



Norman Whitfield

May 12, 1940 - September 16, 2008

Los Angeles, California

Norman Whitfield, Motown songwriter and producer who helped invent psychedelic soul and co-wrote hits that still own radio decades later, died in Los Angeles County, California, on September 16, 2008. He was sixty-eight. Harlem beginnings and Detroit's Hitsville years had already placed him beside Barrett Strong and the Temptations as an architect of late-1960s Black pop that sounded like the street and the studio arguing productively.

Born May 12, 1940, in Harlem, Whitfield rose at Motown as a writer-producer whose credits include "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," "Cloud Nine," "Ball of Confusion," and "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone." He pushed longer forms, harder grooves, and social bite into a label often remembered for polish alone. Collaborations with Barrett Strong and the Temptations made psychedelic soul feel like Detroit news rather than fashion. After Motown he continued producing and writing; the catalog's royalty life outlasted any single chart week.

Illness marked his final years. Los Angeles was the industry city that received many Detroit graduates; September 16 became the date the groove's engineer left the board. Cover bands and later producers keep proving that Motown's hardest records were also its most durable.

He died in Los Angeles County on September 16, 2008. The Temptations sides and the Grapevine forever keep the louder memorial.

Whitfield's gift was tension - funk against melody, protest against dance floor, arrangement as argument. Notice

Nearby records the death date so September 16 keeps a Motown architect on America's popular-music calendar.

Services

Died in Los Angeles County, California, September 16, 2008. Motown songwriter and producer; co-writer of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" and major Temptations hits.

NN-OBIT-2026-H102

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