



NINA SIMONE



Timeline

1933	1950	1954	1959	1964	1965	1988	2003
Born Feb 1 st as Eunice Kathleen Waymon	Her application to Curtis Institute of Music denied	Takes a job playing piano at Atlanta City nightclub to pay for private lessons	Releases 'I Loves You, Porgy' which becomes a top 20 US hit	Signed to a new record label and released 'Mississippi Goddam', her first protest song	Simone began to perform and speak at civil rights meetings	Moved to Switzerland and led much of her life in Europe	Died and had ashes scattered in several African countries

Key Songs

I Loves You, Porgy	1959 – Originally written in 1935 by Anne Brown and Todd Duncan but she made her own successful version.
My Baby Just Cares for Me	1962 – Simone made financial mistakes in her early career, but this song featured on an advert in 1987 and her fortune was finally made.
Mississippi Goddam	1964 – This song was a cry for mercy, an angry voice of defiance and reason against the way black communities were being treated in America.
Feeling Good	1965 – This song used a big-band sound and is now one of her most famous.
Why? (The King of Love is Dead)	1968 – Written by Simone's bass player Gene Taylor and was about Martin Luther King and his death.
I Ain't Got No / I Got Life	1968 – A joyous anthem which celebrated the things we all have and reached number 2 in the U.K. charts.
I Put a Spell on You	1969 – Originally written by Screamin' Jay Hawkins, this song was a huge success and sounded very different from the original.
To Be Young, Gifted and Black	1970 – Written by Simone, this uplifting gospel song continued linking her music to the civil rights movement.
Baltimore	1978 – The critics loved this song but she was not fond.



Nina Simone released over 40 albums during her decades-spanning career including studio albums, live versions, and compilations, and scored 15 Grammy nominations. But her highest-charting (and her first) hit, "I Loves You, Porgy," peaked at #18 in the U.S. charts in 1959. She never did get a number one selling single.

The Importance of Nina

Her Music

Nina Simone's music spanned many genres such as jazz, classical, blues, gospel and pop. Much of her style was influenced by 17th century classical composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Even though Nina Simone was a world-renowned performer, she was, throughout her career, constantly drawing on Bach in her improvisations.

The Civil Rights Movement

In 1964, Nina changed record distributors which also meant a change in the contents of her recordings. She began to openly address the racial inequality that was prevalent in the United States with the song "Mississippi Goddam", her response to the murder of Medgar Evers and the Birmingham Church Bombing. The song was released as a single, and it was banned in certain southern states. From then on, a Civil Rights message was standard in Simone's recordings, becoming a part of her live performances and she performed and spoke at many civil rights meetings from then on.

Recognition

She received an honorary degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in 2003, the place which originally refused her entry, which Nina always believed to have been racially motivated. She was inducted into the Rock.n.Roll Hall of Fame in 2018 and won a Grammy Hall of Fame award in 2000. A statue of Nina Simone was built in 2010 in North Carolina.

Famous Events

Hard Life

Nina was one of eight children, born into a poor family in North Carolina, USA. After she was rejected from the Curtis Institute of Music, she gathered a job at Atlanta City, playing what her father called 'The Devil's Music' and changed her name so that her parents would not find out. She gathered a following of fans before receiving a record deal.

Cover Songs

Apart from creating original tracks, she also created cover versions of songs by famous musicians, such as Bob Dylan and the 'Beatles.' Her ability to make original songs sound completely different was unique to her style with many artists admitting they preferred her version of their own!

Mental Health

During the 1980s and 1990s, she battled with mental health problems which included an eight-month suspended jail sentence.