

SMOKEY ROBINSON

Time Flies When You're Having Fun

The dictionary defines the popular term “comfort food” as “food prepared in a traditional style having a usually nostalgic or sentimental appeal.” It has been known to have a buffering effect as it soothes the soul and spurs memories of more “comforting” times. If that concept holds up in the kitchen, then it makes perfect sense that it should hold true in the living room with its aural equivalent. While it’s already a known fact that popular songs often connect with listeners in a highly personal way, often recalled alongside life’s more personal moments, only a few distinctive voices in popular music can achieve that same effect with instantaneous familiarity. With his eternally smooth and instantly recognizable falsetto alone – without the strings, bass, guitar or drums – legendary singer/songwriter/producer **SMOKEY ROBINSON**’s honey-coated voice absolutely is the audio equivalent of comfort food...comfort food for the soul...*with* soul. In following with the aforementioned definition, the Motown legend’s forthcoming ROBSO Records CD, ***Time Flies When You’re Having Fun*** has certainly been “prepared in a traditional style,” while that oh-so-familiar, highly identifiable crooning has an indisputable “nostalgic or sentimental appeal.”

Indeed, the “traditional” element of ***Time Flies When You’re Having Fun*** had already been determined while Robinson was recording his last CD, 2006’s pop/jazz standards collection *Timeless Love*. Just as that particular project had been recorded live in the studio with musicians – the first time he had recorded a full LP that way in years – Smokey knew he wanted to record his newly-written contemporary R&B songs in the very same fashion. In fact, he was so inspired by recording the “old school way” that the recording schedule for both projects actually overlapped. “I was having such a ball making that project (*Timeless Love*),” he explains. “I hadn’t intended on doing them simultaneously because I knew that *Timeless Love* was the one I was going to come out with. But things were going so well with that project that I said, ‘I’m gonna start putting in some of the original material I’d written for my new CD (***Time Flies When You’re Having Fun***) and record it this way too.’ I knew I was going to do these particular songs, but I didn’t realize I was going to wind up recording them live like I did with *Timeless Love*. So I did and we had a ball.” Though he’s the first to acknowledge and appreciate the technologically advanced way that recording for most releases are done today, like the cleaner sound and creative lee-way afforded by ProTools, Robinson was steadfast in his penchant for live instrumentation for this CD. “I think that you still don’t get that feeling that you used to get in the old days when everybody was in the studio together,” says Robinson, whose early Motown classics were recorded in this fashion. “That way was like doing a concert, because everybody was feeding off of each other. It’s just that live vibe.”

Having incorporated the “traditional” ingredient of his comfort food recipe, even a casual **SMOKEY ROBINSON** listener would know that his oh-so-singular voice more than accounts for the “nostalgia” and “sentimentality” components. Whether it’s his signature languid, simmering slow numbers or a groove-driven midtempo, every song delivers what can best be described as “classic Smokey.” Better yet, Robinson – the

primary producer, alongside co-producers Gary Gold and Brian French -- brought on board the similarly recognizable talents of friends Carlos Santana, India.Arie and Joss Stone for the intoxicatingly smooth R&B/pop repertoire of *Time Flies When You're Having Fun*. Completely written by Robinson (except for his sumptuous remake of Norah Jones' "Don't Know Why"), this most enticing set veers from the slow-simmering, Quiet Storm-worthy ("Time Flies," "Whatcha Gonna Do" and "Love Bath") and light-groovin' pop/R&B midtempo (i.e., "Girlfriend"); to the old-school reminiscent ("You're Just My Life," with India.Arie) and even a red-hot double entendre slow grind ("That Place"). For the rhythmic "Please Don't Take Your Love," Robinson is joined by guitar virtuoso Santana, a 30-year friend/colleague he came up in the industry with. When asked about exactly where "that place" referred to on the steamy slow jam actually is, Robinson jokingly teases, "You tell me. It's the same thing as 'Cruisin.' People are going to say the same things as when they heard that song, so 'that place' is wherever you want it to be. I've had two and three people approaching me at a time about a bet, saying, 'When you sang 'Cruisin,' didn't you mean this or that?' I just said, 'No, I meant whatever *you* mean.'"

Given the sensitive nature of his music, the smoothness of his sound and the fact that he composed specially-written material for some of early Motown's most familiar female voices (Mary Wells/Brenda Holloway/The Supremes), it's no surprise that *Time Flies When You're Having Fun*'s two duets -- done with India.Arie and Joss Stone -- come across so mellifluous and alluring. "I love India.Arie so much; she's my baby," Robinson says of his singer/songwriter friend. "I met her through Stevie (Wonder), so we've always vibed well since then. She's just a beautiful and wonderful lady." He's similarly emphatic about Brit soulstress Joss Stone, whom he met when she was only fifteen years-old. "I met her in England," he recalls, "and after hearing her sing I gave her a nickname. I told her she sounded like 'Aretha Joplin.' We just became friends and I would see her from time to time, and I've basically watched her grow up. So, when I wrote 'You're The One For Me' I had her in mind to sing it with me."

Given his legendary status in pop culture and his ever-personable nature, it's no surprise that **SMOKEY ROBINSON** is not only still recording quality music as he celebrates 50 years in the music industry, but attracting top-notch talent to collaborate with as well. After all, this is the same singer/songwriter/producer/record executive who logged a hefty 37 Top 40 hits for Motown Records between 1960 and 1987. In fact, from "Shop Around" (1st Motown #1 R&B hit/1st Motown million-seller) to "Just To See Her"/"One Heartbeat" (both 1987 Top Ten smashes) Robinson began collecting accolades which never seemed to stop coming over the years. In addition to being one of Tamla-Motown's first signings (as well as the label's Vice President from 1960 to 1988), Smokey has been the recipient of a Grammy (for 1987's "Just To See Her"), a 1988 inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a 1991 recipient of the Soul Train Music Award for Career Achievement, a 1999 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, a 2006 Kennedy Center honoree, a recipient of a Doctorate of Music degree from Howard University (2006), a 2009 recipient of an Honorary Doctorate degree from Berkeley College of Music (for whom he also gave the commencement speech), a Songwriter's Hall of Fame honoree and a rare double-honoree of a star on the Hollywood Walk of

Fame (as a solo artist & member of The Miracles). Along the way, he's also amassed the love and respect of his peers, from being lyrically lauded by Bob Dylan (who referred to Robinson as "the world's greatest poet") to being lyrically cited by 80s Brit-pop band ABC (on the smash hit "When Smokey Sings"), the Beatles' George Harrison ("Pure Smokey") and the Tom Tom Club ("Genius of Love").

Hence, a much beloved **SMOKEY ROBINSON** fully intends to continue this wonderfully weaved music legacy with the sultry-sounding *Time Flies When You're Having Fun* (set for an August 25th release). "The title of this CD depicts my life," shares Robinson, "because I love my life. I love the fact that I'm extremely blessed, because I get a chance to live a life that I love. I get a chance to do a craft that I love. I get a chance to do a job that I love. When your job is something that you absolutely love, that's a blessing. I have never taken that for granted. I don't trip on 'Smokey Robinson.' You talk about fifty years going by overnight? That's exactly what has happened."