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VH1's Top 20 Women In Rock

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Patsy Cline
Ella Fitzgerald
Aretha Franklin



Debbie Harry
Billie Holiday
Chrissie Hynde
Etta James



Janis Joplin
Chaka Khan
Carole King
Gladys Knight



Annie Lennox
Madonna
Joni Mitchell
Stevie Nicks



Bonnie Raitt
Grace Slick
Patti Smith
The Supremes



Tina Turner

VH1's "100 Greatest Women Of Rock 'N' Roll" were determined through a survey of female entertainers, writers, photographers, industry executives, and politicians.

of artists, ranging from veterans (Joni Mitchell, Bonnie Raitt, Madonna, Tina Turner) to such newer artists as Alanis Morissette, Erykah Badu, and Sheryl Crow. Various genres of contemporary music are represented, including R&B (Gladys Knight, Anita Baker, Patti LaBelle); jazz (Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughan); country (Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Patsy Cline);



ANN AND NANCY WILSON

hip-hop (Queen Latifah, Salt 'N' Pepa); and the blues (Bessie Smith, Ruth Brown, Big Mama Thornton).

One artist who made the list was Sarah McLachlan. McLachlan, the founder of the female-oriented Lilith Fair festival tour, says, "The success of Lilith Fair was spawned by a number of female singer/songwriters who were very successful on their own. Putting these people together gave us a certain strength."

Liz Phair, also on the list, agrees that the Lilith Fair (which has been co-sponsored by VH1 and on which Phair has been a performer) has had a huge impact for female artists.

She says, "I think there's a lot more diversity in female artists than there was 10 years ago. What's changed since, say, the days when Joni Mitchell first started, is that I think people are more interested in women as songwriters. Female performers are being taken more seriously."

Phair, who calls herself a "fierce feminist," adds, "I think my first album [1993's "Exile In Guyville"] hit at the right time [Music to My Ears,

'Now women are making their own statements and taking more control of their careers'

Billboard, May 8, 1993]. I've always been marginal, but it's heartening that people can relate to my music."

Donna Summer, also on the list, has a longer view. "I think that female artists have been coming into their own since the 1960s," she says. "But now, women are making their own statements and taking more control of their careers, and I really respect that."

Summer adds, "One of my greatest frustrations was having people telling me what to say in my music. I grew up in the rock'n'roll era, and I was influenced by everything from Aretha Franklin to the Rolling Stones to theater to Bonnie Raitt to

Joni Mitchell. I have no desire to do music that bores the living crap out of me. Whether or not the audience gets the music is not the issue. I won't make a certain kind record unless it's what I feel I'm about at the time."

Summer's next album is "VH1 Presents Donna Summer: Live & More—Encore!" (see Dance Trax, page 29).

A FORCE AT RETAIL

While women are already a major force in record stores, some retailers believe "100 Greatest Women Of Rock 'N' Roll" could spur additional sales for the featured artists.

Steve Nuñez, chart supervisor for HMV's Lexington Avenue location in Manhattan, notes, "We saw an increase in catalog sales for artists that were on VH1's '100 Greatest Artists Of Rock 'N' Roll' after the special aired. I think we'll have an increase in sales for the artists on the '100 Greatest Women' special."

Nuñez singles out such artists as Franklin, Cher, Madonna, Dusty Springfield, and McLachlan as being those whose record sales might benefit the most.

He adds, "Aretha's greatest-hits collections consistently sell well, and I think we'll see a jump in her sales



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after the special airs. Sales of Dusty Springfield's catalog will also increase."

Bob Varcho, head music buyer for the North Canton, Ohio-based retail chain Camelot Music Inc., isn't so sure, though. "I don't know if VH1's '100 Greatest' countdowns have a tremendous effect on increasing sales, because they show reruns over an extended period of time. I think VH1's 'Behind The Music' episodes do much more for sales."

VH1 senior VP of original programming and development Lauren Zalaznick says, "The 100 Greatest Artists Of Rock 'N' Roll' was such a great success for us, we wanted to do another countdown special. We considered many different lists: the 100 great artists of the '90s, the 100 greatest albums, the 100 greatest live performances. But we decided to do



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another list about artists because we felt the personal stories juxtaposed with one another worked really well."

Zalaznick explains why VH1 decided on having a female-only countdown: "The '100 Greatest Artists' countdown was great, but there were [fewer than 10 female solo artists] named in the survey. We feel that women deserved to be further honored and recognized for their contri-



PHAIR

butions to music."

Asked why women other than those in the music industry were asked to vote, Zalaznick says, "There are only a limited number of women in the music industry. It's unfortunate but true that the industry is still very much male-dominated, so we wanted to expand our voting body to important women in other fields."

VH1 executive VP of talent and music programming Wayne Isaak says, "If you look at the last five years in music, there's no question that women have become more prominent. A 'best of' category focusing on women is often overlooked, and we wanted to recognize female artists who've made a difference in music."

Voting took place last September and October. Zalaznick says that since VH1 ensured confidentiality to the voters, the names of those who voted would not be revealed to the public.

"The 100 Greatest Women Of Rock 'N' Roll" will be hosted by actresses Julianna Margulies ("ER"), Courteney Cox ("Friends"), and Susan Sarandon, as well as actress/singer Jennifer Lopez and former Spice Girls member Geri Halliwell. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is also featured in the special, although VH1 says she did not vote in the survey.

NOT THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Some people may be surprised to learn that some artists regularly featured on VH1—such as Celine Dion, Mariah Carey, Jewel, and Shania Twain—did not make the final cut. Meanwhile, lesser-known artists like Kim Deal (the Pixies, the Breeders),

RUFFHOUSE PARTNERS SPLIT

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under our co-venture," he says. "We will be administrating the recording budgets. Columbia will handle the marketing and promotion... [The acts] still remain on Ruffhouse/Columbia; we still share in the profit participation. This could go on for another seven or eight years or even 10 to 15 years. Look at Lauryn—I'm sure she'll be with Ruffhouse/Columbia for a number of years."

Commenting on the split with

Exene Cervenkova (X), and Kim Gordon (Sonic Youth) did.

Zalaznick comments on another artist who did not make the final cut: "I think Lauryn Hill would've made it on the list, and she was very close to getting on the list, but her album ["The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill"] was released around the time voting was about to be closed. I think since then, her album has made such an impact that if voting were held now, she would probably be on the list."

Zalaznick adds, "I think this list represents the top 100 women who the voters felt had the biggest influence on music. It's not necessarily about the artists who've had the most hits. People like [ranked artists] Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart were out doing their thing before it was cool to be a woman in rock."

Heart lead singer Ann Wilson says, "Some things have changed in the music industry. There's a little more room for women. But some of the rules haven't changed: Women's images still have to be a certain way. Women have to portray what the industry considers palatable to the public. If you're an overweight female artist, the music industry will expect you to get a personal trainer to lose the weight."

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She adds, "But I have to be optimistic when I see artists like Shawn Colvin and Lucinda Williams doing well, because they wouldn't have gotten as much recognition 10 years ago."

On June 19, Ann and Nancy Wilson will embark on their first U.S. tour together without a band. Wilson adds, "We're going to put out an [Ann and Nancy Wilson] album, but we're road-testing the songs first."

Chaka Khan, another artist on the list, says, "I think women have definitely made progress since when I started in the business. Joni Mitchell was certainly a pioneer in many ways. I think the progress has been made with women being able to make music independently and maintaining a lot of freedom of expression in their art."

Nicolo, Schwartz says, "I felt that Joe's priorities were in places other than the day-to-day operation of Ruffhouse. I needed a full-time partner." However, he stresses, he didn't consider replacing Nicolo.

Adds Nicolo, "It was a great relationship, but it's time to move on. When you have records as big as Lauryn's, you want to start experimenting with what you want to do the rest of your life."