

Mahalia Jackson - Mahalia Jackson (1997)

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01. *Consider Me*
02. *Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen*
03. *If You Just Keep Steel*
04. *I Walked Into The Garden*
05. *A City Called Heaven*
06. *Get Away Jordan*
07. *He's My Light*
08. *Run All The Way*
09. *In The Upper Room*
10. *I Believe*
11. *Amazing Grace*
12. *It Is So Secret*

Mahalia Jackson reigned as a pioneer interpreter of gospel music whose fervent contralto was one of the great voices of this century. Both gospel and rhythm & blues had their roots in the Sanctified church, but whereas blues and R&B departed on secular paths that led to rock and roll, gospel stayed the spiritual course. Nonetheless, the influence of gospel on R&B and rock and roll, especially through such force-of-nature voices as Jackson's, is inescapable. Little Richard has cited Jackson as an inspiration, calling her "the true queen of spiritual singers."

In Jackson's own words, "Rock and roll was stolen out of the sanctified church!" Certainly, in the unleashed frenzy of the "spirit feel" style of gospel epitomized by such singers as Mahalia Jackson, Marion Williams and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, one can hear the rousing roots of rock and roll. One of Jackson's accompanists was keyboardist Billy Preston, who went on to great fame as a rock and R&B star. But religious passion was paramount in Jackson's life, and no sacred-to-secular transformation would mark her career as it did so many others. "Her voice is a

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heartfelt express of all that is most human about us—our fears, our faith, our hope for salvation,” David Ritz wrote in his liner notes for Mahalia Jackson: 16 Most Requested Songs. “Hope is the hallmark of Mahalia Jackson and the gospel tradition she embodies.”

Jackson was born in New Orleans in 1911. A debut Baptist, she was nonetheless influenced by Bessie Smith and the rhythm & blues she heard all around her. She carried the rich musical heritage of her native city with her when she moved to Chicago in 1927. Jackson labored as a domestic but soon found abundant work as a soloist at churches and funerals throughout Chicago. After performing with the Prince Johnson singers, she first recorded as a soloist in the mid-Thirties. She spent five years touring with composer Thomas A. Dorsey, singing at gospel tents and churches. Jackson recorded for Decca in 1937 and for Apollo from 1946-1954. She then moved to Columbia Records, where she achieved broad recognition as a singer of spirituals. She also lent her powerful voice and imprimatur to the Civil Rights movement of the Fifties and Sixties.

Singing in a grainy, full-throated soprano that employed slurs and blue notes, Jackson brought a heightened drama and syncopated bounce to her readings of such gospel classics as “Move On Up a Little Higher,” “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” (a Top 100 pop single) and “How I Got Over.” She sang for Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, performing at the latter’s inaugural. A favorite of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jackson sang at his request immediately before his “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington in August 1963. Jackson recorded for Columbia from 1954 until 1967. She died of heart failure outside Chicago in 1972.

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