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Robert Gordon

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Robert Gordon : Respect Yourself: Stax Records and the Soul Explosion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Respect Yourself: Stax Records and the Soul Explosion:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Perfect Stax HistoryBy Rick SpellLove Memphis music? Love RB from the 60s? Stop what you are doing and buy this book! This book is the definitive history of Stax, the Memphis recording studio that made Issac Hayes, Otis Redding and others. It is truly fascinating and I couldn't recommend this book higher if you have interest in those subjects. From the early music to Rufus and Carla Thomas, to Steve Cropper, the Bar Kays, Booker T and the MGs, it's all here. But the highlight has to be the guitar player who came in with his

chauffeur/gofer who begged to sing one song even after the band left. But once he started singing, WOW! They quickly reconvened and a SUPERSTAR WAS BORN! Read this to find out who it was. And how did Isaac Hayes start and how did he become a singer and what was his relevance to the Stax history? And of course, the horrible plane crash that changed the face of music. Interested on the business side? Two buyouts, unread contracts that come back to harm you and other business stories are all here. If you are a music historian or love Memphis or RB music, BUY AND READ! The first half of the book literally jumps off the page. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An Epic Tale of Rise and Fall By Larry Hartzell Gordon tells the remarkable story of the rise and fall of the venerable Stax label in a way that one suspects that only a Memphian like him can. From a tiny studio fronted by a record store to the fifth largest black-owned business in America, Stax produced a grittier, more "real" alternative to the pop-oriented African American music coming from Motown in the Sixties and early Seventies -- a veritable "soul explosion," as Gordon puts it. His tale is based on interviews with the label's owners, brother and sister Jim Stewart and Estelle "Miz Axton" Axton, its studio musicians (The MGs), producers, and administrative staff, and most of its star artists, such as Carla and Rufus Thomas, Isaac Hayes, William Bell, and Mavis Staples. The singer who put Stax squarely in the public's consciousness was, of course, Otis Redding, to whom devotes many touching, informative, and even funny pages. Gordon argues that Stax essentially grew faster than its leaders, namely Al Bell, could manage. Bell's vision of making Stax a major multimedia force drove the company to its heights, but his lack of control over the millions Stax made sank the enterprise even more quickly than it grew. Less than a decade after Redding's landmark performance at the Monterey Pop Festival, Stax had issued its last single and fell into bankruptcy, leaving in its wake the broken lives of dozens of employees as well as one hell of a musical legacy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Whole Story - gotta read this book! By Big Dan We passed on Graceland and went straight to the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. It was a moving and informative experience, and I came away with a naive, romantic notion of a happy place where hometown geniuses gathered in an atmosphere of creative joy and color-blindness. After reading "Respect Yourself", I now know that it was that kind of a place, but that there was so much more to the story. Gordon presents an engaging tale of the place and the players, with a degree of detail that makes you think that he was there, making notes on everything that happened. The "rest of the story" is inspiring, depressing, disgusting, and ultimately forgiving. The achievements were crazy high and the failures tragically low. I found it a gripping read, and as others have noted, learned a lot about the music business. There are so many stories about how the hits happened. The one that stands out for me is how David Porter and Isaac Hayes came up with "Hold on, I'm Coming" - it's hysterical.

The story of Stax Records unfolds like a Greek tragedy. A white brother and sister build a record company that becomes a monument to racial harmony in 1960's segregated south Memphis. Their success is startling, and Stax soon defines an international sound. Then, after losses both business and personal, the siblings part, and the brother allies with a visionary African-American partner. Under integrated leadership, Stax explodes as a national player until, Icarus-like, they fall from great heights to a tragic demise. Everything is lost, and the sanctuary that flourished is ripped from the ground. A generation later, Stax is rebuilt brick by brick to once again bring music and opportunity to the people of Memphis. Set in the world of 1960s and '70s soul music, *Respect Yourself* is a story of epic heroes in a shady industry. It's about music and musicians -- Isaac Hayes, Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, Wilson Pickett, the Staple Singers, and Booker T. and the M.G.'s, Stax's interracial house band. It's about a small independent company's struggle to survive in a business world of burgeoning conglomerates. And always at the center of the story is Memphis, Tennessee, an explosive city struggling through heated, divisive years. Told by one of our leading music chroniclers, *Respect Yourself* brings to life this treasured cultural institution and the city that created it.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . In the late 1950s, Jim Stewart, and his sister, Estelle Axton, moved their little fledgling recording studio into the defunct Capitol Theater in Memphis, Tenn., opening their doors and establishing the record label that gave birth to gritty, funky soul music. A masterful storyteller, music historian Gordon (*It Came from Memphis*) artfully chronicles the rise and fall of one of America's greatest music studios, situating the story of Stax within the cultural history of the 1960s in the South. Stewart, a fiddle player who knew he'd never make it in the music business himself, one day overheard a friend talking about producing music; he soon gave it a try, and eventually he was supervising the acclaimed producer Chips Moman in the studio as well as creating a business plan for the label; Estelle Axton set up a record shop in the lobby of the theater, selling the latest discs but also spinning music just recorded in the studio and gauging its market appeal. Gordon deftly narrates the stories of the many musicians who called Stax home, from Rufus Thomas, Carla Thomas, and Otis Redding to Isaac Hayes, Sam and Dave, and the Staples Singers, as well as the creative marketing and promotional strategies; the Stax-Volt Revue and Wattstax. By the early 1970s, bad business decisions and mangled personal relationships shuttered the doors of Stax. Today, the Stax sound permeates our lives and, in Gordon's words, became the soundtrack for liberation, the song of triumph, the sound of the path toward freedom. (Nov.) From Booklist *Starred * Say "Stax Records" and certain names may come to mind: Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, Booker T. and the M.G.'s, Isaac Hayes.

Others may think of the guitarist Steve Cropper and bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn or the producer Chips Moman. Stax was the epitome of southern soul. These people and many others are all part of the Stax story as described in music writer and filmmaker Gordon's wonderful cultural history of not only a record company but also the city of Memphis itself. But it is also the story of America writ large: of racism and segregation, of civil rights and riots in the street, of President Lyndon Johnson and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Stax was founded in 1957 as Satellite Records by white siblings Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton; their combined names gave the company its now historic name, Stax, in 1961. They believed in racial harmony and felt, or at least hoped, that their record company could in some way mend the deep chasm between the races. Gordon tells the Stax story—from its humble beginnings to its heyday, to its bankruptcy, and to its present-day incarnation as the Stax Museum of American Soul Music—with expertise, feeling, and a sure hand. --June Sawyers From Bookforum For most of Stax Records' initial run, from roughly 1961-1975, its headquarters on Memphis Tennessee's McLemore Avenue was the capitol of Southern soul. It wasn't just a record label, but the headquarters of a creative movement: the place where an integrated (in multiple senses) cluster of artists and businesspeople created a new kind of popular music, sold it to the world, and tried to unite their divided community by example. That's a compelling story, and Robert Gordon's well placed to tell it. —Douglas Wolk