

Pop's Blogz

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OUTSTANDING WOMEN IN MUSIC - PT 1

Joni Mitchell



[Joni Mitchell - Help Me](#)

Roberta Joan Anderson, or, as she is famously known, Joni Mitchell, is possibly the most influential female recording artist of the late 20th century. A self-described “painter derailed by circumstance,” the Canadian-born musician, singer songwriter has amassed a staggering body of work that spans five decades. Known for her open-tuned guitar and piano driven compositions, Joni’s distinctive, wide-ranging vocals and brilliant, poetic lyrics propelled her career and helped define the generation and era that moved the world through the 60’s and early 70’s. She started out doing small nightclubs in Saskatchewan, soon thereafter moving to Toronto where she played mostly dives and busked the streets. Joni moved to the US in 1965, and her early original work drew enough interest to get her signed to a record label. Her first release was in 1968, but it was the 1971 recording, “Blue”, with its arresting and understated beauty, that marked the beginning of her ascension to greatness. Throughout her career, Mitchell remained musically adventurous, and explored many genres, most notably jazz, which heightened the complexity of her songs both rhythmically and harmonically. She designed all her album artwork, and is credited as sole producer on much of her music.

Roberta Flack



[Roberta Flack - The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face](#)

Born in North Carolina and raised in Arlington, Virginia, Roberta Flack started playing the piano at age 9. By age 15, she was awarded a full music scholarship to Howard University based on her classical piano prowess, and became one of the youngest students ever to enroll there. Coming from a musical family (her mother, Irene, was a church organist), Roberta soon changed her major from piano to voice and went on to become assistant conductor of the university choir and was honored for her “outstanding work in promoting music education.” In her early 20’s, Flack worked as a school teacher and private piano tutor in Washington, D.C. while working local area clubs on evenings and weekends. She was discovered by Les McCann while singing in a Washington nightclub, accompanying herself on mostly jazz and pop numbers. Roberta’s voice is pure and distinctive and her smooth R&B sound was a mainstay on pop radio during the 70’s, during which time she had four #1 hits and won multiple Grammy awards. Notably, she recorded several hit duets with the late Donny Hathaway, including the Grammy-winning “Where Is The Love” and “The Closer I Get To You”. Roberta Flack holds a special in music history as royalty in the Jazz, Soul and R&B genres.

Aretha Franklin



[Aretha Franklin - Respect](#)

By the end of the 60's, Aretha Franklin was acclaimed as the "Queen of Soul". To date, she has recorded over 80 hit singles and has won 18 Grammy Awards. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, she began her career as a child singing gospel music in Detroit, Michigan, in her father's church throughout the 50's, and went on to become the first female performer to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Aretha's signature hits include "Respect", "A Natural Woman" and "Think", although her first song to chart on Billboard's top 100 was "Won't Be Long" from her debut album for Columbia records. Through her career, she has been associated with Columbia, Atlantic, Arista, RCA and J.V.B. records, all of whom enjoyed successes with her songs. In Rolling Stone Magazine's all-time lists, she appears at number 9 in Greatest Artists of All Time, and at number 1 in the Greatest Singers of All Time. There aren't enough superlatives to aptly describe Aretha Franklin. Her piano playing was very much underrated, and her voice will endure as a force beyond compare in Gospel, Soul and R&B music.

Peggy Lee



[Peggy Lee - Fever](#)

Peggy Lee was born Norma Delores Egstrom in 1920 in North Dakota, the seventh of eight children. By her early teens, she was singing professionally on local radio and at 17, left home to move to Los Angeles. Early in her career, she opted to “compete with the noisy crowd with subtlety rather than volume” and developed her trademark vocal sound. Lee had remarkable talent, and was an accomplished singer, songwriter, actress and composer. Her impact on the Big Band and Swing eras is unquestioned, and her smoky, sultry vocal quality set her apart from the singers at the time. She shot to fame in 1942, when her hit song, “Why Don’t You Do Right?” sold a million copies. Her most famous song is the immortal “Fever”. “Miss Peggy Lee”, as she was affectionately called, won 3 Grammy Awards, A Lifetime Achievement Award, and was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1999. She not only wrote music and sang for Disney’s “Lady And The Tramp”, but performed four parts in the movie. Frank Sinatra said of her, “Her regal presence is pure elegance and charm.”

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