




Whitney Houston



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Houston performing at <i>Welcome Home Heroes with Whitney Houston</i> in 1991.	
Born	Whitney Elizabeth Houston August 9, 1963 Newark, New Jersey, U.S.
Died	February 11, 2012 (aged 48) Beverly Hills, California, U.S.
Cause of death	Drowning
Resting place	Fairview Cemetery, Westfield, New Jersey
Occupation	Singer, model, actress, producer
Years active	1977–2012
Height	5' 8" (173 cm)
Religion	Baptist
Spouse(s)	Bobby Brown (1992–2007)
Children	Bobbi Kristina Brown (b. 1993)
Parents	John Russell Houston, Jr. (1920–2003) Emily "Cissy" Houston (née Drinkard) (b. 1933)
Awards	List of awards and nominations
Musical career	
Genres	R&B, pop, soul, gospel
Instruments	Vocals, piano
Labels	Arista, RCA
Associated acts	Cissy Houston, Jermaine Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Bobby Brown
Website	
www.whitneyhouston.com ^[1]	

Whitney Elizabeth Houston (August 9, 1963 – February 11, 2012) was an American recording artist, singer, actress, producer, and model. In 2009, the *Guinness World Records* cited her as the most awarded female act of all

time. Houston was one of the world's best-selling music artists, having sold over 200 million records worldwide. She released six studio albums, one holiday album and three movie soundtrack albums, all of which have diamond, multi-platinum, platinum or gold certification. Houston's crossover appeal on the popular music charts, as well as her prominence on MTV, starting with her video for "How Will I Know," influenced several African American women artists who follow in her footsteps.

Houston is the only artist to chart seven consecutive No. 1 *Billboard* Hot 100 hits.^[2] She is the second artist behind Elton John and the only woman to have two number-one *Billboard* 200 Album awards (formerly "Top Pop Album") on the *Billboard* magazine year-end charts.^[3] Houston's 1985 debut album *Whitney Houston* became the best-selling debut album by a woman at the time of its release. The album was named *Rolling Stone's* best album of 1986, and was ranked at number 254 on *Rolling Stone's* list of the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time. Her second studio album *Whitney* (1987) became the first album by a woman to debut at number one on the *Billboard* 200 albums chart.

Houston's first acting role was as the star of the feature film *The Bodyguard* (1992). The film's original soundtrack won the 1994 Grammy Award for Album of the Year. Its lead single "I Will Always Love You," became the best-selling single by a woman in music history. With the album, Houston became the first act (solo or group, male or female) to sell more than a million copies of an album within a single week period under Nielsen SoundScan system. The album makes her the top female act in the top 10 list of the best-selling albums of all time, at number four. Houston continued to star in movies and contribute to their soundtracks, including the films *Waiting to Exhale* (1995) and *The Preacher's Wife* (1996). *The Preacher's Wife* soundtrack became the best-selling gospel album in history.

On February 11, 2012, Houston was found dead in her guest room at The Beverly Hilton, in Beverly Hills, California. The official coroner's report showed that she had accidentally drowned in the bathtub, with heart disease and cocaine use listed as contributing factors. News of her death coincided with the 2012 Grammy Awards and featured prominently in American and international media.

Life and career

1963–84: Early life and career beginnings

Whitney Houston was born in what was then a middle-income neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey, the second child of Army serviceman and entertainment executive John Russell Houston, Jr. (September 13, 1920 – February 2, 2003), and gospel singer Cissy Houston (née Emily Drinkard). She had two older brothers, Gary Garland, who was also a singer, and Michael Houston.^{[4][5]} She was of African American, Native American, and Dutch descent. Her mother, along with cousins Dionne Warwick and Dee Dee Warwick, godmother Darlene Love and honorary aunt Aretha Franklin were all notable figures in the gospel, rhythm and blues, pop, and soul genres. She met her honorary aunt at age 8, or 9, when her mother took her to a recording studio. Houston was raised a Baptist, but was also exposed to the Pentecostal church. After the 1967 Newark riots, the family moved to a middle-class area in East Orange, New Jersey, when she was four.

At the age of 11, Houston started performing as a soloist in the junior gospel choir at the New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, where she also learned to play the piano. Her first solo performance in the church was "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah." When Houston was a teenager, she attended Mount Saint Dominic Academy, a Catholic girls' high school in Caldwell, New Jersey, where she met her best friend Robyn Crawford, whom she described as the "sister she never had". While Houston was still in school, her mother continued to teach her how to sing. Houston was also exposed to the music of Chaka Khan, Gladys Knight, and Roberta Flack, most of whom would have an influence on her as a singer and performer.

Houston spent some of her teenage years touring nightclubs where her mother Cissy was performing, and she would occasionally get on stage and perform with her. In 1977, at age 14, she became a backup singer on the Michael Zager Band's single "Life's a Party." In 1978, at age 15, Houston sang background vocals on Chaka Khan's hit single "I'm

Every Woman," a song she would later turn into a larger hit for herself on her monster-selling *The Bodyguard* soundtrack album. She also sang back-up on albums by Lou Rawls and Jermaine Jackson.

In the early 1980s, Houston started working as a fashion model after a photographer saw her at Carnegie Hall singing with her mother. She appeared in *Seventeen* and became one of the first women of color to grace the cover of the magazine. She was also featured in layouts in the pages of *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Young Miss*, and appeared in a Canada Dry soft drink TV commercial. Her looks and girl-next-door charm made her one of the most sought after teen models of that time. While modeling, she continued her burgeoning recording career by working with producers Michael Beinhorn, Bill Laswell and Martin Bisi on an album they were spearheading called *One Down*, which was credited to the group Material. For that project, Houston contributed the ballad "Memories", a cover of a song by Hugh Hopper of Soft Machine. Robert Christgau of *The Village Voice* called her contribution "one of the most gorgeous ballads you've ever heard." She also appeared as a lead vocalist on one track on a Paul Jabara album, entitled *Paul Jabara and Friends*, released by Columbia Records in 1983.

Houston had previously been offered several recording agencies (Michael Zager in 1980, and Elektra Records in 1981), however her mother declined the offers stating her daughter must first complete high school. In 1983, Gerry Griffith, an A&R representative from Arista Records, saw her performing with her mother in a New York City nightclub and was impressed. He convinced Arista's head Clive Davis to make time to see Houston perform. Davis too was impressed and offered a worldwide recording contract which Houston signed. Later that year, she made her national televised debut alongside Davis on *The Merv Griffin Show*.

Houston signed with Arista in 1983, but did not begin work on her album immediately. The label wanted to make sure no other label signed the singer away. Davis wanted to ensure he had the right material and producers for Houston's debut album. Some producers had to pass on the project due to prior commitments. Houston first recorded a duet with Teddy Pendergrass entitled "Hold Me" which appeared on his album, *Love Language*. The single was released in 1984 and gave Houston her first taste of success, becoming a Top 5 R&B hit. It would also appear on her debut album in 1985.

1985–86: Rise to international prominence

With production from Michael Masser, Kashif, Jermaine Jackson, and Narada Michael Walden, Houston's debut album *Whitney Houston* was released in February 1985. *Rolling Stone* magazine praised Houston, calling her "one of the most exciting new voices in years" while *The New York Times* called the album "an impressive, musically conservative showcase for an exceptional vocal talent." Arista Records promoted Houston's album with three different singles from the album in the US, UK and other European countries. In the UK, the dance-funk "Someone for Me," which failed to chart in the country, was the first single while "All at Once" was in such European countries as the Netherlands and Belgium, where the song reached the top 5 on the singles charts, respectively.

In the US, the soulful ballad "You Give Good Love" was chosen as the lead single from Houston's debut to establish her in the black marketplace first. Outside the US, the song failed to get enough attention to become a hit, but in the US, it gave the album its first major hit as it peaked at No. 3 on the US *Billboard* Hot 100 chart, and No. 1 on the Hot R&B chart. As a result, the album began to sell strongly, and Houston continued promotion by touring nightclubs in the US. She also began performing on late-night television talk shows, which were not usually accessible to unestablished black acts. The jazzy ballad "Saving All My Love for You" was released next and it would become Houston's first No. 1 single in both the US and the UK. She was then an opening act for singer Jeffrey Osborne on his nationwide tour. "Thinking About You" was released as the promo single only to R&B-oriented radio stations, which peaked at number ten on the US R&B Chart. At the time, MTV had received harsh criticism for not playing enough videos by black, Latino, and other racial minorities while favoring white acts. The third US single, "How Will I Know", peaked at No. 1 and introduced Houston to the MTV audience thanks to its video. Houston's subsequent singles from this, and future albums, would make her the first African-American woman to receive consistent heavy rotation on MTV.

By 1986, a year after its initial release, *Whitney Houston* topped the *Billboard* 200 albums chart and stayed there for 14 non-consecutive weeks. The final single, "Greatest Love of All," became Houston's biggest hit at the time after peaking No. 1 and remaining there for three weeks on the Hot 100 chart, which made her debut the first album by a woman to yield three No. 1 hits. Houston was No. 1 artist of the year and *Whitney Houston* was the No. 1 album of the year on the 1986 *Billboard* year-end charts, making her the first woman to earn that distinction. At the time, Houston released the best-selling debut album by a solo artist. Houston then embarked on her world tour, *Greatest Love Tour*. The album had become an international success, and was certified 13× platinum (diamond) in the United States alone, and has sold 25 million copies worldwide.

At the 1986 Grammy Awards, Houston was nominated for three awards including Album of the Year. She was not eligible for the Best New Artist category due to her previous hit R&B duet recording with Teddy Pendergrass in 1984. She won her first Grammy award for Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female for "Saving All My Love for You". Houston's performance of the song during the Grammy telecast later earned her an Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Performance in a Variety or Music Program.

Houston won seven American Music Awards in total in 1986 and 1987, and an MTV Video Music Award. The album's popularity would also carry over to the 1987 Grammy Awards when "Greatest Love of All" would receive a Record of the Year nomination. Houston's debut album is listed as one of *Rolling Stone's* 500 Greatest Albums of All Time and on The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame's Definitive 200 list. Houston's grand entrance into the music industry is considered one of the 25 musical milestones of the last 25 years, according to *USA Today*. Following Houston's breakthrough, doors were opened for other African-American women such as Janet Jackson and Anita Baker to find notable success in popular music and on MTV.

1987–91: *Whitney, I'm Your Baby Tonight* and "The Star Spangled Banner"

With many expectations, Houston's second album, *Whitney*, was released in June 1987. The album again featured production from Masser, Kashif and Walden as well as Jellybean Benitez. Many critics complained that the material was too similar to her previous album. *Rolling Stone* said, "the narrow channel through which this talent has been directed is frustrating". Still, the album enjoyed commercial success. Houston became the first woman in music history to debut at number one on the *Billboard* 200 albums chart, and the first artist to enter the albums chart at number one in both the US and UK, while also hitting number one or top ten in dozens of other countries around the world. The album's first single, "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)," was also a massive hit worldwide, peaking at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart and topping the singles chart in many countries such as Australia, Germany and the UK. The next three singles, "Didn't We Almost Have It All," "So Emotional," and "Where Do Broken Hearts Go" all peaked at number one on the US Hot 100 chart, which gave her a total of seven consecutive number one hits, breaking the record of six previously shared by The Beatles and The Bee Gees. Houston became the first woman to generate four number-one singles from one album. *Whitney* has been certified 9× Platinum in the US for shipments of over 9 million copies, and has sold a total of 20 million copies worldwide.

At the 30th Grammy Awards in 1988, Houston was nominated for three awards, including Album of the Year, winning her second Grammy for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance for "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)." Houston also won two American Music Awards in 1988 and 1989, respectively, and a Soul Train Music Award. Following the release of the album, Houston embarked on the *Moment of Truth World Tour*, which was one of the ten highest grossing concert tours of 1987.^[6] The success of the tours during 1986–87 and her two studio albums ranked Houston No. 8 for the highest earning entertainers list according to *Forbes* magazine. She was the highest earning African-American woman overall and the third highest entertainer after Bill Cosby and Eddie Murphy.

Houston was a supporter of Nelson Mandela and the anti-apartheid movement. During her modeling days, the singer refused to work with any agencies who did business with the then-apartheid South Africa. On June 11, 1988, during the European leg of her tour, Houston joined other musicians to perform a set at Wembley Stadium in London to

celebrate a then-imprisoned Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday. Over 72,000 people attended Wembley Stadium, and over a billion people tuned in worldwide as the rock concert raised over \$1 million for charities while bringing awareness to apartheid. Houston then flew back to the US for a concert at Madison Square Garden in New York City in August. The show was a benefit concert that raised a quarter of a million dollars for the United Negro College Fund. In the same year, she recorded a song for NBC's coverage of the 1988 Summer Olympics, "One Moment in Time", which became a Top 5 hit in the US, while reaching number one in the UK and Germany. With her world tour continuing overseas, Houston was still one of the top 20 highest earning entertainers for 1987–88 according to *Forbes* magazine.^[7]



Houston performing "Saving All My Love for You" on the *Welcome Home Heroes* concert in 1991

In 1989, Houston formed The Whitney Houston Foundation For Children, a non-profit organization that has raised funds for the needs of children around the world. The organization cares for homelessness, children with cancer or AIDS, and other issues of self-empowerment.^[8] With the success of her first two albums, Houston was undoubtedly an international crossover superstar, the most prominent since Michael Jackson, appealing to all demographics. However, some black critics believed she was "selling out." They felt her singing on record lacked the soul that was present during her live concerts.

At the 1989 Soul Train Music Awards, when Houston's name was called out for a nomination, a few in the audience jeered.^[9] Houston defended herself against the criticism, stating, "If you're gonna have a long career, there's a certain way to do it, and I did it that way. I'm not ashamed of it". Houston took a more urban direction with her third studio album, *I'm Your Baby Tonight*, released in November 1990. She produced and chose producers for this album and as a result, it featured production and collaborations with L.A. Reid and Babyface, Luther Vandross, and Stevie Wonder. The album showed Houston's versatility

on a new batch of tough rhythmic grooves, soulful ballads and up-tempo dance tracks. Reviews were mixed. *Rolling Stone* felt it was her "best and most integrated album". while *Entertainment Weekly*, at the time thought Houston's shift towards an urban direction was "superficial."

The album contained several hits: the first two singles, "I'm Your Baby Tonight" and "All the Man That I Need" peaked at number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart; "Miracle" peaked at number nine; "My Name Is Not Susan" peaked in the top twenty; "I Belong to You" reached the top ten of the US R&B chart and garnered Houston a Grammy nomination; and the sixth single, the Stevie Wonder duet "We Didn't Know", reached the R&B top twenty. The album peaked at number three on the *Billboard* 200 and went on to be certified 4x platinum in the US while selling twelve million total worldwide.

In 1990, Houston was the spokesperson for a youth leadership conference hosted in Washington, D.C. She had a private audience with President George H. W. Bush in the Oval Office to discuss the associated challenges.

During the Persian Gulf War, Houston performed "The Star Spangled Banner" at Super Bowl XXV at Tampa Stadium on January 27, 1991. This performance was later reported by those involved in the performance to have been lip synced or to have been sung into a dead microphone while a studio recording previously made by Houston was played. Dan Klores, a spokesman for Houston, explained: "This is not a Milli Vanilli thing. She sang live, but the microphone was turned off.



Houston met with President George H. W. Bush in the Oval Office in 1990, while in Washington, D.C., to participate in the Youth Leadership Forum

It was a technical decision, partially based on the noise factor. This is standard procedure at these events." (See also Star Spangled Banner lip sync controversy.) A commercial single and video of her performance were released, and reached the Top 20 on the US Hot 100, making her the only act to turn the US national anthem into a pop hit of that magnitude (José Feliciano's version reached No. 50 in November 1968). Houston donated all her share of the proceeds to the American Red Cross Gulf Crisis Fund. As a result, the singer was named to the Red Cross Board of Governors.^[10]

Her rendition was critically acclaimed and is considered the benchmark for singers. *Rolling Stone* commented that "her singing stirs such strong patriotism. Unforgettable", and the performance ranked No. 1 on the 25 most memorable music moments in NFL history list. VH1 listed the performance as one of the greatest moments that rocked TV. Following the attacks on 9/11, it was released again by Arista Records, all profits going towards the firefighters and victims of the attacks. This time it peaked at No. 6 in the Hot 100 and was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America.

Later in 1991, Houston put together her *Welcome Home Heroes* concert with HBO for the soldiers fighting in the Persian Gulf War and their families. The free concert took place at Naval Station Norfolk in Norfolk, Virginia in front of 3,500 servicemen and women. HBO descrambled the concert so that it was free for everyone to watch.^[11] Houston's concert gave HBO its highest ratings ever.^[12] She then embarked on the *I'm Your Baby Tonight World Tour*.

1992–94: Marriage to Bobby Brown and *The Bodyguard*

Throughout the 1980s, Houston was romantically linked to American football star Randall Cunningham and actor Eddie Murphy, whom she dated. She then met R&B singer Bobby Brown at the 1989 Soul Train Music Awards. After a three-year courtship, the two were married on July 18, 1992. On March 4, 1993, Houston gave birth to their daughter Bobbi Kristina Houston Brown, her only child, and his fourth. Brown would go on to have several run-ins with the law, including some jail time.

With the commercial success of her albums, movie offers poured in, including offers to work with Robert De Niro, Quincy Jones, and Spike Lee; but Houston felt the time wasn't right. Houston's first film role was in *The Bodyguard*, released in 1992 and co-starring Kevin Costner. Houston played Rachel Marron, a star who is stalked by a crazed fan and hires a bodyguard to protect her. *USA Today* listed it as one of the 25 most memorable movie moments of the last 25 years in 2007. Houston's mainstream appeal allowed people to look at the movie color-blind.

Still, controversy arose as some felt the film's advertising intentionally hid Houston's face to hide the film's interracial relationship. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 1993, the singer commented that "people know who Whitney Houston is – I'm black. You can't hide that fact." Houston received a Razzie Award nomination for Worst Actress. *The Washington Post* said Houston is "doing nothing more than playing Houston, comes out largely unscathed if that is possible in so cockamamie an undertaking", and *The New York Times* commented that she lacked passion with her co-star. Despite the film's mixed reviews, it was hugely successful at the box office, grossing more than \$121 million in the U.S. and \$410 million worldwide, making it one of the top 100 grossing films in film history at its time of release, though it is no longer in the top 100 due to rising ticket prices since the time the film was released.

The film's soundtrack also enjoyed big success. Houston executive produced and contributed six songs for the motion picture's adjoining soundtrack album. *Rolling Stone* said it is "nothing more than pleasant, tasteful and urbane". The soundtrack's lead single was "I Will Always Love You," written and originally recorded by Dolly Parton in 1974. Houston's version of the song was acclaimed by many critics, regarding it as her "signature song" or "iconic performance". *Rolling Stone* and *USA Today* called her rendition "the tour-de-force." The single peaked at number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for a then-record-breaking 14 weeks, number one on the R&B chart for a then-record-breaking 11 weeks, and number one on the Adult Contemporary charts for five weeks.

The single was certified 4× platinum by the RIAA, making Houston the first woman with a single to reach that level in the RIAA history and becoming the best-selling single by a woman in the US. The song also became a global success, hitting number-one in almost all countries, and one of the best-selling singles of all time with 12 million copies sold. The soundtrack topped the *Billboard* 200 chart and remained there for 20 non-consecutive weeks, the longest tenure by any album on the chart in the Nielsen SoundScan era, and became one of the fastest selling albums ever. During Christmas week of 1992, the soundtrack sold over a million copies within a week, becoming the first album to achieve that feat under Nielsen SoundScan system.^[13] With the follow-up singles "I'm Every Woman," a Chaka Khan cover, and "I Have Nothing" both reaching the top five, Houston became the first woman to ever have three singles in the Top 11 simultaneously. The album was certified 17× platinum in the US alone, with worldwide sales of 44 million, making *The Bodyguard* the biggest-selling album by a female act on the list of the world's Top 10 best-selling albums, topping Shania Twain's 40 million sold for *Come On Over*.

Houston won three Grammys for the album in 1994, including two of the Academy's highest honors, Album of the Year and Record of the Year. In addition, she won a record 8 American Music Awards at that year's ceremony including the Award of Merit, 11 Billboard Music Awards, 3 Soul Train Music Awards in 1993–94 including Sammy Davis, Jr. Award as Entertainer of the Year, 5 NAACP Image Awards including Entertainer of the Year, a record 5 World Music Awards, and a BRIT award. Following the success of the project, Houston embarked on another expansive global tour, *The Bodyguard World Tour*, in 1993–94. Her concerts, movie, and recording grosses made her the third highest earning female entertainer of 1993–94, just behind Oprah Winfrey and Barbra Streisand according to *Forbes* magazine.^[14] Houston placed in the top five of *Entertainment Weekly's* annual "Entertainer of the Year" ranking and was labeled by *Premiere* magazine as one of the 100 most powerful people in Hollywood.

In October 1994, Houston attended and performed at a state dinner in the White House honoring newly elected South African president Nelson Mandela. At the end of her world tour, Houston performed three concerts in South Africa to honor President Mandela, playing to over 200,000 people. This would make the singer the first major musician to visit the newly unified and apartheid free nation following Mandela's winning election. The concert was broadcast live on HBO with funds of the concerts being donated to various charities in South Africa. The event was considered the nation's "biggest media event since the inauguration of Nelson Mandela".

1995–97: *Waiting to Exhale*, *The Preacher's Wife*, and *Cinderella*

In 1995, Houston starred alongside Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, and Lela Rochon in her second film *Waiting to Exhale*, a motion picture about four African-American women struggling with relationships. Houston played the lead character Savannah Jackson, a TV producer in love with a married man. She chose the role because she saw the film as "a breakthrough for the image of black women because it presents them both as professionals and as caring mothers". After opening at number one and grossing \$67 million in the US at the box office and \$81 million worldwide, it proved that a movie primarily targeting a black audience can cross over to success, while paving the way for other all-black movies such as *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* and the Tyler Perry movies that have become popular in the 2000s.^{[15][16][17]} The film is also notable for its portrayal of black women as strong middle class citizens as opposed to stereotypes. The reviews were mainly positive for the ensemble cast. *The New York Times* said "Ms. Houston has shed the defensive hauteur that made her portrayal of a pop star in 'The Bodyguard' seem so distant."^[18] Houston was nominated for an NAACP Image Award for "Outstanding Actress In A Motion Picture", but lost to her co-star Bassett.

The film's accompanying soundtrack, *Waiting to Exhale: Original Soundtrack Album*, was produced by Houston and Babyface. Though Babyface originally wanted Houston to record the entire album, she declined. Instead, she "wanted it to be an album of women with vocal distinction", and thus gathered several African-American female artists for the soundtrack, to go along with the film's strong women message. As a result, the album featured a range of contemporary R&B female recording artists along with Houston, such as Mary J. Blige, Aretha Franklin, Toni Braxton, Patti LaBelle, and Brandy. Houston's "Exhale (Shoop Shoop)" peaked at No. 1, and then spent a record

eleven weeks at the No. 2 spot and eight weeks on top of the R&B Charts. "Count On Me", a duet with CeCe Winans, hit the US Top 10; and Houston's third contribution, "Why Does It Hurt So Bad", made the Top 30. The album debuted at No. 1, and was certified 7× Platinum in the United States, denoting shipments of seven million copies. The soundtrack received strong reviews as *Entertainment Weekly* said "the album goes down easy, just as you'd expect from a package framed by Whitney Houston tracks.... the soundtrack waits to exhale, hovering in sensuous suspense"^[19] and has since ranked it as one of the 100 Best Movie Soundtracks. Later that year, Houston's children's charity organization was awarded a VH1 Honor for all the charitable work.

In 1996, Houston starred in the holiday comedy *The Preacher's Wife*, with Denzel Washington. She plays a gospel-singing wife of a pastor (Courtney B. Vance). It was largely an updated remake of the 1948 film "The Bishop's Wife" which starred Loretta Young, David Niven and Cary Grant. Houston earned \$10 million for the role, making her one of the highest-paid actresses in Hollywood at the time and the highest earning African American actress in Hollywood.^[20] The movie, with its all African-American cast, was a moderate success, earning approximately \$50 million at the U.S. box offices.^[21] The movie gave Houston her strongest reviews so far. *The San Francisco Chronicle* said Houston "is rather angelic herself, displaying a divine talent for being virtuous and flirtatious at the same time" and that she "exudes gentle yet spirited warmth, especially when praising the Lord in her gorgeous singing voice".^[22] Houston was again nominated for an NAACP Image Award and won for Outstanding Actress In A Motion Picture.

Houston recorded and co-produced, with Mervyn Warren, the film's accompanying gospel soundtrack. *The Preacher's Wife: Original Soundtrack Album* included six gospel songs with Georgia Mass Choir that were recorded at the Great Star Rising Baptist Church in Atlanta. Houston also duetted with gospel legend Shirley Caesar. The album sold six million copies worldwide and scored hit singles with "I Believe in You and Me" and "Step by Step," becoming the largest selling gospel album of all time. The album received mainly positive reviews. Some critics, such as that of *USA Today*, noted the presence of her emotional depth, while *The Times* said "To hear Houston going at full throttle with the 35 piece Georgia Mass Choir struggling to keep up is to realise what her phenomenal voice was made for".

In 1997, Houston's production company changed its name to BrownHouse Productions and was joined by Debra Martin Chase. Their goal was "to show aspects of the lives of African-Americans that have not been brought to the screen before" while improving how African-Americans are portrayed in film and television.^[23] Their first project was a made-for-television remake of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. In addition to co-producing, Houston starred in the movie as the Fairy Godmother along with Brandy, Jason Alexander, Whoopi Goldberg, and Bernadette Peters. Houston was initially offered the role of Cinderella in 1993, but other projects intervened.^[24] The film is notable for its multi-racial cast and nonstereotypical message.^[25] An estimated 60 million viewers tuned into the special giving ABC its highest TV ratings in 16 years. The movie received seven Emmy nominations including Outstanding Variety, Musical or Comedy, while winning Outstanding Art Direction in a Variety, Musical or Comedy Special.

Houston and Chase then obtained the rights to the story of Dorothy Dandridge. Houston was to play Dandridge, who was the first African American actress to be nominated for an Oscar. She wanted the story told with dignity and honor. However, Halle Berry also had rights to the project and she got her version going first.^[26] Later that year, Houston paid tribute to her idols such as Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, and Dionne Warwick by performing their hits during the three-night HBO Concert *Classic Whitney*, live from Washington, D.C. The special raised over \$300,000 for the Children's Defense Fund. Houston received The Quincy Jones Award for outstanding career achievements in the field of entertainment at the 12th Soul Train Music Awards.

1998–2000: *My Love Is Your Love* and *Whitney: The Greatest Hits*

After spending much of the early and mid-1990s working on motion pictures and their soundtrack albums, Houston's first studio album in eight years, the critically acclaimed *My Love Is Your Love*, was released in November 1998. Though originally slated to be a greatest hits album with a handful of new songs, recording sessions were so fruitful that a new full-length studio album was released. Recorded and mixed in only six weeks, it featured production from Rodney Jerkins, Wyclef Jean and Missy Elliott. The album debuted at number thirteen, its peak position, on the *Billboard* 200 chart. It had a funkier and edgier sound than past releases and saw Houston handling urban dance, hip hop, mid-tempo R&B, reggae, torch songs, and ballads all with great dexterity.

From late 1998 to early 2000, the album spawned several hit singles: "When You Believe" (US No. 15, UK No. 4), a duet with Mariah Carey for 1998's *The Prince of Egypt* soundtrack, which also became an international hit as it peaked in the Top 10 in several countries and won an Academy Award for Best Original Song; "Heartbreak Hotel" (US No. 2, UK No. 25) featured Faith Evans and Kelly Price, received a 1999 MTV VMA nomination for Best R&B Video, and number one on the US R&B chart for seven weeks; "It's Not Right But It's Okay" (US No. 4, UK No. 3) won Houston her sixth Grammy Award for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance; "My Love Is Your Love" (US No. 4, UK No. 2) with 3 million copies sold worldwide; and "I Learned from the Best" (US No. 27, UK No. 19). These singles became international hits as well, and all the singles, except "When You Believe," became number one hits on the *Billboard* Hot Dance/Club Play chart. The album sold four million copies in America, making it certified 4× platinum, and a total of eleven million copies worldwide.

The album gave Houston some of her strongest reviews ever. *Rolling Stone* said Houston was singing "with a bite in her voice" and *The Village Voice* called it "Whitney's sharpest and most satisfying so far".^[27] In 1999, Houston participated in VH-1's Divas Live '99, alongside Brandy, Mary J. Blige, Tina Turner, and Cher. The same year, Houston hit the road with her 70 date *My Love Is Your Love World Tour*. The European leg of the tour was Europe's highest grossing arena tour of the year. In November 1999, Houston was named Top-selling R&B Female Artist of the Century with certified US sales of 51 million copies at the time and *The Bodyguard Soundtrack* was named the Top-selling Soundtrack Album of the Century by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). She also won The Artist of the Decade, Female award for extraordinary artistic contributions during the 1990s at the 14th Soul Train Music Awards, and an MTV Europe Music Award for Best R&B.

In May 2000, *Whitney: The Greatest Hits* was released worldwide. The double disc set peaked at number five in the United States, reaching number one in the United Kingdom. In addition, the album reached the Top 10 in many other countries. While ballad songs were left unchanged, the album features house/club remixes of many of Houston's up-tempo hits. Included on the album were four new songs: "Could I Have This Kiss Forever" (a duet with Enrique Iglesias), "Same Script, Different Cast" (a duet with Deborah Cox), "If I Told You That" (a duet with George Michael), and "Fine", and three hits that had never appeared on a Houston album: "One Moment in Time", "The Star Spangled Banner", and "If You Say My Eyes Are Beautiful", a duet with Jermaine Jackson from his 1986 *Precious Moments* album. Along with the album, an accompanying VHS and DVD was released featuring the music videos to Houston's greatest hits, as well as several hard-to-find live performances including her 1983 debut on *The Merv Griffin Show*, and interviews. The greatest hits album was certified 3× platinum in the US, with worldwide sales of 10 million.

2000–05: *Just Whitney* and personal struggles

Though Houston was seen as a "good girl" with a perfect image in the 1980s and early 1990s, by the late 1990s, her behavior changed. She was often hours late for interviews, photo shoots and rehearsals, and canceling concerts and talk-show appearances.^[28] With the missed performances and weight loss, rumors about Houston using drugs with her husband circulated. On January 11, 2000, airport security guards discovered marijuana in both Houston's and husband Bobby Brown's luggage at a Hawaii airport, but the two boarded the plane and departed before authorities could arrive. Charges were later dropped against them,^[29] but rumors of drug usage between the couple would

continue to surface. Two months later, Clive Davis was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Houston had been scheduled to perform at the event, but failed to show up.^[30]

Shortly thereafter, Houston was scheduled to perform at the Academy Awards but was fired from the event by musical director and longtime friend Burt Bacharach. Her publicist cited throat problems as the reason for the cancellation. In his book *The Big Show: High Times and Dirty Dealings Backstage at the Academy Awards*, author Steve Pond revealed that "Houston's voice was shaky, she seemed distracted and jittery, and her attitude was casual, almost defiant", and that while Houston was to sing "Over the Rainbow," she would start singing a different song.^[31] Houston later admitted to having been fired.^[32] Later that year, Houston's long-time executive assistant and friend, Robyn Crawford, resigned from Houston's management company.

In August 2001, Houston signed the biggest record deal in music history with Arista/BMG. She renewed her contract for \$100 million to deliver six new albums, on which she would also earn royalties. She later made an appearance on *Michael Jackson: 30th Anniversary Special*. Her extremely thin frame further spurred rumors of drug use. Houston's publicist said, "Whitney has been under stress due to family matters, and when she is under stress she doesn't eat." The singer was scheduled for a second performance the following night but canceled.^[33] Within weeks, Houston's rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" would be re-released after the September 11 attacks, with the proceeds donated to the New York Firefighters 9/11 Disaster Relief Fund and the New York Fraternal Order of Police. The song peaked at No. 6 this time on the US Hot 100, topping its previous position.

In 2002, Houston became involved in a legal dispute with John Houston Enterprise. Although the company was started by her father to manage her career, it was actually run by company president Kevin Skinner. Skinner filed a breach-of-contract lawsuit and sued for \$100 million (but lost), stating that Houston owed the company previously unpaid compensation for helping to negotiate her \$100 million contract with Arista Records and for sorting out legal matters. Houston stated that her 81-year-old father had nothing to do with the lawsuit. Although Skinner tried to claim otherwise, John Houston never appeared in court. Houston's father later died in February 2003.^[34] The lawsuit was dismissed on April 5, 2004, and Skinner was awarded nothing.

Also in 2002, Houston did an interview with Diane Sawyer to promote her then-upcoming album. During the prime-time special, Houston spoke on topics including rumored drug use and marriage. She was asked about the ongoing drug rumors and replied, "First of all, let's get one thing straight. Crack is cheap. I make too much money to ever smoke crack. Let's get that straight. Okay? We don't do crack. We don't do that. Crack is wack." The line was from Keith Haring's mural which was painted in 1986 on the handball court at 128th Street and 2nd Avenue. Houston did, however, admit to using other substances at times, including cocaine.

In December 2002, Houston released her fifth studio album, *Just Whitney...* The album included productions from then-husband Bobby Brown, as well as Missy Elliott and Babyface, and marked the first time that Houston did not produce with Clive Davis as Davis had been released by top management at BMG. Upon its release, *Just Whitney...* received mixed reviews.^[35] The album debuted at number 9 on the *Billboard* 200 chart and it had the highest first week sales of any album Houston had ever released. The four singles released from the album, didn't fare well on the *Billboard* Hot 100, but became Hot Dance Club Play hits. *Just Whitney...* was certified platinum in the United States, and sold approximately three million worldwide.

On a June 2003 trip to Israel, Houston said of her visit, "I've never felt like this in any other country. I feel at home, I feel wonderful."

In late 2003, Houston released her first Christmas album *One Wish: The Holiday Album*, with a collection of traditional holiday songs. Houston produced the album with Mervyn Warren and Gordon Chambers. A single titled "One Wish (for Christmas)" reached the Top 20 on the Adult Contemporary chart, and the album was certified gold in the US. Having always been a touring artist, Houston spent most of 2004 touring and performing in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Russia. In September 2004, she gave a surprise performance at the World Music Awards in a tribute to long-time friend Clive Davis. After the show, Davis and Houston announced plans to go into studio to work on her new album.^[36]

In early 2004, husband Bobby Brown starred in his own reality TV program, *Being Bobby Brown* (on the Bravo network), which provided a view into the domestic goings-on in the Brown household. Though it was Brown's vehicle, Houston was a prominent figure throughout the show, receiving as much screen time as Brown. The series aired in 2005 and featured Houston in, what some would say, not her most flattering moments. The *Hollywood Reporter* said it was "undoubtedly the most disgusting and execrable series ever to ooze its way onto television."^[37] Despite the perceived train-wreck nature of the show, the series gave Bravo its highest ratings in its time slot and continued Houston's successful forays into film and television.^[38] The show was not renewed for a second season after Houston stated that she would no longer appear in it, and Brown and Bravo could not come to an agreement for another season.^[39]

2006–12: Return to music, *I Look to You*, tour and film comeback

After years of controversy and turmoil, Houston separated from Bobby Brown in September 2006, filing for divorce the following month. On February 1, 2007, Houston asked the court to fast track their divorce. The divorce was finalized on April 24, 2007, with Houston granted custody of the couple's daughter. On May 4, Houston sold the suburban Atlanta home featured in *Being Bobby Brown* for \$1.19 million.^[40] A few days later, Brown sued Houston in Orange County, California court in an attempt to change the terms of their custody agreement. Brown also sought child and spousal support from Houston. In the lawsuit, Brown claimed that financial and emotional problems prevented him from properly responding to Houston's divorce petition. Brown lost at his court hearing as the judge dismissed his appeal to overrule the custody terms, leaving Houston with full custody and Brown with no spousal support.^[41] In March 2007, Clive Davis of Arista Records announced that Houston would begin recording a new album. In October 2007, Arista released another compilation *The Ultimate Collection* outside the United States.

Houston gave her first interview in seven years in September 2009, appearing on Oprah Winfrey's season premiere. The interview was billed as "the most anticipated music interview of the decade".^[42] Whitney admitted on the show to using drugs with former husband Bobby Brown, who "laced marijuana with rock cocaine". By 1996, she told Oprah, "[doing drugs] was an everyday thing... I wasn't happy by that point in time. I was losing myself."^[43]

Houston released her new album, *I Look to You*, in August 2009. The album's first two singles are "I Look to You" and "Million Dollar Bill." The album entered the Billboard 200 at No. 1, with Houston's best opening-week sales of 305,000 copies, marking Houston's first number one album since *The Bodyguard*, and Houston's first studio album to reach number one since 1987's *Whitney*. Houston also appeared on European television programs to promote the album. She performed the song "I Look to You" on the German television show *Wetten, dass..?*. Three days later, she performed the worldwide first single from *I Look To You*, Million Dollar Bill, on the French television show *Le Grand Journal*. Houston appeared as guest mentor on *The X Factor* in the United Kingdom. She performed "Million Dollar Bill" on the following day's results show, completing the song even as a strap in the back of her dress popped open two minutes into the performance. She later commented that she "sang [herself] out of [her] clothes".

The performance was poorly received by the British media, and was variously described as "weird" and "ungracious," "shambolic" and a "flop." Despite this reception, "Million Dollar Bill" jumped to its peak from 14 to number 5 (her first UK top 5 for over a decade), and three weeks after release "I Look to You" went gold. Houston appeared on the Italian version of *The X Factor*, performing the same song "Million Dollar Bill" to excellent reviews. She was awarded the Gold Certificate for achieving over 50,000 CD sales of "I Look To You" in Italy. In November, Houston performed "I Didn't Know My Own Strength" at the 2009 American Music Awards in Los Angeles, California. Two days later, Houston performed both songs on the *Dancing With The Stars* season 9 finale.

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Houston performing "My Love Is Your Love" with her daughter Bobbi Kristina Brown on *Good Morning America*, September 1, 2009

As of December 2009, "I Look to You" has been certified platinum by the RIAA for sales of more than one million copies in the United States. On January 26, 2010, her debut album was re-released in a special edition entitled *Whitney Houston – The Deluxe Anniversary Edition*.



Whitney Houston at the O2 Arena, April 28, 2010, as part of her Nothing but Love World Tour

Houston later embarked on a world tour, entitled the Nothing but Love World Tour. It was her first world tour in over ten years and was announced as a triumphant comeback. However, some poor reviews and rescheduled concerts brought some negative media attention. Houston canceled some concerts due to illness and received widespread negative reviews from fans who were disappointed in the quality of her voice and performance. Some fans reportedly walked out of her concerts.

In January 2010, Houston was nominated for two NAACP Image Awards, one for Best Female Artist and one for Best Music Video. She won the award for Best Music Video for her single "I Look to You." On January 16, she received The BET Honors Award for Entertainer citing her lifetime achievements spanning over 25 years in the industry. The 2010 BET Honors award was held at the Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C. and aired on February 1, 2010. Jennifer Hudson and Kim Burrell performed in honor of her, garnering positive reviews.

Houston also received a nomination from the Echo Awards, Germany's version of the Grammys, for Best International Artist. In April 2010, the UK newspaper *The Mirror* reported that Houston was thinking about recording her eighth studio album and wanted to collaborate with will.i.am (of The Black Eyed Peas), her first choice for a collaboration.

Houston also performed the song "I Look to You" on the 2011 BET *Celebration of Gospel*, with gospel–jazz singer Kim Burrell, held at the Staples Center, Los Angeles. The performance aired on January 30, 2011. Early in 2011, she gave an uneven performance in tribute to cousin Dionne Warwick at music mogul Clive Davis' annual pre-Grammy gala. In May 2011, Houston enrolled in a rehabilitation center again, as an out-patient, citing drug and alcohol problems. A representative for Houston said that it was a part of Houston's "longstanding recovery process."

In September 2011, *The Hollywood Reporter* announced that Houston would produce and star alongside Jordin Sparks and Mike Epps in the remake of the 1976 film *Sparkle*. In the film, Houston portrays Sparks' "not-so encouraging mother." Houston also is credited as an executive producer of the film. Debra Martin Chase, producer of *Sparkle*, stated that Houston deserved the title considering she had been there from the beginning in 2001, when Houston obtained *Sparkle* production rights. R&B singer Aaliyah – originally tapped to star as Sparkle – died in a 2001 plane crash. Her death derailed production, which would have begun in 2002.^[44] Houston's remake of *Sparkle* was filmed in the fall of 2011 over a two-month period, and was released by TriStar Pictures. On May 21, 2012, "Celebrate", the last song Houston recorded with Sparks, premiered at RyanSeacrest.com. It was made available for digital download on iTunes on June 5. The song was featured on the *Sparkle: Music from the Motion Picture* soundtrack as the first official single. The movie was released on August 17, 2012 in the United States. The accompanying music video for Celebrate was filmed on May 30, 2012. The video was shot over 2 days, and a sneak peek of the video premiered on *Entertainment Tonight* on June 4, 2012.

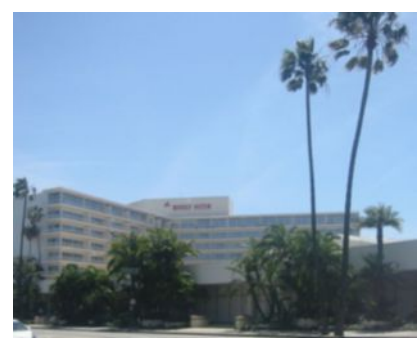
Death

On February 9, 2012, Houston visited singers Brandy and Monica, together with Clive Davis, at their rehearsals for Davis' pre-Grammy Awards party at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. That same day, she made her last public performance, when she joined Kelly Price on stage in Hollywood, California, and sang "Jesus Loves Me".

Two days later, on February 11, Houston was found unconscious in Suite 434 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, submerged in the bathtub; she was later pronounced dead.^[45] The cause of death was not immediately known. It was later ruled by the coroner to have been an "accidental drowning". Beverly Hills paramedics arrived at approximately 3:30 p.m. and found the singer unresponsive and performed CPR. Houston was pronounced dead at 3:55 p.m. PST. Local police said there were "no obvious signs of criminal intent." On March 22, 2012, the Los Angeles County coroner's office reported the cause of Houston's death was drowning and the "effects of atherosclerotic heart disease and cocaine use". The office stated the amount of cocaine found in Houston's body indicated that she used the substance shortly before her death. Toxicology results revealed additional drugs in her system: Benadryl, Xanax, marijuana and Flexeril. The manner of death was listed as an "accident."

Houston had an invitation-only memorial on Saturday, February 18, 2012, at the New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey. The service was scheduled for two hours, but lasted four. Among those who performed at the funeral were Stevie Wonder (rewritten version of "Ribbon in the Sky," and "Love's in Need of Love Today"), CeCe Winans ("Don't Cry," and "Jesus Loves Me"), Alicia Keys ("Send Me an Angel"), Kim Burrell (rewritten version of "A Change Is Gonna Come"), and R. Kelly ("I Look to You"). The performances were interspersed with hymns by the church choir and remarks by Clive Davis, Houston's record producer; Kevin Costner; Ricky Minor, her music director; her cousin, Dionne Warwick; and Ray Watson, her security guard for the past 11 years. Aretha Franklin was listed on the program and was expected to sing, but was unable to attend the service. Bobby Brown, Houston's ex-husband, was also invited to the funeral but he left before the service began. Houston was buried on Sunday, February 19, 2012, in Fairview Cemetery, in Westfield, New Jersey, next to her father, John Russell Houston, who died in 2003. In June 2012, the McDonald's Gospelfest in Newark became a tribute to Houston.

Reaction



The Beverly Hilton Hotel, where Houston's body was found.



Flowers near the Beverly Hilton Hotel.



New Hope Baptist Church

Pre-Grammy party

The Clive Davis' pre-Grammy party that Houston was expected to attend, which featured many of the biggest names in music and movies, went on as scheduled although it was quickly turned into a tribute to Houston. Davis spoke about Houston's death at the evening's start: "By now you have all learned of the unspeakably tragic news of our beloved Whitney's passing. I don't have to mask my emotion in front of a room full of so many dear friends. I am personally devastated by the loss of someone who has meant so much to me for so many years. Whitney was so full of life. She was so looking forward to tonight even though she wasn't scheduled to perform. Whitney was a beautiful person and a talent beyond compare. She graced this stage with her regal presence and gave so many memorable performances here over the years. Simply put, Whitney would have wanted the music to go on and her family asked that we carry on."

Tony Bennett spoke of Houston's death before performing at Davis' party. He said, "First, it was Michael Jackson, then Amy Winehouse, now, the magnificent Whitney Houston." Bennett sang "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?" and said of Houston, "When I first heard her, I called Clive Davis and said, 'You finally found the greatest singer I've ever heard in my life.'"

Some celebrities opposed Davis' decision to continue on the party while a police investigation was being conducted in Houston's hotel room and her body was still in the building. Chaka Khan, in an interview with CNN's Piers Morgan on February 13, 2012, shared that she felt the party should have been canceled, saying "I thought that was complete insanity. And knowing Whitney I don't believe that she would have said 'the show must go on.' She's the kind of woman that would've said 'Stop everything! Un-unh. I'm not going to be there.' [...] I don't know what could motivate a person to have a party in a building where the person whose life he had influenced so enormously and whose life had been affected by hers. They were like... I don't understand how that party went on." Sharon Osbourne condemned the Davis party, declaring "I think it was disgraceful that the party went on. I don't want to be in a hotel room when there's someone you admire who's tragically lost their life four floors up. I'm not interested in being in that environment and I think when you grieve someone, you do it privately, you do it with people who understand you. I thought it was so wrong."

Further reaction and tributes

Many other celebrities released statements responding to Houston's death. Darlene Love, Houston's Godmother, hearing the news of her death, said, "It felt like I had been struck by a lightning bolt in my gut." Dolly Parton, whose song "I Will Always Love You" was covered by Houston, said, "I will always be grateful and in awe of the wonderful performance she did on my song and I can truly say from the bottom of my heart, 'Whitney, I will always love you. You will be missed.'" Aretha Franklin said, "It's so stunning and unbelievable. I couldn't believe what I was reading coming across the TV screen." Other paying tribute included Mariah Carey, Quincy Jones and Oprah Winfrey.

Moments after news of her death emerged, CNN, MSNBC and Fox News all broke from their regularly scheduled programming to dedicate time to non-stop coverage of Houston's death. All three featured live interviews with people who had known Houston including those that had worked with her, interviewed her along with some of her peers in the music industry. *Saturday Night Live* displayed a photo of a smiling Houston, alongside Molly Shannon, from her 1996 appearance. MTV and VH-1 interrupted their regularly scheduled programming on Sunday February 12 to air many of Houston's classic videos with MTV often airing news segments in between and featuring various reactions from fans and celebrities.

Houston's former husband, Bobby Brown, was reported to be "in and out of crying fits" since receiving the news. He did not cancel a scheduled performance and within hours of his ex-wife's sudden death, an audience in Mississippi observed as Brown blew kisses skyward, tearfully saying: "I love you, Whitney."


Ken Ehrlich, executive producer of the 54th Grammy Awards, announced that Jennifer Hudson would perform a tribute to Houston at the February 12, 2012, awards. He said "event organizers believed Hudson – an Academy

Award-winning actress and Grammy Award-winning artist – could perform a respectful musical tribute to Houston". Ehrlich went on to say: "It's too fresh in everyone's memory to do more at this time, but we would be remiss if we didn't recognize Whitney's remarkable contribution to music fans in general, and in particular her close ties with the Grammy telecast and her Grammy wins and nominations over the years". At the start of the awards ceremony, a footage of Houston performing "I Will Always Love You" from the 1994 Grammys was shown following a prayer read by host, LL Cool J. Later in the program following a montage of photos of musicians who died in 2011 with Houston singing "Saving All My Love for You" at the 1986 Grammys, Hudson paid tribute to Houston and the other artists by performing "I Will Always Love You". The tribute was partially credited for the Grammys telecast getting its second highest ratings in history.

Houston was honored in the form of various tributes at the 43rd NAACP Image Awards, held on February 17. An image montage of Houston and important black figures who died in 2011 was followed by video footage from the 1994 ceremony, which depicted her accepting two Image Awards for outstanding female artist and entertainer of the year. Following the video tribute, Yolanda Adams delivered a rendition of "I Love the Lord" from *The Preacher's Wife Soundtrack*. In the finale of the ceremony, Kirk Franklin and The Family started their performance with "The Greatest Love of All." The 2012 BRIT Awards, which took place at London's O2 Arena on February 21, also paid tribute to Houston by playing a 30-second-video montage of her music videos with a snippet of "One Moment in Time" as the background music in the ceremony's first segment. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie said that all New Jersey state flags would be flown at half-staff on Tuesday, February 21 to honor Houston. Houston was also featured, alongside other recently deceased figures from the movie industry, in the *In Memoriam* montage at the 84th Academy Awards on February 26, 2012.

Artistry and legacy

Voice

	<p>"I Will Always Love You" (1992)</p> <p>One of Houston's best selling singles worldwide and recognized songs, "I Will Always Love You" prominently uses melismas.</p>
<p><i>Problems playing this file? See media help.</i></p>	

Houston was a mezzo-soprano,^[46] and was commonly referred to as "The Voice" in reference to her exceptional vocal talent. She was third in MTV's list of 22 Greatest Voices, and sixth on *Online Magazine COVE*'s list of the 100 Best Pop Vocalists with a score of 48.5/50. Jon Pareles of *The New York Times* stated she "always had a great big voice, a technical marvel from its velvety depths to its ballistic middle register to its ringing and airy heights". In 2008, *Rolling Stone* listed Houston as the thirty-fourth of the 100 greatest singers of all time, stating, "Her voice is a mammoth, coruscating cry: Few vocalists could get away with opening a song with 45 unaccompanied seconds of singing, but Houston's powerhouse version of Dolly Parton's 'I Will Always Love You' is a tour de force." Matthew Perpetua from *Rolling Stone* also eulogized Houston's vocal, enumerating ten performances, including "How Will I Know" from the 1986 MTV VMAs and "The Star Spangled Banner" at the 1991 Super Bowl. "Whitney Houston was blessed with an astonishing vocal range and extraordinary technical skill, but what truly made her a great singer was her ability to connect with a song and drive home its drama and emotion with incredible precision," he stated. "She was a brilliant performer, and her live shows often eclipsed her studio recordings."

Jon Caramanica of *The New York Times* commented, "Her voice was clean and strong, with barely any grit, well suited to the songs of love and aspiration. [...] Hers was a voice of triumph and achievement, and it made for any number of stunning, time-stopping vocal performances." Mariah Carey stated, "She [Whitney] has a really rich,

strong mid-belt that very few people have. She sounds really good, really strong." While in her review of *I Look to You*, music critic Ann Powers of the *Los Angeles Times* writes, "[Houston's voice] stands like monuments upon the landscape of 20th century pop, defining the architecture of their times, sheltering the dreams of millions and inspiring the climbing careers of countless imitators", adding "When she was at her best, nothing could match her huge, clean, cool mezzo-soprano."

Lauren Everitt from BBC News Magazine commented on melisma used in Houston's recording and its influence. "An early 'I' in Whitney Houston's 'I Will Always Love You' takes nearly six seconds to sing. In those seconds the former gospel singer-turned-pop star packs a series of different notes into the single syllable," stated Everitt. "The technique is repeated throughout the song, most pronouncedly on every 'I' and 'you'. The vocal technique is called melisma, and it has inspired a host of imitators. Other artists may have used it before Houston, but it was her rendition of Dolly Parton's love song that pushed the technique into the mainstream in the 90s. [...] But perhaps what Houston nailed best was moderation." Everitt said that "[i]n a climate of reality shows ripe with 'oversinging,' it's easy to appreciate Houston's ability to save melisma for just the right moment."

Houston's vocal stylings have had a significant impact on the music industry. According to Linda Lister in *Divafication: The Deification of Modern Female Pop Stars*, she has been called the "Queen of Pop" for her influence during the 1990s, commercially rivaling Mariah Carey and Celine Dion.^[47] Stephen Holden from *The New York Times*, in his review of Houston's Radio City Music Hall concert on July 20, 1993, praised her attitude as a singer, writing, "Whitney Houston is one of the few contemporary pop stars of whom it might be said: the voice suffices. While almost every performer whose albums sell in the millions calls upon an entertainer's bag of tricks, from telling jokes to dancing to circus pyrotechnics, Ms. Houston would rather just stand there and sing." With regard to her singing style, he added: "Her [Houston's] stylistic trademarks – shivery melismas that ripple up in the middle of a song, twirling embellishments at the ends of phrases that suggest an almost breathless exhilaration – infuse her interpretations with flashes of musical and emotional lightning."

Elysa Gardner of the *Los Angeles Times* in her review for *The Preacher's Wife Soundtrack* praised Houston's vocal ability highly, commenting, "She is first and foremost a pop diva – at that, the best one we have. No other female pop star – not Mariah Carey, not Celine Dion, not Barbra Streisand – quite rivals Houston in her exquisite vocal fluidity and purity of tone, and her ability to infuse a lyric with mesmerizing melodrama."

Influence

During the 1980s, MTV was coming into its own and received criticism for not playing enough videos by black artists. With Michael Jackson breaking down the color barrier for black men, Houston did the same for black women. She became the first black woman to receive heavy rotation on the network following the success of the "How Will I Know" video.^[48] Following Houston's breakthrough, other African-American women, such as Janet Jackson and Anita Baker, were successful in popular music. Baker commented that "Because of what Whitney and Sade did, there was an opening for me... For radio stations, black women singers aren't taboo anymore."

Allmusic noted her contribution to the success of black artists on the pop scene, commenting, "Houston was able to handle big adult contemporary ballads, effervescent, stylish dance-pop, and slick urban contemporary soul with equal dexterity" and that "the result was an across-the-board appeal that was matched by scant few artists of her era, and helped her become one of the first black artists to find success on MTV in Michael Jackson's wake". *The New York Times* stated that "Houston was a major catalyst for a movement within black music that recognized the continuity of soul, pop, jazz and gospel vocal traditions".^[49] Richard Corliss of *Time* magazine commented on her initial success breaking various barriers:

Of her first album's ten cuts, six were ballads. This chanteuse [Houston] had to fight for air play with hard rockers. The young lady had to stand uncowed in the locker room of macho rock. The soul strutter had to seduce a music audience that anointed few black artists with superstardom. [...] She was a phenomenon waiting to happen, a canny tapping of the listener's yen for a return to the musical middle.

And because every new star creates her own genre, her success has helped other blacks, other women, other smooth singers find an avid reception in the pop marketplace.

Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* said that Houston "revitalized the tradition of strong gospel-oriented pop-soul singing".^[50] Ann Powers of the *Los Angeles Times* referred to the singer as a "national treasure". Jon Caramanica, other music critic of *The New York Times*, called Houston "R&B's great modernizer," adding "slowly but surely reconciling the ambition and praise of the church with the movements and needs of the body and the glow of the mainstream". He also drew comparisons between Houston's influence and other big names' on 1980s pop:

She was, alongside Michael Jackson and Madonna, one of the crucial figures to hybridize pop in the 1980s, though her strategy was far less radical than that of her peers. Jackson and Madonna were by turns lascivious and brutish and, crucially, willing to let their production speak more loudly than their voices, an option Ms. Houston never went for. Also, she was less prolific than either of them, achieving most of her renown on the strength of her first three solo albums and one soundtrack, released from 1985 to 1992. If she was less influential than they were in the years since, it was only because her gift was so rare, so impossible to mimic. Jackson and Madonna built worldviews around their voices; Ms. Houston's voice was the worldview. She was someone more to be admired, like a museum piece, than to be emulated.

The Independent's music critic Andy Gill also wrote about Houston's influence on modern R&B and singing competitions, comparing it to Michael Jackson's. "Because Whitney, more than any other single artist — Michael Jackson included — effectively mapped out the course of modern R&B, setting the bar for standards of soul vocalese, and creating the original template for what we now routinely refer to as the 'soul diva'," stated Gill. "Jackson was a hugely talented icon, certainly, but he will be as well remembered (probably more so) for his presentational skills, his dazzling dance moves, as for his musical innovations. Whitney, on the other hand, just sang, and the ripples from her voice continue to dominate the pop landscape." Gill said that there "are few, if any, Jackson imitators on today's TV talent shows, but every other contestant is a Whitney wannabe, desperately attempting to emulate that wondrous combination of vocal effects — the flowing melisma, the soaring mezzo-soprano confidence, the tremulous fluttering that carried the ends of lines into realms of higher yearning".

Houston was considered by many to be a "singer's singer," who had an influence on countless other vocalists, both female and male. Similarly, Steve Huey from Allmusic wrote that the shadow of Houston's prodigious technique still looms large over nearly every pop diva and smooth urban soul singer — male or female — in her wake, and spawned a legion of imitators. *Rolling Stone*, on her biography, stated that Houston "redefined the image of a female soul icon and inspired singers ranging from Mariah Carey to Rihanna". *Essence* ranked Houston the fifth on their list of 50 Most Influential R&B Stars of all time, calling her "the diva to end all divas".

A number of artists have acknowledged Houston as an influence, including Celine Dion, Mariah Carey, Toni Braxton, Christina Aguilera,^[51] LeAnn Rimes, Jessica Simpson, Nelly Furtado, Kelly Clarkson, Britney Spears,^[52] Ciara,^[53] P!nk, Ashanti, Robin Thicke,^[54] Jennifer Hudson, Stacie Orrico, Amerie, and Destiny's Child. Mariah Carey, who was often compared to Houston, said, "She [Houston] has been a big influence on me." She later told *USA Today* that "none of us would sound the same if Aretha Franklin hadn't ever put out a record, or Whitney Houston hadn't."^[55] Celine Dion who was the third member of the troika that dominated female pop singing in the 1990s, did a telephone interview with *Good Morning America* on February 13, 2012, telling "Whitney's been an amazing inspiration for me. I've been singing with her my whole career, actually. I wanted to have a career like hers, sing like her, look beautiful like her." Beyoncé told the *Globe and Mail* that Houston "inspired [her] to get up there and do what [she] did".^[56] She also wrote on her website on the day after Houston's death, "I, like every singer, always wanted to be just like [Houston]. Her voice was perfect. Strong but soothing. Soulful and classic. Her vibrato, her cadence, her control. So many of my life's memories are attached to a Whitney Houston song. She is our queen and she opened doors and provided a blueprint for all of us."

Mary J. Blige said that Houston inviting her onstage during VH1's *Divas Live* show in 1999 "opened doors for [her] all over the world".^[57] Brandy stated, "The first Whitney Houston CD was genius. That CD introduced the world to her angelic yet powerful voice. Without Whitney, half of this generation of singers wouldn't be singing." Kelly Rowland, in an *Ebony's* feature article celebrating black music in June 2006, recalled that "[I] wanted to be a singer after I saw Whitney Houston on TV singing 'Greatest Love of All'. I wanted to sing like Whitney Houston in that red dress." She added that "And I have never, ever forgotten that song [Greatest Love of All]. I learned it backward, forward, sideways. The video still brings chills to me. When you wish and pray for something as a kid, you never know what blessings God will give you."

Alicia Keys said "Whitney is an artist who inspired me from [the time I was] a little girl." Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson cites Houston as her biggest musical influence. She told *Newsday* that she learned from Houston the "difference between being able to sing and knowing how to sing."^[58] Leona Lewis, who has been called "the new Whitney Houston," also cites her as an influence. Lewis stated that she idolized her as a little girl.^[59]

Awards and achievements

Houston was the most awarded female artist of all time, according to Guinness World Records, with two Emmy Awards, six Grammy Awards, 30 Billboard Music Awards, 22 American Music Awards, among a total of 415 career awards as of 2010. She held the all-time record for the most American Music Awards of any female solo artist and shared the record with Michael Jackson for the most AMAs ever won in a single year with eight wins in 1994. Houston won a record 11 Billboard Music Awards at its fourth ceremony in 1993. She also had the record for the most WMAs won in a single year, winning five awards at the 6th World Music Awards in 1994.

In May 2003, Houston placed at number three on VH1's list of "50 Greatest Women of the Video Era," behind Madonna and Janet Jackson. She was also ranked at number 116 on their list of the "200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons of All Time". In 2008, *Billboard* magazine released a list of the Hot 100 All-Time Top Artists to celebrate the US singles chart's 50th anniversary, ranking Houston at number nine. Similarly, she was ranked as one of the "Top 100 Greatest Artists of All Time" by VH1 in September 2010. In November 2010, *Billboard* released its "Top 50 R&B/Hip-Hop Artists of the Past 25 Years" list and ranked Houston at number three who not only went on to earn eight number-one singles on the R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart, but also landed five number ones on R&B/Hip-Hop Albums.

Houston's debut album is listed as one of the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time by *Rolling Stone* magazine and is on Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's Definitive 200 list. In 2004, *Billboard* picked the success of her first release on the charts as one of 110 Musical Milestones in its history. Houston's entrance into the music industry is considered one of the 25 musical milestones of the last 25 years, according to *USA Today* in 2007. It stated that she paved the way for Mariah Carey's chart-topping vocal gymnastics. In 1997, the Franklin School in East Orange, New Jersey was renamed to The Whitney E. Houston Academy School of Creative and Performing Arts. In 2001, Houston was the first artist to be given a BET Lifetime Achievement Award. Additionally, she was one of the world's best-selling music artists, having sold over 200 million albums and singles worldwide. She was ranked as the fourth best-selling female artist in the United States by the Recording Industry Association of America, with 55 million certified albums sold in the US, and held an Honorary Doctorate in Humanities from Grambling State University, Louisiana.

Discography

Studio albums

- 1985: *Whitney Houston*
- 1987: *Whitney*
- 1990: *I'm Your Baby Tonight*
- 1998: *My Love Is Your Love*
- 2002: *Just Whitney*
- 2009: *I Look to You*

Holiday albums

- 2003: *One Wish: The Holiday Album*

Filmography

Film roles

Year	Title	Role	Notes and awards
1992	<i>The Bodyguard</i>	Rachel Marron	Feature film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated – 1993 MTV Movie Award for Best Female Performance • Nominated – 1993 MTV Movie Award for Best Breakthrough Performance • Nominated – 1993 MTV Movie Award for Best On-Screen Duo with co-star Kevin Costner • Nominated – 1992 Golden Raspberry Award for Worst Actress^[60]
1995	<i>Waiting to Exhale</i>	Savannah Jackson	Feature film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated – 1996 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture
1996	<i>The Preacher's Wife</i>	Julia Biggs	Feature film <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Won – 1997 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture • Nominated – 1997 Blockbuster Entertainment Award for Favorite Female Actress(Comedy/Romance) • Nominated – 1997 Kids' Choice Award for Favorite Movie Actress
1997	<i>Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella</i>	Fairy Godmother	Made-for-television film, part of a revival of the <i>Wonderful World of Disney</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated – 1998 Emmy Award for Outstanding Variety, Music Or Comedy Special • Nominated – 1998 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Television Movie/Mini-Series
2004	<i>Nora's Hair Salon</i>	Herself	Direct-to-video
2012	<i>Sparkle</i>	Emma	Feature film

Television roles

Year	Title	Network	Role	Notes
1984	<i>Gimme a Break!</i>	NBC	Rita	"Katie's College" (Season 3, Episode 20, air date: March 15, 1984)
	<i>As the World Turns</i>	CBS	Herself	Houston appeared on the soap on August 1–2, 1984, with Jermaine Jackson singing two duets off a new album he was releasing at the time: "Take Good Care of My Heart" and "Nobody Loves Me Like You Do." They taped their appearance on July 25 at CBS Studios in New York City.
1985	<i>Silver Spoons</i>	NBC	Herself	"Head Over Heels" (Season 4, Episode 1, air date: September 15, 1985) She performed the edited version of "Saving All My Love for You", changing some of the words.
2003	<i>Boston Public</i>	Fox	Herself	"Chapter Sixty-Six" (Season 3, Episode 22, air date: May 12, 2003) She performed "Try It On My Own" from the 2002 studio album <i>Just Whitney</i> .

Commercials

Year	Company	Promoting	Country	Notes
1983	Dr Pepper/Seven Up	Canada Dry (soft drink beverage)	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston appeared in this commercial before debut as a professional singer and sang the praises of sugar-free Canada Dry Ginger Ale.
1986	Coca-Cola	Diet Coke (soft drink beverage)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston sang the Diet Coke theme song, "Just for the taste of it".
1988	Coca-Cola	Diet Coke (soft drink beverage)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston sang the other version of the Diet Coke advertising slogan at the time, "Just for the taste of it". Outside the United States, the second version of advertising was released, in which "Greatest Love of All" was used as background music. 1989 MTV Video of the Year winning "This Note's for You" by Neil Young, parodied parts of this advertising to criticize pop/rock stars who make commercial endorsements, most notably Michael Jackson for Pepsi and Houston for Diet Coke, using look-alikes for them.
1989	Sanyo	Electronics (the stereo, TV)	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston was featured on print advertisements and sang the theme song for TV commercial, "Takin' A Chance", produced by Keith Thomas. It was released as a CD single in Japan and included in Japanese edition of <i>I'm Your Baby Tonight</i>. Sanyo also sponsored Houston's 1990 Japan only Feels So Right Tour.
1994 1995	AT&T	Telephone services	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston sang its theme song, "True Voice".
1999	Nissin	Consumer credit business	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston appeared on both print advertisement and TV commercial for Nissin, a nonbank finance company that lends to consumers and small businesses in Japan, with then the company's slogan "Make it happen with Nissin"

Film/TV Productions

Year	Title	Director	Notes and awards
1997	<i>Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella</i>	Robert Iscove	Executive producer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominated – 1998 Emmy Award for Outstanding Variety, Music Or Comedy Special Nominated – 1998 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Television Movie/Mini-Series
2001	<i>The Princess Diaries</i>	Garry Marshall	Producer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Won – 2002 Young Artist Award for Best Family Feature Film – Comedy Nominated – 2002 Broadcast Film Critics Association Award for Best Family Film (Live Action) Nominated – 2002 Phoenix Film Critics Society Award for Best Family Film Nominated – 2002 Teen Choice Award for Film – Choice Movie, Comedy
2003	<i>The Cheetah Girls</i>	Oz Scott	Producer
2004	<i>The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement</i>	Garry Marshall	Producer
2006	<i>The Cheetah Girls 2: When in Spain</i>	Kenny Ortega	Co-executive producer
2012	<i>Sparkle</i>	Salim Akil	Producer

Tours

World tours

- *The Greatest Love World Tour* (1986)
- *Moment of Truth World Tour* (1987–88)
- *I'm Your Baby Tonight World Tour* (1991)
- *The Bodyguard World Tour* (1993–94)
- *My Love Is Your Love World Tour* (1999)
- *Nothing But Love World Tour* (2010)

Regional tours

- *Feels So Right Tour* (1990)
- *Pacific Rim Tour* (1997)
- *The European Tour* (1998)
- *Soul Divas Tour* (2004)

Televised concerts

- *Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute* (1988)
- *Welcome Home Heroes with Whitney Houston* (1991)
- *The Concert for a New South Africa* (1994)
- *Classic Whitney Live from Washington, D.C.* (1997)

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