

INDUCTEES AND NOMINEES

BIOGRAPHIES BY MICHAEL HILL



THE FLAMINGOS

ARETHA FRANKLIN

Born March 25th, 1942
Memphis, Tennessee



Aretha Franklin was only twenty-five when she clinched the title of Lady Soul with her unforgettably proud, sexy, candid and confident 1967 version of Otis Redding's "Respect." Franklin had already given notice of the sound of things to come with her first Jerry Wexler-produced single for Atlantic Records, "I Never Loved a Man (the Way I Love You)," cut at Rick Hall's Fame Recording Studios, in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. That legendary one-day session marked not only the emergence of a prodigious talent but the start of a new era of fresh, forthright soul music.

Franklin had already traveled a long, hard road to Muscle Shoals (to which she never returned after that day in 1967, preferring to record in New York City with session aces both Northern and Southern, both black and white). She began to sing as a child, alongside her preacher father, the well-known, well-respected and well-heeled Reverend C.L. Franklin of Detroit, Michigan, "the Man with the Million-Dollar Voice," a best-selling artist in his own right with his recorded sermons. Through her father's ministry, she met many of the greats of the black musical world: Mahalia Jackson (a mother figure and longtime confidante) and Clara Ward (her father's frequent companion), as well as Sam Cooke and Lou Rawls, both of whom had early success as gospel singers before launching their commercial careers. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, Franklin toured the evangelical circuit, then struck out on her own, moving to New York City in 1960 and signing with Columbia Records, where John Hammond recorded her first sides. Although she had some success on the R&B charts during her Columbia years — her first single, "Today I Sing the Blues," reached Number Ten — her work there, which mingled gospel-and-blues-inflected material with straightforward cabaret and Broadway-show pop, served chiefly as a prelude for the moment when the voice of the bona fide Lady Soul would come forth. After Franklin moved to Atlantic in 1966, at the behest of Jerry Wexler, that voice seemed to capture serendipitously the mood of a tumultuous time — the 'Retha years of the late Sixties — to embody joy and rage, frustration and possibility, sensual longing and spiritual pleasure, a dream of freedom and its reality.

The voice endured — by turns earthy, autobiographical, glamorous, sentimental — as Franklin grew, changed and experimented on records like *Young, Gifted, and Black*, *Spirit in the Dark* and her gospel tour de force, *Amazing Grace*, and on stages ranging from the Apollo Theatre to the Fillmore West. In 1980, Franklin joined Arista Records, where she continues to create up-to-the-minute, state-of-soul hits in collaboration with such popular artist-producers as Luther Vandross and Narada Michael Walden, including the sassy, rap-spiced "Jump to It," the playfully flirtatious "Freeway of Love" and a recent version of the Rolling Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash" that gave Mr. Jagger a run for his money.