

Topic Page: [Simone, Nina \(1933 – 2003\)](#)

Summary Article: **Simone, Nina**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

US jazz singer, pianist, and composer. In the 1960s she took up the cause of civil rights, writing and performing protest songs. In the early 1970s, she went into exile in the south of France, angrily denouncing the treatment of black Americans. She remains distinctive for her blending of jazz, pop, and soul with emotional intensity and a classical amplitude.

She was born in Tryon, North Carolina. After studying piano and teaching music as a teenager, she attended Juilliard for a year; she failed to gain admission to Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, she believed, on account of her race. She turned to playing the piano and singing in Atlanta, Georgia, nightclubs, first using the name 'Nina Simone' in 1954. She first won national acclaim with her 1959 recording of Gershwin's 'I Loves You, Porgy'. Her songs include 'To Be Young, Gifted and Black' and 'Four Women'. For many years she was distracted by quarrels with agents, recording companies, and the Internal Revenue Service over money matters, and her occasional performances in the USA were unevenly given and received. She returned to the USA in 1993 to promote a new album, *A Woman Alone*. She was called the 'highpriestess of soul'. Her autobiography is entitled *I Put a Spell on You* (1992).

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