



# The Lost Supreme

Written by Peter Benjaminson, based on more than seven hours of interviews with Florence Ballard. Published by Chicago Review Press/Lawrence Hill Books. NOW IN ITS SECOND PRINTING.

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**Book Reviewer Karla Mass praises *The Lost Supreme: The Dreamgirl Florence Ballard*, in the April 11-17, 2008 issue of *Week's Most Talked about Book*," a McClatchy Interactive**

As part of the review, she reads a part of *The Lost Supreme* describing the historic meeting between The Beatles and the Supremes. Hear her by clicking on the link at the top of this page, then scroll down to read her review.



"THE LOST SUPREME: THE LIFE OF DREAMGIRL FLORENCE BALLARD" BY PETER BENJAMINSON

*Baby, baby*  
*Baby don't leave me*  
*Ooh, please don't leave me*  
*All by myself*  
*I've got this burning, burning*  
*Yearning feelin' inside me*  
*Ooh, deep inside me*  
*And it hurts so bad*

Back in the day, I could not hit a high note, a low note or even hum in key to soulful groove and catchy lyrics to "Where Did Our Love Go?" are etched in my memory. Originally rejected by the Marvelettes, this '60s hit skyrockets the Supremes to stardom as their first recorded song to reach No. 1 on the Pop and R&B charts.

Florence Ballard, founder of the group and the name Supremes, sings strong, church vocals in the background. Fans describe her as "the one with the voice." In these accolades, Diana Ross is always out front as lead vocalist; and for Ballard, her talent is the beginning of the end.

"The Lost Supreme: The Life of Dreamgirl Florence Ballard" by Peter Benjaminson

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into the life of Ballard as a feisty teen, a determined mother and one of the four Supremes. Her personal struggles will break hearts, and although the tragic outcome biography is well known, fans still hope for a miracle.

The author of the previous book, "The Story of Motown," pens another page that appeals to both young and old, but it's especially interesting for big dreamers who face similar challenges. Ballard shares the most intimate details of her life with the author in one-on-one interviews.

Her story begins as one of 13 children growing up in Detroit's Brewster housing projects. She describes lively family jam sessions, common in the Ballard household.

Ballard, Mary Wilson and Diana Ross are childhood friends who share a love of music. Together, they form a group with a fourth member named Betty McGlowen and call themselves the Primettes. The energetic quartet rehearses after school and eventually performs at various venues. Venues include clubs, church recreation rooms and union halls. McGlowen eventually leaves the group; and Ballard, Wilson and Ross are devastated.

The trio cements their relationship after signing a "one-sided" contract with Motown founder Berry Gordy. Milestones include an appearance on the Ed Sullivan show, performing at New York City's Copacabana in July 1965 and an unforgettable meeting with John Lennon, McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr of the popular band, the Beatles. The unknown Supremes are now touring the world.

Benjaminson writes, "Motown continued to deduct from their royalties all the recording and producing their records, as well as the costs of sending them around the world to tour."

But most disturbing ... Ballard's role as a Supreme is threatened. She constantly feels the pressure and instinctively strikes back when verbally attacked by Gordy. Her self-esteem is hurt. Ballard's pitfalls are numerous and include a poor contract with Motown, a rocky relationship with Ross and Gordy and inadequate legal representation. Revelations about her depression and poverty are astonishing.

Benjaminson portrays Ballard, the lost supreme, with honesty and dignity. He uncovers the layers of a delicate soul and reveals her vulnerability.

He also reminds us of the good old days. Personal, black-and-white photographs of Ballard's journey to stardom, along with a beautiful cover image of her in better times. Informative appendixes include a lengthy discography and an excerpt from Ballard's publicized legal case.

There are a variety of books to choose from on the career and life of Florence Ballard. Benjaminson's version prevails. He has no axe to grind, no alliances to hold dear or to lose by telling Flo's side of the story.

## ONE BOOK WORTH SINGING ABOUT

*The Lost Supreme: The Life of Dreamgirl Florence Ballard*

**Non-Fiction**

**Author:** Peter Benjaminson

**Publisher:** Lawrence Hill Books

**Publication Date:** April 2008

**A groovy website:** The Social Music Revolution at <http://www.last.fm/music/The+Supremes>

*"The Week's Most Talked About Book" is a weekly book review and literary criticism column that publishes every Friday. Selected titles are based on popularity, public opinion and observation. Questions, comments and suggestions should be sent to book columnist Karla Mass at [kmass@mcclatchyinteractive.com](mailto:kmass@mcclatchyinteractive.com). She is a content producer for McClatchy Interactive.*

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