



DIONNE WARWICK

Celebrates
45th Year
In Music: 'I've Stayed
True To Who I Am'

Pop-soul legend Dionne Warwick won fame in the '60s with such hits as *Don't Make Me Over*, *Walk On By*, *Do You Know The Way To San Jose* and *I Say A Little Prayer*. She kicked off her 45th anniversary with an all-star Hollywood salute.



Seppia Music

It's been said that the name of the game in show business is longevity. A true artist wants to go beyond a hit record. You want to be more than the latest fad. You want to have staying power. You want the public to recognize your

name and your music generation after generation. Such is the case with Dionne Warwick, who is celebrating her 45th year in music this year. It has never been a case of "who's Dionne?" or "whatever happened to....?"

COVER STORY



At a tribute in her honor, Warwick teams up with Burt Bacharach, who wrote most of her big classic hits along with lyricist, Hal David.

▼ Warwick is congratulated by her sons, songwriter-singer David Elliott and music producer Damon Elliott. Warwick celebrates with friends (clockwise from top, l) Gladys Knight and Leslie Uggams; and family members, granddaughter Cheyenne Elliott and sister, soul singer Dee Dee Warwick.



Willie Rosselle



◀ Warwick's aunt, soul-gospel vocalist Cissy Houston, performs gospel tune at tribute at Hollywood's Kodak Theater.

You know the name Dionne. She has built a trust fund with the public, promising and delivering music that never goes out of style.

She admits that it's hard to explain her longevity in a business where singers are here today and gone tomorrow.

"I wish I had the complete answer," she laughs. "But I really attribute it to remaining who I am and not jumping ship, being completely cognizant of what the people

who have supported me for all these years are accustomed to hearing from me. And I've simply stayed true to who I am.

"I have never tried to dress like somebody else, sound like anybody else. I have always just been me, Dionne. I also was fortunate enough to have songs written specifically for me, tailor-made for me."

In 1961—some 45 years ago—Warwick was one of the music industry's most sought-after background session singers. She sang backup on records for the Drifters, Bobby Darin, Dinah Washington, Brook Benton, the Shirelles, Ruth Brown and Chuck Jackson's hit, *Any Day Now*, released in early 1962. She met songwriter Burt Bacharach when she was singing backup at a recording session for the Drifters' tune *Mexican Divorce*, written by Bacharach.

Bacharach told *EBONY* in May 1968 that

he recognized immediately that Dionne had the voice and the elegant presence of a star. He said Dionne "had something. Just the way she carries herself, the way she works, her flow and feeling for the music—it was there when I first met her. She had, and still has, a kind of elegance, a grace that very few other people have."

Bacharach and his songwriting partner, lyricist Hal David, later wrote a long string of pop classics for the sophisticated singer from East Orange, NJ, starting with her 1962 debut hit *Don't Make Me Over* and continuing with *Alfie*, *Walk On By*, *I Say A Little Prayer*, *Do You Know The Way To San Jose*, *This Girl's In Love With You*, *Promises, Promises*, *What The World Needs Now Is Love* and *I'll Never Fall In Love Again*.

The amazing thing about the Warwick catalogue of tunes is that they are among the most covered tunes by other artists. Practically everyone has covered a Warwick tune: Isaac Hayes (*Walk On By*); Aretha Franklin (*I Say A Little Prayer*); the

COVER STORY



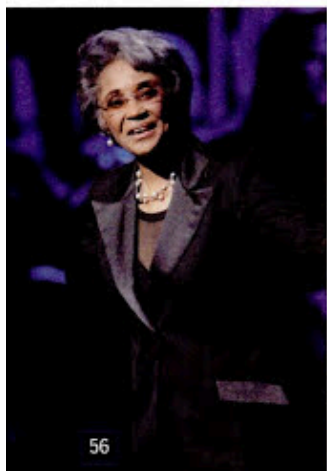
▲ Donnie McClurkin was among the gospel stars who performed at Warwick's salute.

Carpenters (*Close To You*), and the late Luther Vandross turned Warwick's *A House Is Not A Home* into a soulful showstopper. As friend Aretha Franklin says, "Dionne did a fabulous job with everything Bacharach wrote. All of Bacharach stuff I love—I *Say A Little Prayer*, *Do You Know the Way to San Jose*."

Warwick looks back on a history-making career of many firsts.

She became the first Black female singer to do a Royal Command Performance before Queen Elizabeth in England. She also is the first of her generation to crossover and win a pop Grammy (*Do You Know The Way To San Jose*) in 1968 and the first Black singer of her era to branch out into movies with her starring role in *Slaves*, opposite Ossie Davis. She's also the first female artist to simultaneously win Grammys in pop and R&B categories (*I'll Never Love This*

◀ Stevie Wonder joins Warwick for their Grammy Award-winning hit, *That's What Friends Are For*. Warwick has won five Grammys in her remarkable career.



COVER STORY

Way Again and *Deju vu*).

The legendary lady of song is celebrating her 45th year in music with a world tour and is putting the finishing touches on an upcoming CD of duets of her hits performed with Gladys Knight, Jill Scott, Britney Spears, Kelly Rowland, Kelis, Chanté Moore, Angie Stone, Deborah Cox, Mya and Wynonna Judd.

She kicked off her 45th anniversary with a rocking musical fest at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, produced by award-winning producer David Gest.

She was celebrated, toasted and serenaded by her celebrity friends who performed their favorite Dionne Warwick song.

The show, hosted by actress Angela Bassett, got off to a rollicking start as gospel legends saluted Warwick's church roots with a rendition of *What The World Needs Now Is Love*. The tribute included Shirley Caesar, Donnie McClurkin, BeBe Winans, CeCe Winans, Andre Crouch, Sandra Crouch, Della Reese, Edwin Hawkins, Tramaine Hawkins, Walter Hawkins, Candi Staton and Warwick's sister, soul singer Dee Dee Warwick, and aunt, soul-gospel vocalist Cissy Houston.

Ashford and Simpson took center stage with a rendition of *Make It Easy On Yourself*.

Nancy Wilson, who participated at the gala, told JET: "The beauty of being with Burt Bacharach and Hal David gave her a wide appeal, across the board. She is really the first of our generation, back in the '60s, to really, really make it big and to be able to cross over to the White market and



▲ Legendary singer-songwriter Smokey Robinson and hit soul singer Gerald Levert enjoy the festivities at Warwick's anniversary celebration.

win a mainstream following. Yet, at the same time, she did R&B too. She's really a well-rounded performer."

At the salute, Leslie Uggams gave a rousing, Broadway-style rendition of Warwick's *I'll Never Fall In Love Again* and won a tremendous ovation.

The tribute also featured Deborah Cox, Chanté Moore and Angie Stone (who sang *The Windows of the World* while Da Brat rapped). Jill Scott sang Warwick's movie hit, *The April Fools*; the legendary O'Jays sang a favorite Warwick tune, *There's Always Something There To Remind Me*; and singer Brian McKnight performed *No Night So Long*.

Reflecting on her long career she says, "I have been blessed in my life. I can't say whether there was a particular reason for it. I feel God just pointed His finger at me and said, 'You are the one right now.'" □

—Clarence Waldron
and Aldore D. Collier
Photos by Valerie Goodloe

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