began to use cocaine more and more regularly. In 1980 under increasing pressure from the Internal Revenue Service, Gaye moved to Europe. Persistent reports of his erratic personal conduct and reliance on cocaine fuelled pessimism about his future career, but instead he re-emerged in 1982 with a startling single, Sexual Healing. He returned to the USA, where he took up residence at his parents" home. The intensity of his cocaine addiction made it impossible for him to work on another album, and he fell into a prolonged bout of depression. He repeatedly announced his wish to commit suicide in the early weeks of 1984, and his abrupt shifts of mood brought him into heated conflict with his father.
~Music Central 96

On the day before Marvin's forty- fifth birthday they quarreled over his father's treatment of his mother. Marvin lashed out at him, attacking him and beating him. His father calmly left the room, went down the hall to his own room, and returned with a gun. He shot Marvin twice in the chest, the second time at point-blank range. Marvin Gaye died instantly.