

Sports & Entertainment

# Acclaimed collection from Stax Records ‘Written in Their Soul: The Stax Songwriter Demos’; Scores two Grammy nominations and defines the Memphis Sound and Soulsville

MEMPHIS, TN – On June 23, 2023, several hundred people of all generations gathered at the Stax Museum of American Soul Music in Memphis, Tennessee for a very special event. The crowd from throughout the United States was there for that day’s release of **Written in Their Soul: The Stax Songwriter Demos**, one of the most important behind-the-scenes music documents of songwriting at Stax Records during its 1960s and 1970s heyday.

Moderated by GRAMMY-winning writer **Robert Gordon**, the **Written in Their Soul** event included a panel discussion and listening party with songwriters **William Bell, Eddie Floyd, Deanie Parker, Bobby Manuel, and Henderson Thigpen**, and the collections three-time GRAMMY Award-winning producer **Cheryl Pawelski**, discussing their impact on the Stax legacy.

An indication of its rightful place in music, the release was nominated for two GRAMMY Awards in both the Best Album Notes and Best Historical Album categories. With audio restoration by GRAMMY-winning mastering engineer **Michael Graves**, the all-new collection brings together 146 demos from the Stax Records vaults, highlighting the strength of the songwriting talent at the legendary label, including 140 tracks that had never been heard. This level of recognition defines the Stax Records legacy, past, present, and future.

Founded in 1957 by banker **Jim Stewart** as Satellite Records, the company soon moved into an abandoned movie theater and changed its name to Stax Records, launching and promoting the careers of stars like **Otis Redding, Booker T. & the M.G.’s, the Staple Singers, Isaac Hayes, Sam & Dave, Rufus and Carla Thomas, Albert King**, among hundreds of others.

In 1975 however, Stax was forced into involuntary bankruptcy and the original building that housed the Stax studios was demolished in 1989, leaving only an empty lot and a historic marker.

In 1998, a group of Memphis philanthropists and one-time Stax Records artists came together to build the Soulsville Foundation, which consists of the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Stax Music Academy, and The Soulsville Charter School, all located at the original site of Stax Records in a community known as Soulsville USA. Intent on mentoring neighborhood children, using music education as the tool, The Stax Music Academy was established and began programming at a nearby school on June 1, 2000. Rufus and Carla Thomas were among the first instructors.

For the past 23 years, the Stax Music Academy has evolved into a combination of music education and creative youth development, teaching vocals, instrumentals, music theory, songwriting, production, and more. Measuring each student’s social and emotional learning to make them original thinkers and socially conscious artists, the educational organization assists students in following their own musical path. Stax Music Academy Executive

Director **Isaac Daniel** finds the current program promising but with more work to do. “I think we’ve had a lot of successes and traveled around the world and have some great alumni,” he says, “but we are still evolving in workforce development and other areas to help alleviate the generational poverty many of our students experience.”

“All of the music education and creative youth development that goes on today at the Stax Music Academy and The Soulsville Charter School today is steeped in the legacy of Stax Records including diversity, opportunity, inclusion, and economic empowerment,” said **Deanie Parker**, Director of Publicity at Stax Records and the founding president and CEO of the Soulsville Foundation. “Look at the songwriters who sat on the panel in June. Our children now have the opportunity to be influenced by their original hits of R&B music.”

“The legacy of Stax is unparalleled,” continues Daniel. “And it is evolving as we learn even more. That a Stax songwriter demo set has been nominated for two Grammy Awards® is phenomenal. These songs were mainly written in the 1960s. Our

students can learn so much from this opportunity and from these artists and songwriters. We are indeed keeping classic R&B and soul music alive through them studying Stax Records and always learning something new, including how to put their own spin on things.”

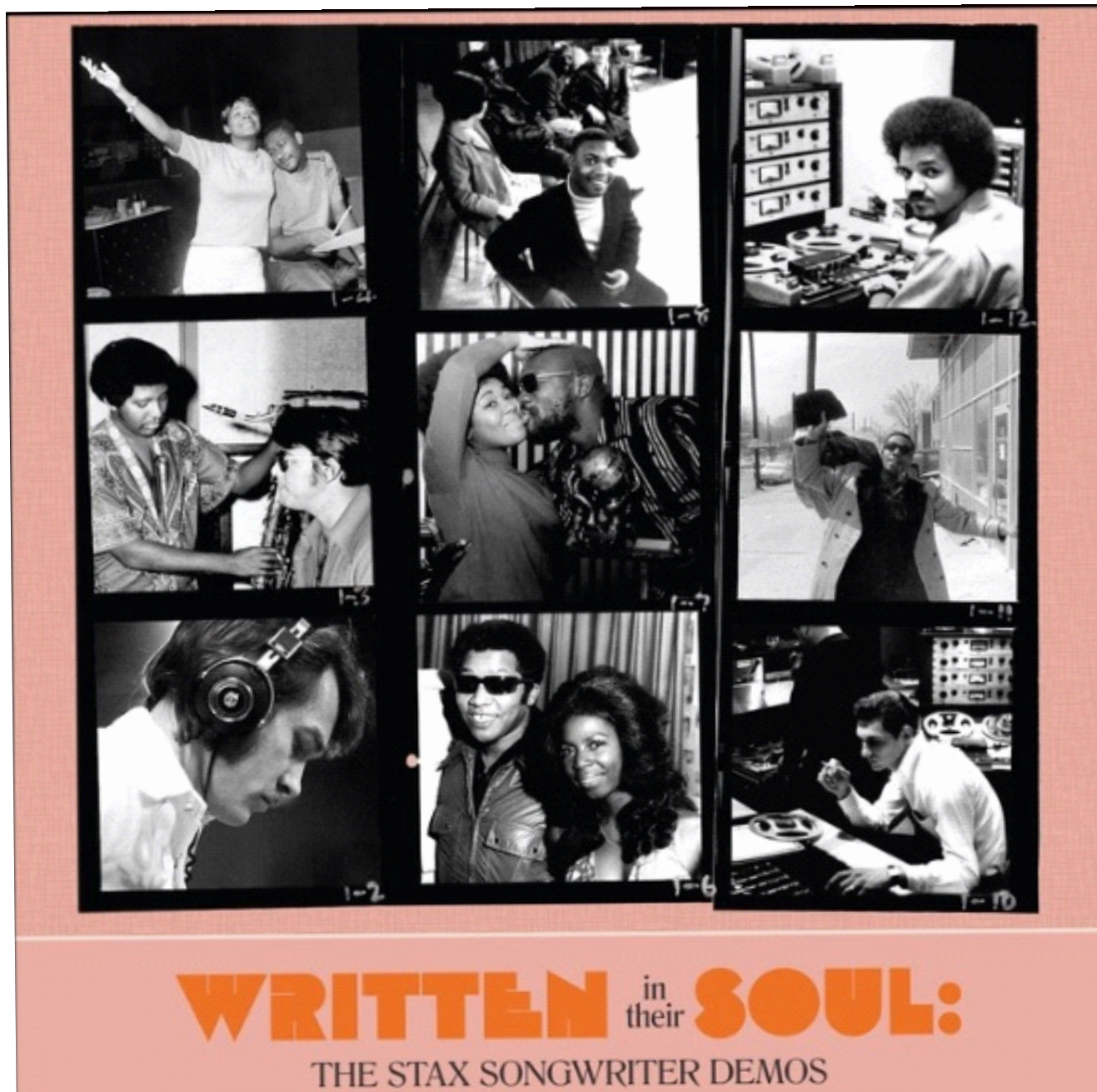
**About Stax Records:** Stax Records, now owned by Concord, was founded by Jim Stewart in 1957 in Memphis, Tennessee. It rose from a small, family-operated company to become one of the most influential record labels in the world, helping create “The Memphis Sound” and launching the careers of icons such as **Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, Booker T. & The M.G.’s, the Staple Singers, Sam & Dave, Rufus and Carla Thomas, The Bar-Kays**, and dozens of other artists who helped change popular culture forever. In all, Stax placed 167 hit songs in the Top 100 in Pop and 243 hits in the Top 100 in R&B.

For more info, visit [staxrecords.com](http://staxrecords.com) and follow on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

**About The Stax Museum of American Soul Music:**

Located on the original site of the Stax Records studio in Memphis, Tennessee, the Stax Museum pays special tribute to the artists who recorded there, as well as other American soul legends, with interactive exhibits, films, stage costumes, musical instruments, vintage recording equipment used at Stax, records, photographs, permanent and changing galleries, and a rare and amazing collection of more than 2,000 items of memorabilia and artifacts. It is an entity of the Soulsville Foundation, which also operates the **Stax Music Academy and The Soulsville Charter School** on the same campus.

For more info, visit <https://soulsvillefoundation.org/> and follow on Facebook and Instagram



*Songwriters and Stax stars have a good time at Stax in its hey day. Shown in this photo are songwriter duo-artists David Porter and Isaac Hayes. Hayes went on to become first Black artist to win an Academy Award for Best Original Song which was “Shaft”.*

*(Photos/Courtesy: Soulsville Foundation)*

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Watch for The Mid-South Tribune’s 29th Annual Black History Month Edition in February 2024!