



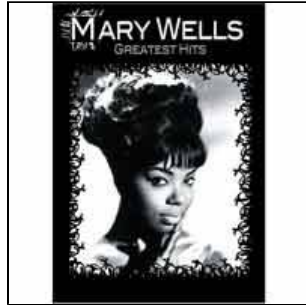
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Mary Wells Greatest Hits

MVD

Motown diva deserves better memorial than this

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She was the Beatles' favourite female singer, one of the early voices that helped make Motown the Sound Of Young America, and her 'My Guy' still stands as the apogee of early Motown's *innocence*, a very old-fashioned, chivalrous sense of romance that seems antique today (though *it still moves*). Her tenure at the soul factory ended soon after, however, Wells exiting the label and suing Berry Gordy for a fairer share of royalties; by the late 1980s she was touring the oldies circuit, which is where this flimsy DVD comes in.

Composed of footage shot at the Rock'n'Roll Palace in Orlando, Florida (presumably not far from Disney World), the DVD presents a six song set of Wells performing her hits for a room full of power-dressing yuppies, letting down lacquered hair and getting their Big Chill on. The taut blare and pocket symphonies of her Motown sides recreated by slick studio musicians using synthesisers at every opportunity, it's a sorrowful occasion, not least since Wells herself is in visibly and audibly poor shape - 'Bye Bye Baby' is particularly tragic; though Wells swings valiantly at it, the performance sounds half-hearted. Some time after this footage was filmed, in 1992, Wells succumbed to cancer, ending a career that deserves a much better memorial than this 18 minute set.

By **Stevie Chick**

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