

# Powerhouse Singer Triumphed Over Abuse

BY JOHN JURGENSEN

Tina Turner, the performer whose powerhouse singing and dancing took her from a barnstorming R&B music revue to the peak of pop stardom, has died at age 83.

She was an eight-time Grammy winner with a textured voice that transmitted raw emotion in songs like “River Deep—Mountain High” and “What’s Love Got to Do

With It.” She whipped up audiences with a stage presence that was both frenzied and sensual, and an influence on performers from Mick Jagger to Beyoncé. And she put her fierce magnetism to work in movies such as “Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome,” in which she played a post-apocalyptic villain.

Turner died Wednesday at her home in Küsnacht, Switzerland, near Zürich, after a long illness, said her spokesman, Bernard Doherty. “She enchanted millions of fans around the world and inspired the stars of tomorrow,” her representatives wrote on her Instagram page Wednesday. “Today we say goodbye to a dear friend who leaves us all her greatest work: her music.”

Turner’s career unfolded in two chapters—with her first husband, Ike Turner, and without. The volatile R&B mastermind added her to his act when she was 17 years old, inventing the stage name Tina Turner for his star singer. She would later detail how he abused her physically and emotionally while working her and a revolving lineup of backup dancers and



Flamboyant pop and R&B vocalist Tina Turner, shown in 1985, was an eight-time Grammy winner.

musicians nonstop.

From 1960 through the mid-1970s, the Ike & Tina Turner Revue was one of live music’s most electrifying groups yet didn’t generate consistent hit records. Merging into the rock ‘n’ roll world helped. They reinterpreted songs such as Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Proud Mary”; their turbo rendition of that number earned a Grammy Award and the duo’s highest position—No. 4—on the Billboard Top 40 chart.

After Turner left her husband in 1976, she struggled to work her way out of debt and establish herself as a solo act.

Her global success in the 1980s, triggered by her smash 1984 album “Private Dancer,” was later framed as a triumph of liberation from her ex-husband. Ike Turner’s domineering behavior, bursts of violence and cocaine abuse were depicted in a 1986 autobiography that was adapted into the 1993 biopic “What’s Love Got to Do With It,” starring Angela Bassett and Laurence Fishburne. The tale would permanently color both musicians’ legacies.

Tina Turner was born Anna Mae Bullock on Nov. 26, 1939, in Nutbush, Tenn., a place she later sang of in “Narbush City Limits,” the only hit song she

wrote herself. Her father was an overseer of fellow sharecroppers, but when her parents moved away for manufacturing jobs during World War II, Ann, as she was known, and her older sister lived with relatives. She sang in church, was a cheerleader and played basketball. At age 16, with her father gone from the family, she moved in with her mother in St. Louis, where Ike Turner and his Kings of Rhythm band ruled the local music scene.

Eight years older than Ann, Ike heard Ann singing between sets at a Kings of Rhythm show, and put her in his band. Their initially platonic rela-

tionship turned intimate and by the time Ann recorded her first lead vocal in 1960, she was pregnant with her second child, and her first with Ike.

To link his rising lead singer’s fortunes to his own, Ike dubbed her Tina Turner and renamed his band the Ike & Tina Turner Revue. They married in 1962.

When Ann hesitated over changing her name and touring while pregnant, Ike abused her for the first time, she said in the book “I, Tina,” written with Kurt Loder: “He would beat me with shoes, shoe trees, anything that was handy.” She would later attempt suicide using sleeping pills.

In 1976, a physical fight with her husband before a concert in Dallas spurred Turner to flee the tour and her marriage. She credited Buddhism for helping her break away.

A 1983 concert in Manhattan—and the enthusiasm of attendees such as David Bowie—sparked a record deal. Turner’s cover of Al Green’s “Let’s Stay Together” paved the way for recording sessions that would yield the album “Private Dancer.” At the 1985 Grammys, the album earned four wins, including Record of the Year and Song of the Year for “What’s Love Got to Do With It.”

A romance with a German record executive, Erwin Bach led her to relocate to Europe. Turner became a citizen of Switzerland and married Bach in 2013. She suffered a stroke soon after her marriage, and other health problems followed, including renal disease that resulted in the 2017 transplant of a kidney donated by her husband.

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