

Ike Turner,

The Kings of Rhythm

The Grammy's, The Handy's & more....

2001 marked the Golden Anniversary of a GOLD Record from an Era when Fifty-thousand 45's was a BIG Seller. That 500K-selling single cut the edge of a new style before deejay Alan Freed named it: **ROCK & ROLL**. Sam Phillips, Sun Studios founder, tagged that Billboard #1 R&B Smash as the very first "**Rock & Roll Recording**". Every hell-raiser, hip-shaker, and hit-maker owes a nod to that teenager recognized by Rock historians as the "**Father of Rock & Roll**".



That Billboard bullet, "**Rocket 88**", was penned by a 19-year old boogie-woogie boy and his back-up band, "**The Kings of Rhythm**", for their first Sun Studios session in March 1951. B.B. King introduced the kid to Phillips, but he did not have a song - yet. So, on that rainy ride up Highway 61 to Memphis with their gear strapped on top, inspiration and lightning struck. The first muscle car - a highway cruiser - the hot, new, Oldsmobile "**Rocket 88**" was the subject and title of that historic #1 Hit. His lead vocalist, Jackie Brensten, and his side band, "**The Delta Cats**", were mistakenly credited with the song by Chess Records, who released it. But those that know Rock history know The Kings of Rhythm were the real rockers toiling in the shadows of their own success. That kid is referred to by Little Richard as "The Man". B.B. King proudly echoes, "He's the best band leader I've ever seen." The kid who became "The Man" is Ike Turner.

Turner full-tilt boogies throughout his Golden Anniversary record, "**Here and Now**". His first commercial release in 23 years, this Ikon Records debut received rave critical acclaim and a **GRAMMY Nomination** for **BEST TRADITIONAL BLUES ALBUM** in 2001. Likewise heralded by the 2002 **W.C. HANDY BLUES AWARDS** as a masterpiece, Turner was lauded with **COMEBACK ALBUM OF THE YEAR AWARD** and Nominated for **BLUES ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR, SOUL/BLUES MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR, and SOUL/BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR**.

Better known for his signature whammy-bar guitar, the bedazzling piano-man surprises many with his recently re-discovered piano roots. Turner's first mentor was the legendary boogie-boss Pinetop Perkins, now 89. Turner and Pinetop united for an electrifying, tear-filled piano duet at the 2001 Chicago Blues Festival filmed for the Martin Scorsese Series "**The Blues: Godfathers and Sons**" currently airing nationwide on PBS channels.

Prior to migrating up-river to East St. Louis in 1954, Turner was a house boogie-woogie man in West Memphis "blacks only" clubs. A young, white truck driver often snuck in and hid next to the piano to study Ike's boogie style and woogie-wild legs. That kid was Elvis Presley. The list of historical sessions he's led with the likes of Elmore James, B.B. King, Buddy Guy, and a

still continuing list of blues, rock, and R&B royalty is stunning. He is also noted for discovering, developing, and recording many legendary artists, such as Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Muddy Waters, and Little Milton.

The 60's rock diva Janis Joplin sought Turner for vocal coaching. A primordial Jimi Hendrix played in the Kings of Rhythm for a time. The bandleader fired him for his incessant, uncontrolled feedback; imagine that. Another notable talent, Annie Mae Bullock was a gifted rookie singer he coached, choreographed, and restyled. He created her image and changed little Annie's name to Tina...Turner. They even taught the Rolling Stones to strut. The rest of the Ike&Tina Turner Review legacy is part history, part legend, part myth.

Turner recorded himself and others variously as the Ike&Tina Turner Review, The Ikettes, Eki Renrut, The Kings of Rhythm, and under other pseudonyms. His standout recordings include such classics as "A Fool In Love", "It's Gonna Work Out Fine", "I'm Blue", "I Wanna Take You Higher", "Nutbush City Limits", "River Deep – Mountain High", and "Proud Mary". From 1951 to 1976 Ike recorded hundreds of songs and dozens of albums while successfully touring the world over.

For the next 15 years Turner sank deeper into and then rehabilitated from his well publicized, yet overstated, excesses and mistakes portrayed in the Tina Turner dramatization "What's Love Got To Do With It?" That era of his life cost Turner his family and his fortune. Eventually, the deal-done-wrong with Walt Disney Pictures cost Turner his fame and then his name, too, through a legal loophole that prevented Turner from objecting to his on-screen character assassination. To her credit, Tina publicly set the record straight, announcing the film was not fair to Ike; but the mass-media glossed over her statement. Then the Oscar Nominations for riveting, larger-than-life performances transformed Angela Winbush and Lawrence Fishburne, and muzzled all criticism of fiction vs. fact.

Turner re-emerged in the 90's, back on track with two thoughts in mind: "One hit is too many, a thousand ain't enough" and "one man with courage is a majority". Then, fate gave Turner another chance at fame as he was inducted into the Rock&Roll Hall of Fame. But he would need all his new found resolve, plus the courage of several lifetimes, to overcome the worldwide misperception of The Man-become-demonic myth in Tina's movie that was sold as fiction, but bought as fact.

Fortunately, his legendary music survived the thrashing his name did not. As a result, countless hip-hoppers sampled his tracks, most notably the male-rapper, barrier-breaking Salt-N-Peppa, who turned the Ike-penned "I'm Blue" into "Shoop". Ike was instantly timeless, again - The Ikettes incarnate. The defiant female-rap trio catapulted Turner with a chart-topping Mega-hit, sizzling to Hot Rap Singles #1, Hot Dance Music #1, Rhythmic Top 40 #1, Hot R&B #3, and Billboard Hot 100 #4. They had a career total of five #1 Hits in all, but their one-two punch combination with Turner was THE standout hit-of-hits that powered their 1994 album, "None Of Your Business", to a **GRAMMY: BEST ALBUM FOR A RAP DUO/GROUP** – another Turner TKO.

A setback next occurred, as such is life. Turner recalled his storied life with the noted English biographer Nigel Cawthorne, under the title "Takin' Back My Name", published in mid-1999. It is a spell-binding saga told by Turner in his Creole rooted oral tradition: rags-to-riches-to-fame-to-richer-to-rags-to-infamy, replete with names, dates, crimes, and confessions. Cawthorne's agent committed a marketing mis-step by signing the book to Virgin Publishing, an otherwise capable publisher. Virgin Publishing later alleged they were not connected to Virgin Records, yet both are London based and share the same logo. Tina Turner is a Virgin Records recording artist. A reasonable effort to market the book was put forth. But requested **promo copies failed to arrive** on time; retail store **orders failed to ship**; author **in-stores** were **arranged then abandoned**; a **frustrated Turner** began to **decline interviews** when **repeatedly correspondents had not seen the book**; and finally, when Turner rep's **located tens of thousands of books log jammed** in New York warehouses **Virgin forbade them to contact the U.S. staff further, requiring them to talk to the London office only**. Soon after in 2000, the "What's Love" film was suddenly broadcast recurrently and Virgin Records flourished with the release of Tina's mega-selling swan-song, "Twenty Four Seven". She mounted the highest grossing tour of the year, while Ike's autobiography fumbled, stumbled, withered and died.

Turner, disappointed, sought to regroup. Boot strapping once more, courage did not fail the boogie boy from Clarksdale. Perhaps the first-grader molested by an old neighbor woman, who watched his beloved father die from a beating around the same time in life, was entitled to one more reprieve.

He returned to the crossroads of his youth, strategically reinventing himself. He scrapped the Ike Turner Review and revitalized the Kings of Rhythm. He willed **Ikon Records** into being and joined forces with **Bottled Majic Music** magnate, **Rob Johnson**, to revive his recording career. At 69, he re-recorded "Rocket 88". To leave no doubt that he IS, WAS and WILL ALWAYS BE The Man: he cut the vocals himself. Mellowed with age, he distilled all those years building others into an elixir this time – for Ike. Then, trepidly he climbed the stage with raw determination and faced his biggest demon: debilitating stage fright. Stepping up to front the band on vocals, piano, and whammy-bar, he headlined the Memphis In May Festival. Memphis embraced his spectacular performance and validated his stature as the mentor of so many, no longer toiling in the shadows.

Next: the 2001 **"Here and Now"** record promotion campaign, another page in taking back his name. It was a marathon of interviews and tour dates capped off with the **Conan O'Brien Show**. The witty **"I Gave You What You Wanted (It's Not My Fault You Didn't Like What You Got)"** funk-blues was the perfect album teaser for national TV. The clip can be viewed on www.IkeTurner.com. With one step back followed by two leaps forward, this instant-classic album energized renewed interest in his pre-Tina career, as intended. He toured all the influential blues & jazz festivals, releasing a live album in Europe, **"The Resurrection"**, and the companion DVD filmed at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in 2002.

Who says lightening can't three-peat. In 2003 the Japanese female vocal act, **6, 7, 8 & 9** put a new spin on the Ike-tune **"I'm Blue"** and their rendition landed in the martial arts, action-thriller film **"Kill Bill"**. Also, a reunion brought Turner together with fellow Rock Pioneer, Sam Phillips, for rare and humorous moments captured in another Scorsese segment, **"The Blues: Return to Memphis"**. Another feature film, **"Soul To Soul"** that includes **Santana, Ike&Tina Turner, Roberta Flack**, the **Staple Singers**, and others, is set to re-air on TV in Europe for the first time in nearly 30 years.

2004 will mark the 50th Anniversary of when East Memphis-influenced Elvis stepping into the limelight. To commemorate this milestone **N.A.R.A.S.**, the GRAMMY organization, is recognizing Turner and Elvis's original band members, **Scotty Moore, Bill Black**, and **DJ Fontana** with the **Grammy Heroes Award** which will take place in Memphis this spring. St. Louis also recently honored him with a Star on its illustrious **St. Louis Walk of Fame**. Today, Turner is concerned with the wellbeing of urban youth and delivers a positive message to them through **The Blues Schools Program**. During **Black History Month** Turner goes to high schools to perform for and jam with student musicians, and to spread his message: Stay in school, stay off drugs, follow your dreams, respect yourself and everyone else will follow. To say Turner is back is to ignore his influence on legions of rockers, from day one to day now. Fit, trim, ready and steady; Ike is today; Ike is yesterday; and as Ike rocks into the future he is continually woven into the Rock of ALL ages.

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