

# The Legend

# Lives On



*Whitney Houston*

*1963—2012*

*Photo courtesy Resilient Media Entertainment via Creative Commons*

# *Whitney Houston's undeniable talent, beauty and good works made her America's sweetheart*

**By Vanessa Gyamfi**

Standing on the stage shy and nervous with clenched hands, wearing a purple off-the-shoulder dress was a 20-year-old Whitney Houston making her first ever national television debut on "The Merv Griffin Show." She sang her version of the song "Home" from the movie, "The Wiz." Her voice and performance were so beautiful and refreshing. This was the day the world witnessed a star in the making.

The Queen of R&B was born August 9, 1963, in Newark, N. J. She was blessed to be born into a musical family, with her mother being Cissy Houston a gospel star and her cousin being singer Dionne Warwick. Houston was also the legendary Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin's goddaughter. At a young age, Houston was singing in her local church choir.

By the time she turned 15 she was singing background vocals with her mother on Chaka Khan's 1978 song, "I'm Every Woman." She later began working as a background vocalist for a New York funk band called Material. The purity and astonishing quality of her voice attracted the attention of major record labels. Not only could Houston sing, she was also a very beautiful woman, her smooth brown skin, skinny frame and gorgeous white smile caught the eye of several magazines. She began modeling for fashion magazines like Seventeen.

In 1983, Houston was signed to Arista records by one of the industry's most notable music executives, Clive Davis. Her debut album titled "Whitney Houston" was released February 14, 1985. The album featured three number one singles in the United States: "Greatest Love of All," "Saving All My Love for You" and "How Will I Know."

In 1987, she released her second album titled "Whitney." This album landed her four more Number One singles and a Grammy for the song "I Wanna Dance with Somebody." She became the only artist to have seven consecutive Number One Billboard Hot 100 hits. She also became the first female artist to enter the Billboard 200 album chart at Number One. Overall, Houston sold 170 million albums and singles worldwide. And became the only artist with seven consecutive multi-platinum albums. She won six Grammy Awards and was nominated 26 times.

Five years later, she appeared in her first movie, "The Bodyguard," which film featured her remake of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You." This song was huge hit all over the world, it stayed at number one for 14 weeks straight. She furthered her acting career by starring in films such as Waiting to Exhale and The Preacher's Wife.

Houston was not only a talented artist, she was also a humanitarian she established the Whitney Houston Foundation for Children, a nonprofit organization that funds projects to help needy children all over the world. Her undeniable talent, beauty, voice, charity work and good girl image made her America's sweetheart. That's why it came as surprise to people when she married the overly provocative and bad boy of R&B, Bobby Brown, in 1992. Houston received a lot of criticism, especially from family members on her decision. But she loved Brown and refused to listen to her family members and the naysayers. Despite her small frame and often shy demeanor; Houston was a feisty woman and could not be controlled. On March 4, 1993, Houston gave birth to a baby girl named Bobbi Kristina. She was her world there was nothing she wouldn't do for her daughter. (Bobbi Kristina's life was tragically cut short on January 31, 2015 at the age of 22.)

Houston's image and career took a serious downfall when she became heavily involved with drugs, alongside her husband. The relationship became toxic and abusive; Brown was incarcerated for a period of time. Despite the alleged abuse she remained married to Brown and continued to use drugs. People all over noticed a change in her appearance and demeanor, she began to lash out and looked unkempt. Brown was heavily criticized for the downfall of America's sweetheart. People blamed him for Houston's drug abuse even though it was alleged she did drugs before she met Brown. In 2007, she divorced her husband of 15 years and began to take steps to get her life back in order and stop using drugs.

After years of struggling with her personal life, she debuted a new album in 2009, titled "I Look to You." This album was about her trials and how she overcame it all. Things were beginning to look up for Houston, she worked and starred in a new musical film called "Sparkle" with R&B singer Jordin Sparks, the film was based on the girl group The Supremes. But soon tragedy struck on February 11, 2012, when Houston was found dead in a bathtub at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, in Los Angeles. She was 48. Her death was caused by accidental drowning, but effects of heart disease and cocaine found in her system were factors in her death.

Even though her life was cut short, she was able to make a global impact in the world of music. Houston influenced so many artists such as Mariah Carey, Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, Ashanti and Jennifer Hudson.

The impact she made in the world will never be forgotten. She is a legend and will always be remembered, her legacy will forever live on.