

Paul Simon

Born on October 13, 1941 in Newark, New Jersey, Paul Simon is one of the greatest singer/songwriters in the history of the music industry. His family moved to Queens in New York City the year he was born. Simon's musical career began at Forest Hills High School when he and his friend Art Garfunkel began singing together as a duo, occasionally performing at school dances. Their idols were the Everly Brothers, whom they often emulated or imitated in their early recordings. Paul developed an interest in jazz, folk and blues, and in particular in artists like Woody Guthrie. Paul used pseudonyms for the music he wrote. Some were: "Tico and The Triumphs" and Jerry Landis. In fact Simon and Garfunkel were named *Tom & Jerry* by their record company and it was under this name that the duo first had success. In 1957, they recorded the single "Hey, Schoolgirl". It reached forty-nine on the pop charts while they were still in their teens.

After graduating from high school, Simon attended Queens College, while Garfunkel studied at Columbia University in Manhattan. Though Simon earned a degree in English literature, his real passion was rock and roll. Between 1957 and 1964, Simon wrote, recorded, and released more than thirty songs, occasionally reuniting with Garfunkel as Tom & Jerry for some singles, including "Our Song" and "That's My Story," among others. He also briefly attended Brooklyn Law School.

Paul reached No. 99 on the pop charts as Jerry Landis with the hit "The Lone Teen Ranger." Both chart singles were released on Amy Records. In April 1964 he started touring folk clubs and coffee houses in the United Kingdom. At the first club he played, the Railway Inn Folk Club in Brentwood, Essex he met Kathy Chitty who became his girlfriend and inspiration for "Kathy's Song" "America" and other numbers.

In early 1964, Simon and Garfunkel got an audition with Columbia Records, whose executives were impressed enough to sign the duo to a contract to produce an album. Columbia decided that the two would be called simply "Simon & Garfunkel," which Simon claimed in 2003, was the first time that artists' ethnic names had been used in pop music.

He and Art Garfunkel got back together as Simon and Garfunkel and recorded "Wednesday Morning 3 a.m.". After the commercial failure of the album they broke up again. Simon left America to go to England where he played in folk circuits and He made a solo album. Back in America the producer of their first album, Tom Wilson, dubbed bass, electric guitar, and drums to the all acoustic song, 'Sound of Silence', which propelled them into the folk-rock scene. Simon and Garfunkel were back and in 1966 they had popularity with the album "The Sound of Silence" which features songs such as "I am a Rock", "Richard Cory" and "Kathy's Song" (written about an early girlfriend of Paul's). Their next album "Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme had songs such as "Homeward Bound" "The 59th Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)". Although Paul is proud of all of his work, he once said he didn't want to be remembered only for "Feelin' Groovy."

In 1967 Mike Nichols asked Simon to write a score for his upcoming movie *The Graduate* (1967). Their next album "Bookends" which is considered one of the greatest albums of the sixties, featured songs such as "Mrs. Robinson" from *The Graduate* (1967), "Hazy Shade of Winter", "At The Zoo", "America". Their last album "Bridge Over Troubled Water" featured songs such as the title song, "The Boxer", "Cecilia".

After Simon and Garfunkel split in 1970, Simon began to write and record solo material. His first solo album, self-titled *Paul Simon* was released January 1972, preceded by his first experiment with world music, the Jamaican-inspired "Mother and Child Reunion", which is widely considered one of the first reggae attempts by a white musician. The single was a hit, reaching both the American and British Top 5, and the album was particularly well received, with critics praising the variety of styles and the confessional lyrics, and with the *Paul Simon* reaching at No. 4 in the U.S. and No. 1 on the UK and Japan. It later spawned another Top 30 hit with "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard".

Simon's next project was the pop-folk masterpiece, *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*, released in May 1973. It contained some of his most popular and polished recordings - the lead single, "Kodachrome", with its fresh arrangement and comical message, was a No. 2 hit in America, and the follow-up, the gospel-flavored "Loves Me Like a Rock" was even bigger, topping the charts. Other songs, like the patriotic "American Tune" or the melancholic "Something So Right" became standards on the musician's catalogue. Critical and commercial reception for this second album were even stronger than there were for his debut. The album reached No. 1 on the charts. As a souvenir for the tour that came next, in 1974 it was released a live album, *Live Rhymin'*, which was moderately successful and showed, again, some changes in the Simon's music style, adopting world and religious music.

Still Crazy After All These Years, his next album released in 1975 was received as one of his finest works, marking another departure from his previous work as the atmosphere of the recordings were sad, darker and entirely confessional, as he wrote and recorded in the wake of his divorce from his first wife, Peggy. Preceded by the feel-good duet with Phoebe Snow, "Gone at Last" (a Top 25 hit) and the Simon & Garfunkel reunion track "My Little Town" (a No. 9 on Billboard), the album managed to be his only No. 1 on the Billboard charts to date, and eventually won a Grammy Award for Album of the Year. With Simon in the forefront of popular music, the third single from the album, "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" was immensely popular, reaching the top spot of the Billboard charts (this was, also, his only single to reach No. 1 on this list).

After three back-to-back successful studio albums, Simon became less productive during the second half of the seventies. He dabbled in various projects, including writing music for the film *Shampoo* and acting in the movie, *Annie Hall*. Paul made numerous appearances on the television show, *Saturday Night Live* for his friend and producer, Lorne Michaels. He achieved another hit in this decade, with the lead single of his 1977 compilation, *Greatest Hits, Etc.*, "Slip Slidin' Away", a top ten hit in America.

In 1980 he released *One Trick Pony*, his first in almost five years. It was paired with the motion picture of the same, in which Simon starred. Although it produced a Top 10 hit (Simon's final) with the upbeat "Late in the Evening, the album did not sell well, in a music market particularly dominated by disco songs. Then, Simon began to recording *Hearts and Bones*, a polished and confessional album that was recognized with time as one of his best works, but that marked a lull in his commercial popularity during this era, at the point that the both the album and the lead single, "Allergies", missed the American Top 40. *Hearts and Bones* was particularly remarkable for its inclusion of "The Late Great Johnny Ace", a song partly about Johnny Ace, an American R&B singer, and partly about slain ex-Beatle John Lennon. It also told the story of his relationship and brief unsuccessful marriage to actress Carrie Fisher. With his solo career in the middle of a crisis, Simon lent his talents to USA for Africa and performed on the relief fundraising single "We Are the World".

In 1985, recovering from the breakup of his second marriage Paul was listening to a recording in his car of the South African group Boyoyo Boys' instrumental "Gumboots". Inspired by the unusual sound, he wrote lyrics to sing over a re-recording of the song, which became the first song of his greatest musical project, *Graceland*, an eclectic mixture of musical styles including pop, a cappella, isicathamiya, rock, and mbaqanga. Much of the album was recorded in South Africa and featured many South African musicians and groups, particularly Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Warner Brothers had serious doubts about releasing an album of this category, because of an international boycott of South Africa but when it did, *Graceland* was praised by critics and the public and became Simon's most successful album. The singles "You Can Call Me Al", "Graceland", "The Boy in the Bubble" and "Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes" became standards and were highly praised. Simon, whose career had been struggling for the past 5 years reinvented himself at age 45, and was back in the forefront of introducing popular music, received the Grammy Award for Album of the Year for *Graceland*, and embarked on the successful "Graceland Tour".

After the success of *Graceland*, he decided to extend its roots with the Brazilian music-flavored *The Rhythm of the Saints*, which was released on October 1990. The album received excellent critical reviews and achieved very respectable sales, peaking at No. 4 in the U.S. and No. 1 in the UK. The lead single, "The Obvious Child", was a Top 20 hit in the UK. The album received a Grammy nomination for Album of the Year. Although not as successful as *Graceland*, *The Rhythm of the Saints* was received well in his efforts to popularize world music. The importance of both albums allowed Simon to stage a concert in Central Park with both African and South American bands in August of 1991. The success led to both a live album and an Emmy-winning TV special. After 1991, Simon's place in the forefront of popular music dropped notably. In 1992 he married Edie Brickell with whom he has three children.

Since the early years of the 1990s he worked on *The Capeman*, a musical that finally opened on 1997 receiving terrible reviews and becoming a commercial failure from which Simon lost 11 million dollars. The album was received with lukewarm

expectations. In late 1999, Paul wrote and recorded a new album very quickly, with "You're the One" arriving in 2000. While not reaching the commercial heights of previous albums, it received favorable reviews and received a Grammy nomination for Album of the Year. The same year, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a solo artist. He appeared on the first *Saturday Night Live* episode following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and sang "The Boxer" as a tribute to the heroes of the attacks.

In 2002 Simon wrote and recorded "Father and Daughter", the theme song for the animated children's movie *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*. The track was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Song. In 2004, Simon's studio albums were re-released both individually and together in a limited-edition nine-CD boxed set, *Paul Simon: The Studio Recordings 1972–2000*. At the time, Simon was already working on a new album with Brian Eno – *Surprise*, which was finally released in May 2006. In February 2009, Simon performed back-to-back shows in his native New York City at the newly renovated Beacon Theater, which had recently been renovated. Simon was reunited with Art Garfunkel at the first show as well as with the cast of *The Capeman*. The original duo of Simon and Garfunkel continue to tour the world today.

In commenting on US TV show *Ellen* what drove him to write material for this latest album, Simon noted the events of September 11, 2001 and also turning 60 since his previous album *You're the One*. Simon is also one of the practitioners of a creative and distinctive fingerstyle guitar style in popular music. His instrumental proficiency has always been highly underrated and practically invisible as a guitarist. His compositional abilities with his combination of jazz-tinged chords and seamless, romantic, poetic lyrics ranged throughout all his different songwriting styles. He is one of less than five modern American artists who owns all the rights to his own works.

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