

# Ella Fitzgerald



*Ella Jane Fitzgerald A.K.A. “The First Lady of Song”, was born on April 25th, 1917. Shortly after her birth, she and her mother moved to Yonkers, New York. Her childhood was tough, losing both her parental figures and her sister in a short time span. But Ella never gave up, she used her memories and experiences and put it in her music. In 1934 Ella’s name was drawn at the Apollo and she got to perform at amateur night. She was going to dance but changed her mind at the last second, singing instead. She wooed the crowd and thus launched her career; winning 13 Grammy’s and selling over 40 million albums.*

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# Duke Ellington



*Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington was born on April 29th, 1899 in Washington D.C. He earned the nickname “Duke” at a young age due to his “gentlemanly” ways during his piano lessons. He wrote his first composition at the age of 15 entitled “Soda Fountain Rag”. At 17 he started playing professionally. Duke performed at nightclubs on Broadway, appeared on radios, films, and recorded hundreds of songs with his sextet band—that soon grew to be a 10-piece ensemble. You probably know his most popular hit, “Take the A Train”. Ellington’s career earned him 12 Grammy’s, 3 of them were in his passing.*

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# Mary Lou Williams



*Mary Lou Williams, (who was born Mary Elfrieda Scruggs), was born in Atlanta on May 8, 1910. Shortly after, at the age of 4, Williams' mother moved them to Pittsburgh with her stepfather. Then she began to learn piano. Williams excelled at the instrument and by 15 she was on the road with a small band. She played swing, ragtime bass and boogie-woogie on one hand, and incorporated counter rhythms and melodies on the other hand. This landed her the role of star soloist of the group. She went on to do wonders for new Jazz sounds.*

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# Nina Simone



*Nina Simone, born Eunice Kathleen Waymon, is a North Carolina native born on February 21st, 1933. She began playing piano by ear at the small age of 3. In 1954, Nina auditioned to play piano at a bar and grill; word spread quickly about the pianist with the deep, velvet voice reshaping the jazz sound. It was here that she nicknamed herself "Nina Simone". She soon attracted the attention of the record industry. She signed with Syd Nathan at King Records and began her legendary career.*

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# Thelonius Monk



*Thelonius Monk was born on October 10, 1917 in North Carolina. When he was 4 he and his family moved to NYC. He studied piano at 11 and at 13 he won the Apollo's Amateur contest so many times, they had to ban him from continuing to enter. In 1941, Monk joined a house band and developed the "Bebop" jazz style. His career continued to grow along with his popularity. He became one of only 4 jazz musicians to be featured on the cover of Time Magazine.*

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# Charles Mingus



*Charles Mingus was born on April 22, 1922 in Arizona. He was raised in California and got his first taste of music from the Church. He was also influenced by Duke Ellington, who he listened to when he was 8. Settling in New York in the 1950's, the renowned bassist (and pianist) recorded with greats like Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and even Duke Ellington. Ballet companies played Charles' music often. Alvin Alley choreographed "The Mingus Dances", an hour long program that premiered in 1972. Mingus received many accolades for his talent, his legacy continues through foundations in his name.*

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