



## HARRY BALK

October 1, 1925 - December 3, 2016

SERVICES: 2:00 PM MONDAY 12/5/2016 at HEBREW MEMORIAL CHAPEL

A LINK WILL BE PROVIDED FOR A WEBCAST OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE

FOLLOW THIS LINK FOR A YOUTUBE VIDEO ABOUT HARRY BALK

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XeIY\\_cnwZw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XeIY_cnwZw)

FOLLOW THIS LINK FROM FOX2 NEWS

<http://www.fox2detroit.com/news/local-news/221519555-story>

Age 91, of Oak Park, died December 3, 2016.

Beloved husband to the late Patti Jerome,

Harry is survived by Vicky (Devlin Burton) Howard, Scott (Summer) Howard, London Howard, Harper Howard, Beverly (Terry) Van Wagoner and Jeffrey Schweig.

Cherished brother to Faygie (late Myer) Bloom, late Frieda (late Buddy) Schweig and the late Rose (late Al) Sherman.

Also survived by other family members and the family of Patti Jerome including, the late Sandra McCallister, Nanea Reeves, the late Vicki Reeves, Laura McCallister and Lelya.

Harry Balk during his record career, discovered Rodriguez, Little Willie John, among others. He produced Del Shannon's Runaway and Johnny and the Hurricanes. He worked for Berry Gordy at Motown and was responsible for pushing Marvin Gaye's What's Going On album to release.

(article taken from the Jewish News, written by Judy Greenwald)

A real legend in the Motown music scene, according to his daughter, Vicky Howard, "Other kids' fathers were doctors, lawyers, accountants," Howard said. "But my dad was the 'Godfather of Detroit Music,' so hip and cool. When I was in school, and we had a 'show what your parent did at work' day, my presentation involved an assembly where the popular group The Shades of Blue performed their hit, 'Oh How Happy' to show what my dad did

d!

“He was so handsome and always wore crisp, white, monogrammed shirts and even smoked monogrammed cigars! With hard work, ‘HB’ — as he was always called — was very successful in the production end of the Motown music scene. Through my dad, I got my passion for producing.”

This passion was developed in Balk at an early age. Born in Detroit’s 12th Street neighborhood, Balk, as a young man, managed the Krim Theatre in Highland Park, owned by his uncle. Howard said in order to boost business, her father held talent shows at the theater, and a consistent winner was singer Little Willie John, who became the first major talent Balk signed. His next success as a producer involved Del Shannon, with the hit song “Runaway.” Balk formed Twirl Records with business partner Irving Michanek in 1961. This Detroit business lasted until 1965. Balk then formed a new label, Impact Records, as well as a publishing company, Gomba.

In 1966, Balk discovered the Latino singer Rodriguez and, in 1969, he both started Inferno Records and closed Impact, after being hired by Motown’s Berry Gordy, where he was the first Jewish head of A&R (artists and repertoire — the division of a record label responsible for talent scouting and artistic development).

Balk started the Rare Earth label in 1969 and is credited with pushing for the release of Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On,” despite Gordy’s reluctance. The album became the biggest success in Motown history.

One friend who knows much of Balk’s history is fellow music industry professional John Brooks of Clinton Township.

“Harry and I met in 1961 when an Italian singer I managed, Mickey Denton (his real name, Gasper Badalamenti), auditioned for Harry at his record company at 20 W. Alexandrine in Downtown Detroit,” Brooks said. “We’ve worked together and been best friends ever since. I never saw him without a hat for the first two years I knew him! Harry produced 11 top-10 records and many top 40s. He’s without a doubt one of the most respected record producers in the music business.”

Balk’s achievements influenced his daughter’s success as a producer as well. A model in her own right, Howard learned about “behind-the-scenes” work from him, and for the past 26 years, Ta-Dah! Productions has been at the forefront of presenting top-quality fashion shows and special events for malls, TV shows and corporate clients. “I’ve followed in my father’s footsteps,” she said. “Producing is my life as well.”

Harry Balk and Berry Gordy at Motown, the Musical on Broadway

According to Howard, much of her father’s career took place during his many years living in California. She said he returned to Michigan in 2007.

A special event that celebrated Balk’s lifelong successful music career was the 2013 Detro

it Music Awards, where he received the Distinguished Achievement Award for his body of work in the music industry.

Joel Martin, owner of 54 Sound Studios in Ferndale, emceed the event, and on the DVD of the show Martin produced, Balk is shown saying it was the most valuable and touching award he'd ever received.

"Detroit is my heart," he said, "a wonderful town, and Motown made music history. This award is awesome! There's no other way to describe it." Balk's words garnered him a standing ovation.

Martin called Balk "a visionary music producer." Balk, he said, was a tremendous influence in his pursuing a career in music production.

"Harry made essential contributions to American — and more importantly — Detroit's music history. I can attest to a time when a gambler with instinct, moxie and talent could achieve anything in the record business. Harry is a Detroit treasure, and his contribution will live forever."

A special item at the 90th birthday fete is one Howard believes will create lasting memories as well.

"My dad always signed everything with 'Guess Who Loves You?' and a drawing of a face with a mustache and cigar. In honor of his birthday, his granddaughter is making mugs with 'Legendary HB 90th Birthday' on one side, and his signature and saying on the other. He said having everyone he loves together to celebrate him would be a really exciting and proud moment."

Howard, too, showed pride as she pointed out the diamond ring she wears with the initials "HB" on it, which once belonged to her father.

"My dad gave the ring to me on my 60th birthday," she said. "That ring, along with a mezuzah he wore that was given to him by his grandparents at his bar mitzvah, were and are very important to him.

"Dad had a hit song: 'Hats off to Larry,'" Howard said with emotion filling her voice. "I say, Hats off to Harry! You're one in a million, Dad. You're a true gold record!"

#### OFFICIATING:

Rabbi Y. Pinson

#### INTERMENT:

Hebrew Memorial Park Cemetery

#### SHIVA:

The family will observe Shiva following the interment on Monday and through 8:00 PM concluding with brief religious services

On Tuesday the family will gather from 5:00 PM through 9:00 PM

The time will be spent sharing stories and celebrating Harry's life.

The family will gather at the home of

Vicky Howard and Devlin Burton

13340 Victoria Avenue

Huntington Woods, MI 48070

(248) 548-4749

#### CONTRIBUTIONS:

If you would like to further honor the memory of

HARRY BALK

you may do so by making a contribution to

JEWISH HOSPICE AND CHAPLAINCY NETWORK

6555 West Maple Rd.

West Bloomfield, MI 48322

(248) 592-2687

<http://www.jewishhospice.org>

# Cemetery

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## Hebrew Memorial Park Cemetery

33230 Gratiot

Clinton Township, MI, 48035

# Events

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**DEC** **Service** 02:00PM

**5**

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Hebrew Memorial Chapel

26640 Greenfield Rd, Oak Park, MI, US, 48237

**DEC** **Shiva**

**5**

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Vicky Howard and Devlin Burton

13340 Victoria Avenue, Huntington Woods, MI, US,  
48070

# Comments

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“ A webcast video has been added.



**Hebrew Memorial Chapel** - December 04, 2016 at 12:08 PM



“ Grandpa funeral

**Laura** - July 01, 2017 at 02:51 PM



“ I was a distant relative who knew his Mother Leah very well growing up as my Father and she were first cousins. My Grandfather and Harry's Grandmother were Brother and Sister. Sorry for the loss but glad he had a long life.

Jay Barry(Berezdivin family).

**jay barry** - December 13, 2016 at 11:18 AM

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“ Vicky,

I have some very fond memories of Uncle Harry.

The very tall man, always wearing a cool hat with him smoking his cigars that always smelled so bad to me. His graveley voice speaking with such authority. I remember the times we hung out at the Motown studios, not realizing or caring who was recording, just being bored. Boy, were we young and ignorant ! We were watching history being made.

I remember one time my Mom was out here in California visiting and I had called Uncle Harry to come meet us for lunch. What a great time reminiscencing. After I showed him pictures of my 2 children, he had told me he had no doubt that I was a great Mom. In hindsight I should have taken some pictures.

I miss him!

My heart goes out to you!

Love you Cuz

Robin Sellin Zeiger

**Robin Zeiger** - December 05, 2016 at 03:01 PM

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“ <http://www.fox2detroit.com/news/local-news/221519555-story>

**Chandler Parkside PJs** - December 05, 2016 at 08:14 AM

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“ Hi Vicky,

So sorry for your loss. Sounds like your dad was quite the guy. Although I never knew him, looks like you embody much of the same spirit, talent and moxie that was him. Condolences to all.

Warmly,

Denny Green

**Dennis R. Green** - December 05, 2016 at 05:15 AM

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“Uncle Harry." I remember he took us kids for a ride in his Volkswagon Bus and we went to visit a specialty shop that did hand painting on vehicles. I do not remember the "person" Or group who got their name painted on the sides. Us kids thought iit was,pretty cool.

Audrey Weinberg

**Audrey L Weinberg** - December 04, 2016 at 10:18 PM