



# Barry White



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White in 1974

### Background information

<b>Birth name</b>	Barry Eugene Carter
<b>Born</b>	September 12, 1944 Galveston, Texas, United States
<b>Died</b>	July 4, 2003 (aged 58) Los Angeles, California, United States
<b>Genres</b>	Soul, disco, funk, R&B
<b>Occupations</b>	Singer-songwriter, record producer, arranger, musician
<b>Instruments</b>	Piano, keyboards, vocals, drums, recorder
<b>Years active</b>	1960–2003
<b>Labels</b>	20th Century, Unlimited Gold, Casablanca, Mercury, Private Music/BMG, A&M, Eagle
<b>Associated acts</b>	Love Unlimited, The Love Unlimited Orchestra, Isaac Hayes, Gerald LeVert, Marvin Gaye, Michael Jackson, The Banana Splits
<b>Website</b>	barrywhite.com <sup>[1]</sup>

**Barry White**, born **Barry Eugene Carter** (September 12, 1944 – July 4, 2003), was an American composer and singer-songwriter.

A two-time Grammy Award-winner known for his distinctive bass voice and romantic image, White's greatest success came in the 1970s as a solo singer and with the Love Unlimited Orchestra, crafting many enduring soul, funk, and disco songs such as his two biggest hits, "You're the First, the Last, My Everything" and "Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe." Along with Isaac Hayes, White is considered by Allmusic.com as a pioneer of disco music in the early 1970s.

During the course of his career in the music business, White achieved 106 gold albums worldwide, 41 of which also attained platinum status. White had 20 gold and 10 platinum singles, with worldwide sales in excess of 100 million, according to critics Ed Hogan and Wade Kergan.<sup>[2]</sup> His influences included Rev. James Cleveland, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin plus Motown artists The Supremes, The Four Tops and Marvin Gaye.

## Early life

Barry White was born **Barry Eugene Carter** in Galveston, Texas,<sup>[3]</sup> and grew up in the high-crime areas of South Central Los Angeles. White was the elder of two brothers; his brother Darryl is 13 months younger. He grew up listening to his mother's classical music collection, and first took to the piano emulating what he heard on the records. His introduction to music led to him playing piano on Jesse Belvin's 1956 hit single, "Goodnight My Love."<sup>[4]</sup>

White recalled that, "[As a child] I had a normal squeaky kid voice. Then as a teenager, that completely changed. My mother cried because she knew her baby boy had become a man."

## Gang life and jail sentence

During his teenage years, White and his brother got involved with crime and gang activity. At the age of 17, he was jailed for four months for stealing \$30,000 worth of Cadillac tires.

While in jail, White listened to Elvis Presley singing "It's Now or Never" on the radio,<sup>[5]</sup> an experience he later credited with changing the course of his life.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Music career

### The 1960s

After his release from jail, he left gang life and began a musical career at the dawn of the 1960s in singing groups. He first released "Too Far to Turn Around" in 1960 as part of The Upfronts before working for various small independent labels in Los Angeles. He also recorded several singles under his own name in the early 1960s, backed by vocal groups the Atlantics (for the Rampart and Faro labels) and the Majestics (for the Linda and Jordan labels).

Bob Keane of Del-Fi Records – the man who discovered Ritchie Valens – hired him as an A&R man in the mid-1960s, and White started working with the label's artists including Viola Wills and The Bobby Fuller Four, as a songwriter, session musician, and arranger. He discovered singer Felice Taylor and arranged her song "I Feel Love Comin' On", as well as "Harlem Shuffle" for Bob & Earl. Both records became big hits in the UK. He also wrote "Doin' the Banana Split" for TV bubblegum act The Banana Splits in 1968.<sup>[7]</sup>

### The 1970s as producer

In 1972, he got his big break producing a girl group he had discovered called Love Unlimited. Formed in imitative style of the Motown girl group The Supremes, the group members had gradually honed their talents with White for two years previously until they signed contracts with Uni Records. His friend Paul Politi hooked him up with music industry businessman Larry Nunes, who helped to finance their album. After it was recorded, Nunes took the recording to Russ Regan, who was the head of the Uni label owned by MCA. The album, 1972's *From A Girl's Point of View We Give to You... Love Unlimited*, became a million album seller.

White produced, wrote and arranged their classic soul ballad, "Walking In The Rain With The One I Love", which climbed to #14 in the *Billboard* Hot 100 Pop chart and #6 on the *Billboard* R&B chart in late 1972. This single also reached #12 in the UK chart. White's voice can clearly be heard in this piece as he plays the lover who answers the phone call of the female lead.

Soon after, Regan left Uni for 20th Century Records. Without Regan, White's relationship with Uni soured. With his relationship with Uni over and Love Unlimited contract-bound with the label, White was able to switch both his production deal and the group to 20th Century Records. (They recorded several other hits throughout the 1970s, "I Belong To You," which spent over five months on the *Billboard* R&B chart in 1974 including a week at #1 and "Under the Influence of Love", which hit #3 on the *Billboard* Pop album charts. White married the lead singer of the group, Glodean James, on July 4, 1974.)

## The 1970s as solo artist

White wanted to work with another act but decided to work with a solo male artist. While working on a few demos for a male singer, he made three song demos of himself singing and playing, but Nunes heard them and insisted that he re-record and release them himself as a solo recording artist. After arguing for days about it, White was finally persuaded to release the songs himself although he was initially reluctant to step out in front of the microphone.

He then wrote several other songs and recorded them for what eventually became an entire album of music. He was going to use the name "White Heat," but decided on using his given name instead. White was still hesitating up to the time the label copy was made. It eventually became the first solo White album, 1973's *I've Got So Much to Give*. It included the title track and his first solo chart hit, "I'm Gonna Love You Just a Little More Baby", which also rose to #1 on the *Billboard* R&B charts as well as #3 on the *Billboard* Pop charts in 1973 and stayed in the top 40 for many weeks.

Other chart hits by White included "Never, Never Gonna Give Ya Up" (#2 R&B, #7 Pop in 1973), "Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe" (#1 Pop and R&B in 1974), "You're the First, the Last, My Everything" (#1 R&B, #2 Pop in 1974), "What Am I Gonna Do with You" (#1 R&B, #8 Pop in 1975), "Let the Music Play" (#4 R&B in 1976), "It's Ecstasy When You Lay Down Next to Me" (#1 R&B, #4 Pop in 1977) and "Your Sweetness is My Weakness" (#2 R&B in 1978). White also had a strong following in the United Kingdom, where he scored five Top 10 hits and one number 1 for "You're the First." His popularity as a singer of love songs, coupled with his large size, led to him acquiring the affectionate nickname "The Walrus of Love".

## The Love Unlimited Orchestra

In 1973 White created The Love Unlimited Orchestra, a 40-piece orchestral group to be used originally as a backing band for the girl-group Love Unlimited. However, White had other plans, and in 1973 he released a single with "Love's Theme" (written by him and played by the orchestra), that same track reached #1 on the *Billboard* Pop charts. Later, in 1974, Barry White made the first album of the Love Unlimited Orchestra, *Rhapsody in White*, containing "Love's Theme". White is sometimes credited with ushering in the "disco" sound, seamlessly combining R&B music with classical music. Some also regard "Love's Theme" as the first hit in the actual "disco era", but Nino Tempo and 5th Ave. Sax's song "Sister James" had already reached the *Billboard* Hot 100 a few months before and had a disco sound in its own right.

White would continue to make albums with the Orchestra, achieving some successes such as: *Rhapsody in White*; *Satin Soul*; *Bring it On Up*; *Forever in Love*; *My Sweet Summer Suite*; *Theme From King Kong (remake)*. The Orchestra ceased to make albums in 1983, but continued to support White as a backing band.

## The 1980s

After six years White left 20th Century in 1979 to launch his own label, Unlimited Gold, with CBS/Columbia Records. Although his success on the pop charts slowed down as the disco era came to an end, he maintained a loyal following throughout his career. Despite several albums over the next three years he failed to repeat his earlier successes, with no singles managing to reach the *Billboard* Hot 100 except for 1982's "Change," climbing into the *Billboard* R&B Top 20 (#12). His label venture was exacting a heavy financial cost on White, so he concentrated on mostly touring and finally folded his label in 1983.

After four years he signed with A&M Records, and with the release of 1987's *The Right Night & Barry White*, the single entitled "Sho' You Right" made it to the *Billboard* R&B charts, peaking at #17.

In 1989 he released *The Man Is Back!* and with it had three top 40 singles on the *Billboard* R&B charts: "Super Lover", which made it to #34, "I Wanna Do It Good to Ya", which made it to #26, and "When Will I See You Again", which made it to #32.

## The 1990s

A 1970s nostalgia fad allowed White to enjoy a renewed wave of popularity in the 1990s. After White took part in a Quincy Jones record entitled *Back on the Block*, on the song titled "The Secret Garden (Sweet Seduction Suite)", which topped the R&B chart in 1990, he mounted an effective comeback with several albums, each one more successful than the last. He returned to the top of the charts in 1991 with the album *Put Me in Your Mix*, which reached #8 on the *Billboard* R&B Albums chart and the song by the same name reached #2 on the *Billboard* R&B singles chart.

In 1994 he released the album *The Icon Is Love*, which went to #1 on the *Billboard* R&B album charts, and the single "Practice What You Preach" gave him his first #1 on the *Billboard* R&B singles chart in almost 20 years, and was nominated for a Grammy in the Best R&B Album category (it lost to TLC's *CrazySexyCool*).

In 1996, White recorded the duet "In Your Wildest Dreams" with Tina Turner. 1996 also saw the release of *Space Jam* and its soundtrack, on which White had a duet with Chris Rock, called "Basketball Jones," a remake of Cheech & Chong's "Basketball Jones" from 1974.

His final album, 1999's *Staying Power*, resulted in his last hit song "Staying Power," which placed #45 on the *Billboard* R&B charts. The single won him two Grammy Awards in the categories Best Male R&B Vocal Performance and Best Traditional R&B Vocal Performance.<sup>[8]</sup>

His autobiography, *Love Unlimited*, written with Mark Eliot, was published in 1999 by Broadway Books.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Acting career

Over the course of his career, White sometimes did voice-over work for TV and movies. He voiced the character Bear in the 1975 film *Coonskin* and also played the character Sampson in the movie's live-action segments.

He appeared as himself in a couple episodes of *The Simpsons*, and most importantly the episode "Whacking Day" in which Bart and Lisa used his famously deep bass singing voice, played through loudspeakers placed on the ground, to lull and attract snakes. White was a fan of the show, and had reportedly contacted the staff about wanting to make a guest appearance.

He played the role of a bus driver for a Prodigy commercial in 1995, and he also portrayed the voice of a rabbit in a Good Seasons salad dressing mix commercial, singing a song called "You Can't Bottle Love."<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In addition, he did some work for car commercials, most famously for Oldsmobile, and later on, Jeep.

He also provided voice over for Arby's Restaurant commercials on TV and Radio to promote their 'Market Fresh' menu.

His voice can also be heard in Apple's first iBook commercial.

He made three guest appearances on the comedy-drama TV series *Ally McBeal*, as his music was often featured on the show in dream sequences.

## Illness and death

White was overweight for most of his adult life, and as such, suffered from various health problems in his final years. In 1995, he was admitted to a hospital as a result of high blood pressure, which was believed to be the result of a busy touring schedule.

In August 1999, White was forced to cancel approximately a month's worth of tour dates due to exhaustion, which was, yet again, attributed to high blood pressure and a hectic schedule.

In the fall of 2002, after years of living with high blood pressure in addition to diabetes he was hospitalized with kidney failure. While undergoing dialysis and awaiting a kidney transplant in May 2003, he suffered a stroke, which forced him to retire from public life.

At around 9:30 on the morning of July 4, 2003, White died at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, after suffering from total renal failure.<sup>[10]</sup> His remains were cremated, and the ashes were scattered by his family off the California coast. On September 20, 2004, he was posthumously inducted into the Dance Music Hall of Fame at a ceremony held in New York. On September 12, 2003, which would have been White's 59th birthday, he was posthumously awarded the 2,506th star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6914 Hollywood Blvd. in the category of recording.

## References

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- [5] *Ivor Casey Blog* (<http://ivorcasey.blogspot.com>)
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## External links

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