

"Preserving America's Soul"



THIS MONTH IN R&B HISTORY

APRIL 1964

It's fair to say that a lot of things changed in popular music because of The Beatles, and in April 1964, the group set an all-time record by becoming the first artists to hold the top five pop chart spots with five different singles in the same week. But while that was going on, Mary Wells was slowly but surely working her way across the nation with a song that would prove to have every bit the staying power as the compositions of the Fab Four.

"My Guy." Is there anyone today, over 40 years later, who can't finish the first line "Nothing you can say can tear me away..."? In April of that year, in a nation still recovering from the Kennedy Assassination, and energized by the words of Martin Luther King, Mary Wells had reached the top of the R&B charts, with her rendition of the Smokey Robinson composition. The pop charts were next, and "My Guy" broke into the top ten on April 25th, eventually spending two weeks at #1 later in May.

Mary Wells was no stranger to the airwaves, having already had hits with "Two Lovers", "You Beat Me To The Punch" and "The One Who Really Loves You". "My Guy" would become her signature song, but sadly, it would also be her last major success. Mary left Motown, soon after the success of "My Guy", to sign with 20th Century Fox Records, but never again released a single to compare with her early recordings. She continued her performing career throughout the 60's, 70's and 80's.

In 1992 Mary Wells left us. Posthumously recognized by the Foundation in 1989 as one of the Pioneers of Rhythm and Blues, she'll always be remembered for her early work as a leading lady from Hitsville, U.S.A. And in April 1964, though few remember, she took on John, Paul, George and Ringo. And won.

It was a good month in R&B History.

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MARY WELLS