

Queen Bey Biography



Queen Bey



Billie Holiday



Dinah Washington



Ella Fitzgerald



Sarah Vaughn

As a child Queen Bey listened to singers like Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. She can remember singing in kindergarten changing the nursery rhymes to reflect jazz music she heard at home. Her constant diversion to the tempo of jazz kept her teachers frustrated.. As she grew older she would hide in the closets and sing jazz music because she didn't want her parents to hear her sing as they thought jazz singers were trouble.

When Queen was twelve years old she entered a talent show called "Stars of Tomorrow" on a radio station in Kansas City. She felt this was her chance to find out if she could be a singer. Queen's aunt took her to the legendary Orchid Room jazz club where the contest was being taped. Queen sang "Double Crossing Blues with a house band. Marty Graham, the owner of the Orchid Room heard her performing and offered her a job on the spot, before the contest ended, singing on Monday nights. Queen was just twelve years old, and the Orchid Room was a jumping joint as they referred to clubs in those days. Queen's aunt talked her mother into signing a waiver stating that she agreed to allow Queen to stay back stage and appear on stage as a singer. Queen's mother worked nights and when her aunt couldn't stay with Queen she needed a chaperone back stage. It was back stage at the Orchid Room, as a young girl of twelve, that Queen first met Billie Holiday.

Queen continued to sing at the Orchid Room - never straying from the stage, and she needed a constant stream of chaperones. Most singers and band members were delighted to "look after" the teenager with the big voice. Jazz greats such as Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughn, Dinah Washington, Ella Fitzgerald and Linda Hopkins became her chaperones and her teachers.

Queen's wide repertoire of jazz and blues standards and innovative and often unknown songs are drawn from her first-hand experiences working with the legends of jazz and blues. Queen's style, "a natural and understated approach to the material make for a solid crowd pleaser" according to Variety magazine.

Queen has performed with B.B. King, The Platters and the late jazz pianist Earl Garner. She received rave reviews in the national entertainment magazine Variety and The New York Times for her act at New York's Michael's Pub.

In 1980, Ms. Bey received the Kansas Governor's Arts Award and was one of the honorees at the 1991 induction of the Elder Statesman of Kansas City Jazz, Inc. She is officially recognized as Kansas City's Ambassador of Jazz and each year travels internationally promoting jazz and blues music on behalf of the United States and jazz organizations. Her travels have taken her from Brazil to Germany to Greece.

Queen recorded her first album "Comin' Thru" and followed this recording with a second album "Dues Paid in Full" in 1990. Her most recent CD is entitled "So This is London".

Ms. Bey has acted on stage and television and in film, including Broadway musicals - Ain't Misbehavin, One Mo' Time and Blues in the Night.

Her television debut was an NBC mini-series, Matter of Justice, co-starring Patty Duke and Martin Sheen. Her film debut was in the movie Ninth Street with Martin Sheen and Isaac Hayes.