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## Funk Brother Joe Hunter dies at 79

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DETROIT (AP) — Musician Joe Hunter, a three-time Grammy winner with the legendary Funk Brothers, has been found dead in his Detroit apartment. He was 79.

Hunter was a diabetic but his cause of death was unknown, *The Detroit News* reported. His son said it appeared he was trying to take some medicine when he died on Friday.

Hunter had just returned from a European tour with fellow Funk Brother Jack Ashford.

Born in Jackson, Tenn., the raw, rootsy piano player moved to Detroit just before he turned 12.

Hunter was Berry Gordy Jr.'s first hire, to back up acts such as Smokey Robinson and the Miracles on piano in the late 1950s, as Gordy mustered a staff for what would become Motown Records. Hunter also served as Motown's first bandleader in the early days.

His piano work was an integral part of such songs as Martha and the Vandellas' *Heat Wave* and *Come and Get These Memories*, and Marvin Gaye's *Pride and Joy*, but after Motown left Detroit in 1972, like many musicians, Hunter took what gigs he could.

When Philadelphia musician/historian Allan Slutsky set out to find all the Funk Brothers in the 1980s, he found Hunter playing for tips at the Troy Marriott. Hotel guests had no idea who he was.

After the documentary film *Standing in the Shadows of Motown* was released in 2002, the Funk Brothers' soundtrack album won two Grammys in 2003. In 2004, Hunter and the Funks were awarded with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Grammys, and the group toured for several years.

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