

Nina Simone

Eunice Kathleen Waymon (February 21, 1933 – April 21, 2003), known professionally as **Nina Simone** (/ˈniːnəˈsiːmoʊn/), was an American singer, songwriter, musician, arranger, and civil rights activist. Her music spanned a broad range of musical styles including classical, jazz, blues, folk, R&B, gospel, and pop.

The sixth of eight children born to a poor family in Tryon, North Carolina, Simone initially aspired to be a concert pianist.^[1] With the help of a few supporters in her hometown, she enrolled in the Juilliard School of Music in New York City.^[2] She then applied for a scholarship to study at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she was denied admission despite a well-received audition,^[3] which she attributed to racial discrimination. In 2003, just days before her death, the Institute awarded her an honorary degree.^[4]

To make a living, Simone started playing piano at a nightclub in Atlantic City. She changed her name to "Nina Simone" to disguise herself from family members, having chosen to play "the devil's music"^[3] or so-called "cocktail piano". She was told in the nightclub that she would have to sing to her own accompaniment, which effectively launched her career as a jazz vocalist.^[5] She went on to record more than 40 albums between 1958 and 1974, making her debut with the *Little Girl Blue*. She had a hit single in the United States in 1958 with "I Loves You, Porgy".^[1] Her musical style fused gospel and pop with classical music, in particular Johann Sebastian Bach,^[6] and accompanied expressive, jazz-like singing in her contralto voice.^{[7][8]}

Contents

Biography

- 1933–1954: Early life
- 1954–1959: Early success
- 1959–1964: Becoming popular
- 1964–1974: Civil rights era
- 1974–1993: Later life
- 1993–2003: Final years, illness and death

Activism

- Influence
- Beyond the civil rights movement

Artistry

- Simone standards
- Performance style

Critical reputation

Nina Simone



Simone in 1965

Background information

Birth name	Eunice Kathleen Waymon
Born	February 21, 1933 <div>Tryon, North Carolina, U.S.</div>
Died	April 21, 2003 (aged 70) <div>Carry-le-Rouet, France</div>
Genres	R&B · jazz · blues · folk · soul · classical · gospel
Occupation(s)	Singer · songwriter · musician · arranger · composer · activist
Years active	1954–2003
Labels	Bethlehem · Colpix · Philips · RCA · Victor · CTI · Legacy
Website	ninasimone.com (http://www.ninasimone.com)

Personality

Awards and recognition

Legacy and influence

Music

Film

Drama

Books

Honors

Discography

See also

References

Sources

External links

Biography

1933–1954: Early life

Simone was born Eunice Kathleen Waymon on February 21, 1933, in Tryon, North Carolina. The sixth of eight children in a poor family, she began playing piano at the age of three or four; the first song she learned was "God Be With You, Till We Meet Again". Demonstrating a talent with the instrument, she performed at her local church. Her concert debut, a classical recital, was given when she was 12. Simone later said that during this performance, her parents, who had taken seats in the front row, were forced to move to the back of the hall to make way for white people.^[9] She said that she refused to play until her parents were moved back to the front,^{[10][11]} and that the incident contributed to her later involvement in the civil rights movement.^[12] Simone's mother, Mary Kate Waymon (née Irvin, November 20, 1901 – April 30, 2001),^[13] was a Methodist minister and a housemaid. Her father, Rev. John Devan Waymon (June 24, 1898 – October 23, 1972),^[14] was a handyman who at one time owned a dry-cleaning business, but also suffered bouts of ill health. Simone's music teacher helped establish a special fund to pay for her education.^[15] Subsequently, a local fund was set up to assist her continued education. With the help of this scholarship money, she was able to attend Allen High School for Girls in Asheville, North Carolina.

After her graduation, Simone spent the summer of 1950 at the Juilliard School as a student of Carl Friedberg,^[16] preparing for an audition at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her application, however, was denied. Only 3 of 72 applicants were accepted that year,^[17] but as her family had relocated to Philadelphia in the expectation of her entry to Curtis, the blow to her aspirations was particularly heavy. For the rest of her life, she suspected that her application had been denied because of racial prejudice. Discouraged, she took private piano lessons with Vladimir Sokoloff, a professor at Curtis, but never could re-apply due to the fact that at the time Curtis institute did not accept students over 21. She took a job as a photographer's assistant, but also found work as an accompanist at Arlene Smith's vocal studio and taught piano from her home in Philadelphia.^[16]

1954–1959: Early success

In order to fund her private lessons, Simone performed at the Midtown Bar & Grill on Pacific Avenue in Atlantic City, whose owner insisted that she sing as well as play the piano, which increased her income to \$90 a week. In 1954, she adopted the stage name "Nina Simone". "Nina", derived from *niña*, was a nickname given to her by a boyfriend named Chico,^[16] and "Simone" was taken from the French actress Simone Signoret, whom she had seen in the 1952 movie *Casque d'Or*.^[18] Knowing her mother would not approve of playing the "Devil's Music", she used her new stage name to remain undetected. Simone's mixture of jazz, blues, and classical music in her performances at the bar earned her a small but loyal fan base.^[19]

In 1958, she befriended and married Don Ross, a beatnik who worked as a fairground barker, but quickly regretted their marriage.^[20] Playing in small clubs in the same year, she recorded George Gershwin's "I Loves You, Porgy" (from Porgy and Bess), which she learned from a Billie Holiday album and performed as a favor to a friend. It became her only Billboard top 20 success in the United States, and her debut album Little Girl Blue followed in February 1959 on Bethlehem Records.^{[21][22][23]} Simone lost more than \$1 million in royalties (notably for the 1980s re-release of her version of the jazz standard "My Baby Just Cares for Me") and never benefited financially from the album's sales because she had sold her rights outright for \$3,000.^[24]

1959–1964: Becoming popular

After the success of Little Girl Blue, Simone signed a contract with Colpix Records and recorded a multitude of studio and live albums. Colpix relinquished all creative control to her, including the choice of material that would be recorded, in exchange for her signing the contract with them. After the release of her live album Nina Simone at Town Hall, Simone became a favorite performer in Greenwich Village.^[25] By this time, Simone performed pop music only to make money to continue her classical music studies, and was indifferent about having a recording contract. She kept this attitude toward the record industry for most of her career.^[26]

Simone married a New York police detective, Andrew Stroud, in 1961. He later became her manager and the father of her daughter Lisa, but he abused Simone psychologically and physically.^{[3][27]}

1964–1974: Civil rights era

In 1964, Simone changed record distributors from Colpix, an American company, to the Dutch Philips Records, which meant a change in the content of her recordings. She had always included songs in her repertoire that drew on her African-American heritage, such as "Brown Baby" by Oscar Brown and "Zungo" by Michael Olatunji on her album Nina at the Village Gate in 1962. On her debut album for Philips, Nina Simone in Concert (1964), for the first time she addressed racial inequality in the United States in the song "Mississippi Goddam". This was her response to the June 12, 1963, murder of Medgar Evers and the September 15, 1963, bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four young black girls and partially blinded a fifth. She said that the song was "like throwing ten bullets back at them", becoming one of many other protest songs written by Simone. The song was released as a single, and it was boycotted in some southern states.^{[28][29]} Promotional copies were smashed by a Carolina radio station and returned to Philips.^[30] She later recalled how "Mississippi Goddam" was her "first civil rights song" and that the song came to her "in a rush of fury, hatred and determination". The song challenged the belief that race relations could change gradually and called for more immediate developments: "me and my people are just about due". It was a key moment in her political radicalization.^[31] "Old Jim Crow", on the same album, addressed the Jim Crow laws. After "Mississippi Goddam", a civil rights message was the norm in Simone's recordings and became part of her concerts. As her political activism rose, the rate of release of her music slowed.



Simone at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in Amsterdam, Netherlands in March 1969

Simone performed and spoke at civil rights meetings, such as at the Selma to Montgomery marches.^[32] Like Malcolm X, her neighbor in Mount Vernon, New York, she supported black nationalism and advocated violent revolution rather than Martin Luther King's non-violent approach.^[33] She hoped that African Americans could use armed combat to form a separate state, though she wrote in her autobiography that she and her family regarded all races as equal.

In 1967, Simone moved from Philips to RCA Victor. She sang "Backlash Blues" written by her friend, Harlem Renaissance leader Langston Hughes, on her first RCA album, Nina Simone Sings the Blues (1967). On Silk & Soul (1967), she recorded Billy Taylor's "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free" and "Turning Point". The album 'Nuff Said! (1968) contained live



Nina Simone in 1969

recordings from the Westbury Music Fair of April 7, 1968, three days after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. She dedicated the performance to him and sang "Why? (The King of Love Is Dead)", a song written by her bass player, Gene Taylor.^[34] In 1969, she performed at the Harlem Cultural Festival in Harlem's Mount Morris Park.

Simone and Weldon Irvine turned the unfinished play To Be Young, Gifted and Black by Lorraine Hansberry into a civil rights song of the same name. She credited her friend Hansberry with cultivating her social and political consciousness. She performed the song live on the album Black Gold (1970). A studio recording was released as a single, and renditions of the song have been recorded by Aretha Franklin (on her 1972 album Young, Gifted and Black) and Donny Hathaway.^[28] When reflecting on this period, she wrote in her autobiography, "I felt more alive then than I feel now because I was needed, and I could sing something to help my people".^[35]

1974–1993: Later life

In an interview for Jet magazine, Simone stated that her controversial song "Mississippi Goddam" harmed her career. She claimed that the music industry punished her by boycotting her records.^[36] Hurt and disappointed, Simone left the US in September 1970, flying to Barbados and expected Stroud to communicate with her when she had to perform again. However, Stroud interpreted Simone's sudden disappearance, and the fact that she had left behind her wedding ring, as an indication of her desire for a divorce, and, as her manager, Stroud was in charge of Simone's income.

When Simone returned to the United States, she learned that a warrant had been issued for her arrest for unpaid taxes (unpaid as a protest against her country's involvement with the Vietnam War), and returned to Barbados to evade the authorities and prosecution.^[37] Simone stayed in Barbados for quite some time, and had a lengthy affair with the Prime Minister, Errol Barrow.^{[38][39]} A close friend, singer Miriam Makeba, then persuaded her to go to Liberia. When Simone relocated, she abandoned her daughter Lisa in Mount Vernon.^[40] Lisa eventually reunited with Simone in Liberia, but, according to Lisa, her mother was physically and mentally abusive.^[41] The abuse was so unbearable that Lisa became suicidal and she moved back to New York to live with her father Andrew Stroud.^{[40][41]} Simone recorded her last album for RCA, It Is Finished, in 1974, and did not make another record until 1978, when she was persuaded to go into the recording studio by CTI Records owner Creed Taylor. The result was the album Baltimore, which, while not a commercial success, was fairly well-received critically and marked a quiet artistic renaissance in Simone's recording output.^[42] Her choice of material retained its eclecticism, ranging from spiritual songs to Hall & Oates' "Rich Girl". Four years later, Simone recorded Fodder on My Wings on a French label.



Simone at a concert in Morlaix, France, May 1982

During the 1980s, Simone performed regularly at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London, where she recorded the album Live at Ronnie Scott's in 1984. Although her early on-stage style could be somewhat haughty and aloof, in later years, Simone particularly seemed to enjoy engaging with her audiences sometimes, by recounting humorous anecdotes related to her career and music and by soliciting requests. In 1987, the original 1958 recording of "My Baby Just Cares for Me" was used in a commercial for Chanel No. 5 perfume in Britain. This led to a re-release of the recording, which stormed to number 4 on the UK's NME singles chart, giving her a brief surge in popularity in the UK.

Later, Simone moved to Europe, first living in Nyon, Switzerland, and in 1988 moved to Nijmegen and later Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Simone published her autobiography, I Put a Spell on You, in 1992. She continued to tour through the 1990s, but rarely traveled without an entourage. During the last decade of her life, Simone had sold more than one million records, making

her a global catalog best-seller.

1993–2003: Final years, illness and death

In 1993, she settled near Aix-en-Provence in Southern France.^[43] In the same year, her final album, *A Single Woman*, was released. During a 1998 performance in Newark, she announced, "If you're going to come see me again, you've got to come to France, because I am not coming back."^[44] She suffered from breast cancer for several years before she died in her sleep at her home in Carry-le-Rouet, Bouches-du-Rhône, on April 21, 2003. Her funeral service was attended by singers Miriam Makeba and Patti LaBelle, poet Sonia Sanchez, actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, and hundreds of others. Simone's ashes were scattered in several African countries. She is survived by her daughter, Lisa Celeste Stroud, an actress and singer, who took the stage name Simone, and who has appeared on Broadway in Aida.^[45]

Activism

Influence

Simone's consciousness on the racial and social discourse was prompted by her friendship with black playwright Lorraine Hansberry.^[46] The influence of Hansberry planted the seed for the provocative social commentary that became an expectation in Simone's repertoire. One of Nina's more hopeful activism anthems, "To Be Young, Gifted and Black" was written with collaborator Weldon Irvine in the years following the playwright's passing, acquiring the title of one of Hansberry's unpublished plays.

Beyond the civil rights movement

Simone's social commentary was not limited to the civil rights movement; the song "Four Women" exposed the eurocentric appearance standards imposed on black women in America,^[47] as it explored the internalized dilemma of beauty that is experienced between four black women with skin tones ranging from light to dark. She explains in her autobiography *I Put a Spell on You* (p. 117) that the purpose of the song was to inspire black women to define beauty and identity for themselves without the influence of societal impositions.

Artistry

Simone standards

Throughout her career, Simone assembled a collection of songs that would later become standards in her repertoire. Some were songs that she wrote herself, while others were new arrangements of other standards, and others had been written especially for the singer. Her first hit song in America was her rendition of George Gershwin's "I Loves You, Porgy" (1958). It peaked at number 18 on the *Billboard* magazine Hot 100 chart.^[48]

During that same period Simone recorded "My Baby Just Cares for Me", which would become her biggest success years later, in 1987, after it was featured in a 1986 Chanel No. 5 perfume commercial.^[49] A music video was also created by Aardman Studios.^[50] Well-known songs from her Philips albums include "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" on *Broadway-Blues-Ballads* (1964), "I Put a Spell on You", "Ne me quitte pas" (a rendition of a Jacques Brel song) and "Feeling Good" on *I Put a Spell On You* (1965), "Lilac Wine" and "Wild Is the Wind" on *Wild is the Wind* (1966).^[51]

"Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood", "Feeling Good", and "Sinner Man" (*Pastel Blues*, 1965) have remained popular in terms of cover versions (most notably a version of the former song by The Animals), sample usage, and its use on soundtracks for various movies, TV-series, and video games. "Sinner Man" has been featured in the TV series *Scrubs*, *Person of Interest*, *The Blacklist*, *Sherlock*, *The Umbrella Academy*, *Vinyl*, and *Lucifer*, as well as in movies such as *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Miami Vice*, and *Inland Empire*, and sampled by artists such as Talib Kweli and Timbaland. The song "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" was sampled by Devo Springsteen on "Misunderstood" from Common's 2007 album *Finding Forever*, and by little-known producers Rodnae and Mousa for the song "Don't Get It" on Lil Wayne's 2008 album *Tha Carter III*. "See-Line Woman" was sampled by Kanye West for "Bad News" on his album *808s & Heartbreak*. The 1965 rendition of "Strange Fruit", originally recorded by Billie Holiday, was sampled by Kanye West for "Blood on the Leaves" on his album *Yeezus*.

Simone's years at RCA-Victor spawned a number of singles and album tracks that were popular, particularly in Europe. In 1968, it was "Ain't Got No, I Got Life", a medley from the musical *Hair* from the album *'Nuff Said!* (1968) that became a surprise hit for Simone, reaching number 4 on the UK Singles Chart and introducing her to a younger audience.^[52] In 2006, it returned to the UK Top 30 in a remixed version by Groovefinder.

The following single, a rendition of the Bee Gees' "To Love Somebody", also reached the UK Top 10 in 1969. "The House of the Rising Sun" was featured on *Nina Simone Sings the Blues* in 1967, but Simone had recorded the song in 1961 and it was featured on *Nina at the Village Gate* (1962).^{[53][54]}

Performance style

Simone's bearing and stage presence earned her the title "the High Priestess of Soul".^[55] She was a piano player, singer and performer, "separately, and simultaneously."^[27] As a composer and arranger, Simone moved from gospel to blues, jazz, and folk, and to numbers with European classical styling. Besides using Bach-style counterpoint, she called upon the particular virtuosity of the 19th-century Romantic piano repertoire—Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, and others. Onstage, she incorporated monologues and dialogues with the audience into the program, and often used silence as a musical element.^[56] Throughout most of her life and recording career she was accompanied by percussionist Leopoldo Fleming and guitarist and musical director Al Schackman.^[57]

Critical reputation

Simone is regarded as one of the most influential recording artists of the 20th century.^[58] According to Rickey Vincent, she was a pioneering musician whose career was characterized by "fits of outrage and improvisational genius". Pointing to her composition of "Mississippi Goddam", Vincent said Simone broke the mold, having the courage as "an established black musical entertainer to break from the norms of the industry and produce direct social commentary in her music during the early 1960s".^[59]

In naming Simone the 29th-greatest singer of all time, *Rolling Stone* wrote that "her honey-coated, slightly adenoidal cry was one of the most affecting voices of the civil rights movement", while making note of her ability to "belt barroom blues, croon cabaret and explore jazz — sometimes all on a single record."^[60] In the opinion of AllMusic's Mark Deming, she was "one of the most gifted vocalists of her generation, and also one of the most eclectic".^[61] Creed Taylor, who annotated the liner notes for Simone's 1978 *Baltimore* album, said the singer possessed a "magnificent intensity" that "turns everything—even the most simple, mundane phrase or lyric—into a radiant, poetic message".^[62] Jim Fusilli, music critic for *The Wall Street Journal*, writes that Simone's music is still relevant today: "it didn't adhere to ephemeral trends, it isn't a relic of a bygone era; her vocal delivery and technical skills as a pianist still dazzle; and her emotional performances have a visceral impact."^[63]

"She is loved or feared, adored or disliked", Maya Angelou wrote in 1970, "but few who have met her music or glimpsed her soul react with moderation".^[64] Robert Christgau, reviewing her album *Baltimore*, wrote that her "penchant for the mundane renders her intensity as bogus as her mannered melismas and pronunciation (move over, Inspector Clouseau) and the rote flattering of her

vocal improvisations."^[62] Regarding her piano playing, he dismissed Simone as a "middlebrow keyboard tickler ... whose histrionic rolls insert unconvincing emotion into a song".^[65] He later attributed his generally negative appraisal to Simone's consistent seriousness of manner, depressive tendencies, and classical background.^[66]

Personality

Known for her temper and frequent outbursts,^[67] in 1985, Simone fired a gun at a record company executive, whom she accused of stealing royalties. Simone said she "tried to kill him" but "missed".^[68] Simone was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in the late 1980s.^[69] In 1995, she shot and wounded her neighbor's son with an air gun after the boy's laughter disturbed her concentration.^[70] According to a biographer, Simone took medication for a condition from the mid-1960s onward, although this was supposedly only known to a small group of intimates.^[71] It was kept out of public view for many years, until 2004 when a biography, *Break Down and Let It All Out* written by Sylvia Hampton and David Nathan, was published posthumously. Singer-songwriter Janis Ian, a one-time friend of Simone's, related in her own autobiography, *Society's Child: My Autobiography*, two instances to illustrate Simone's volatility: one incident in which she forced a shoe store cashier at gunpoint to take back a pair of sandals she'd already worn; and another in which Simone demanded a royalty payment from Ian herself as an exchange for having recorded one of Ian's songs, and then ripped a pay telephone out of its wall when she was refused.^[72]

Awards and recognition

Simone was the recipient of a Grammy Hall of Fame Award in 2000 for her interpretation of "I Loves You, Porgy." On Human Kindness Day 1974 in Washington, D.C., more than 10,000 people paid tribute to Simone.^{[73][74]} Simone received two honorary degrees in music and humanities, from Amherst College and Malcolm X College.^{[75][76]} She preferred to be called "Dr. Nina Simone" after these honors were bestowed upon her.^[77] She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018.^[78]

Two days before her death, Simone learned she would be awarded an honorary degree by the Curtis Institute of Music, the music school that had refused to admit her as a student at the beginning of her career.^[4]

Simone has received four career Grammy Award nominations,^[79] two during her lifetime and two posthumously. In 1968, she received her first nomination for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance for the track "(You'll) Go to Hell" from her thirteenth album *Silk & Soul* (1967). The award went to "Respect" by Aretha Franklin.

Simone garnered a second nomination in the category in 1971, for her *Black Gold* album, when she again lost to Franklin for "Don't Play That Song (You Lied)". Ironically, Franklin would again win for her cover of Simone's *Young, Gifted and Black* two years later in the same category which Simone's *Black Gold* album was nominated and features Simone's original version of "Young, Gifted and Black". In 2016, Simone posthumously received a nomination for Best Music Film for the Netflix documentary, *What Happened, Miss Simone?* and in 2018 she received a nomination for Best Rap Song as a songwriter for Jay Z's "The Story of O.J." from his *4:44* album which contained a sample of "Four Women" by Simone.

In 2018, Simone was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.^[80] She was inducted by fellow R&B artist Mary J. Blige.^[81]

In 2019, "Mississippi Goddam" was selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in the National Recording Registry for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".^[82]

Legacy and influence

Music

Musicians who have cited Simone as important for their own musical upbringing include Elton John (who named one of his pianos after her), Madonna, Aretha Franklin, Adele, David Bowie, Boy George, Emeli Sandé, Antony and the Johnsons, Dianne Reeves, Sade, Beyoncé, Janis Joplin, Nick Cave, Van Morrison, Christina Aguilera, Elkie Brooks, Talib Kweli, Mos Def, Kanye West, Lena Horne, Bono, John Legend, Elizabeth Fraser, Cat Stevens, Anna Calvi, Cat Power, Lykke Li, Peter Gabriel, Justin Hayward, Maynard James Keenan, Cedric Bixler-Zavala, Mary J. Blige, Fantasia Barrino, Michael Gira, Angela McCluskey, Lauryn Hill, Patrice Babatunde, Alicia Keys, Alex Turner, Lana Del Rey, Hozier, Matt Bellamy, Ian MacKaye, Kerry Brothers, Jr., Krucial, Amanda Palmer, Steve Adey and Jeff Buckley.^{[28][83][84][85][86][87]} John Lennon cited Simone's version of "I Put a Spell on You" as a source of inspiration for the Beatles' song "Michelle".^[87] American singer Meshell Ndegeocello released her own tribute album *Pour une Âme Souveraine: A Dedication to Nina Simone* in 2012.

Simone's music has been featured in soundtracks of various motion pictures and video games, including but not limited to, *La Femme Nikita* (1990), *Point of No Return* (1993), *Shallow Grave* (1994), *The Big Lebowski* (1998), *Notting Hill* (1999), *Any Given Sunday* (1999), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), *Disappearing Acts* (2000), *Six Feet Under* (2001), *The Dancer Upstairs* (2002), *Before Sunset* (2004), *Cellular* (2004), *Inland Empire* (2006), *Miami Vice* (2006), *Sex and the City* (2008), *The World Unseen* (2008), *Revolutionary Road* (2008), *Home* (2008), *Watchmen* (2009), *The Saboteur* (2009), *Repo Men* (2010), and *Beyond the Lights* (2014). Frequently her music is used in remixes, commercials, and TV series including "Feeling Good", which featured prominently in the Season Four Promo of *Six Feet Under* (2004). Simone's "Take Care of Business" is the closing theme of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (2015), Simone's cover of Janis Ian's "Stars" is played during the final moments of the season 3 finale of *BoJack Horseman* (2016), and "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free" and "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" were included in the film *Acrimony* (2018).

Film

The documentary *Nina Simone: La légende (The Legend)* was made in the 1990s by French filmmakers and based on her autobiography *I Put a Spell on You*. It features live footage from different periods of her career, interviews with family, various interviews with Simone then living in the Netherlands, and while on a trip to her birthplace. A portion of footage from *The Legend* was taken from an earlier 26-minute biographical documentary by Peter Rodis, released in 1969 and entitled simply, *Nina*. Her filmed 1976 performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival is available on video courtesy of Eagle Rock Entertainment and is screened annually in New York City at an event called "The Rise and Fall of Nina Simone: Montreux, 1976" which is curated by Tom Blunt.^[88]

Footage of Simone singing "Mississippi Goddam" for 40,000 marchers at the end of the Selma to Montgomery marches can be seen in the 1970 documentary *King: A Filmed Record... Montgomery to Memphis* and the 2015 Liz Garbus documentary, *What Happened, Miss Simone?*^[3]

Plans for a Simone biographical film were released at the end of 2005, to be based on Simone's autobiography *I Put a Spell on You* (1992) and to focus on her relationship in later life with her assistant, Clifton Henderson, who died in 2006; Simone's daughter, Simone Kelly, has since refuted the existence of a romantic relationship between Simone and Henderson on account of his homosexuality.^[89] Cynthia Mort, screenwriter of *Will & Grace* and *Roseanne*, has written the screenplay and directed the 2016 film, *Nina*, which controversially stars Zoe Saldana in the title role.^{[90][91][92]}

In 2015, two documentary features about Simone's life and music were released. The first, directed by Liz Garbus, *What Happened, Miss Simone?* was produced in cooperation with Simone's estate and her daughter, who also served as the film's executive producer. The film was produced as a counterpoint to the unauthorized Cynthia Mort film, and featured previously unreleased archival footage. It premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2015 and was distributed by Netflix on June 26, 2015.^[93] It was nominated on January 14, 2016, for a 2016 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.^[94]

The Amazing Nina Simone is an independent film written and directed by documentary filmmaker [Jeff L. Lieberman](#) and was released in more than 100 cinemas in 2015. The director initially consulted with Simone's daughter before going the independent route and instead worked closely with Simone's siblings, predominantly Sam Waymon.^{[95][96]} The film debuted in cinemas in October 2015, and has since played more than 100 theatres in 10 countries.^[97]

Drama

She is the subject of *Nina: A Story About Me and Nina Simone*, a one-woman show first performed in 2016 at the [Unity Theatre, Liverpool](#) — a "deeply personal and often searing show inspired by the singer and activist Nina Simone"^[98] — and which in July 2017 ran at the [Young Vic](#), before being scheduled to move to Edinburgh's [Traverse Theatre](#).^[99]

Books

As well as her 1992 autobiography *I Put a Spell on You* (1992), written with Stephen Cleary, Simone has been the subject of several books. They include *Nina Simone: Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood* (2002) by [Richard Williams](#); *Nina Simone: Break Down and Let It All Out* (2004) by Sylvia Hampton and [David Nathan](#); *Princess Noire* (2010) by Nadine Cohodas; *Nina Simone* (2004) by Kerry Acker; *Nina Simone, Black is the Color* (2005) by Andy Stroud; and *What Happened, Miss Simone?* (2016) by [Alan Light](#).

Simone also inspired a book of poetry, *me and Nina* (https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01FPZ7WLY/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1) by Monica Hand.

Honors

In 2002, the city of [Nijmegen](#), Netherlands, named a street after her, as "Nina Simone Street": she had lived in Nijmegen between 1988 and 1990. On August 29, 2005, the city of Nijmegen, the [De Vereeniging](#) concert hall, and more than 50 artists (among whom were [Frank Boeijen](#), [Rood Adeo](#), and Fay Claassen)^[100] honored Simone with the tribute concert *Greetings from Nijmegen*.

Simone was inducted into the [North Carolina Music Hall of Fame](#) in 2009.^[101]

In 2010, a statue in her honor was erected on Trade Street in her native [Tryon](#), North Carolina.^[102]

The promotion from the French Institute of Political Studies of Lille ([Sciences Po Lille](#)), due to obtain their master's degree in 2021, named themselves in her honor. The decision was made that this promotion was henceforth to be known as 'la promotion Nina Simone' after a vote in 2017.^[103]

Simone was inducted into the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) in 2018.

Discography

See also

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External links

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