

## Oum Kalthoum

### BAND STORY

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Umm Kulthum was born in Soumale, she then moved to Tamay ez-Zahayra village in El Senbellawein, Dakahlia Governorate, Egypt, in Dakahlia, in the Nile Delta, near the Mediterranean Sea. Her birth date is controversial, and even the Egyptian Ministry of Information seems to have given either December 31, 1898, or December 31, 1904.

At a young age, she showed exceptional singing talent. Her father, an Imam, taught her to recite the Qur'an, and she is said to have memorized the entire book. When she was 12 years old, her father disguised her as a young boy and entered her in a small performing troupe that he directed. At the age of 16 she was noticed by Abol Ela Mohamed, a modestly famous singer, and by the famous oudist Zakariyya Ahmad, who invited her to come to Cairo. She waited until 1923 before accepting the invitation. She was invited on several occasions to the house of Amin Beh Al Mahdy, who taught her how to play the oud (lute). She developed a very close relationship to Rawheya Al Mahdi, daughter of Amin, and became her closest friend. Kulthum even attended Rawheya's daughter's wedding, although she always tried to avoid public appearances.

Amin Al Mahdi introduced her to the cultural circles in Cairo. In Cairo, she carefully avoided succumbing to the attractions of the bohemian lifestyle, and indeed throughout her life stressed her pride in her humble origins and espousal of conservative values. She also maintained a tightly managed public image, which



### STATS

Visits	Plays
20,504	99,561
Streams	Downloads
99,561	0

### Featured Songs

- 1926 - Dzikra Saad
Arab World
- 1926 - Kam Baatna
Arab World

undoubtedly added to her allure.

At this point in her career, she was introduced to the famous poet Ahmad Rami, who wrote 137 songs for her. Rami also introduced her to French literature, which he greatly admired from his studies at the Sorbonne, Paris, and eventually became her head mentor in Arabic literature and literary analysis. Furthermore, she was introduced to the renowned oud virtuoso and composer Mohamed El Qasabgi. El Qasabgi introduced Umm Kulthum to the Arabic Theatre Palace, where she would experience her first real public success. In 1932, her fame increased to the point where she embarked upon a large tour of the Middle East, touring such cities as Damascus, Syria; Baghdad, Iraq; Beirut and Tripoli, Lebanon.

#### Fame

By 1948 her fame had come to the attention of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who would later become the president of Egypt. At one point the Egyptian musicians guild of which she became a member (and eventually president) rejected her because she had sung for the then-deposed king, Farouk of Egypt. Nasser did not hide his admiration for her. When he discovered that she was no longer allowed to sing, he reportedly said something to the effect of "What are they? Crazy? Do you want Egypt to turn against us?"<sup>[3]</sup> It was his favor that made the musicians' guild accept her back into the fold. In addition, Umm Kulthum was a dedicated Egyptian patriot since the time of King Farouk. Some claim that Umm Kulthum's popularity helped Nasser's political agenda. For example, Nasser's speeches and other government messages were frequently broadcast immediately after Umm Kulthum's monthly radio concerts. Umm Kulthum was also known for her continuous contributions to charity works for the Egyptian military efforts. Umm

Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum

Kulthum's monthly concerts took place on the first Thursday of every month and were renowned for their ability to clear the streets of some of the world's most populous cities as people rushed home to tune in.

Her songs deal mostly with the universal themes of love, longing and loss. They are nothing short of epic in scale, with durations measured in hours rather than minutes. A typical Umm Kulthum concert consisted of the performance of two or three songs over a period of three to six hours. In the late 1960s, due to her age, she began to shorten her performances to two songs over a period of two and a half to three hours. These performances are in some ways reminiscent of the structure of Western opera, consisting of long vocal passages linked by shorter orchestral interludes. However, Umm Kulthum was not stylistically influenced by opera.

During the 1930s, her repertory took the first of several specific stylistic directions. Her songs were virtuosic, as befit her newly trained and very capable voice, and romantic and modern in musical style, feeding the prevailing currents in Egyptian popular culture of the time. She worked extensively with texts by romantic poet Ahmad Rami and composer Muhammad al-Qsabji, whose songs incorporated European instruments such as the violoncello and double bass as well as harmony.

Umm Kulthum's musical directions in the 1940s and early 1950s and her mature performing style caused this period to be popularly called the "golden age" of Umm Kulthum. In keeping with changing popular taste as well as her own artistic inclinations, in the early 1940s she requested songs from composer Zakariya Ahmad and colloquial poet Bayram al-Tunisi cast in styles

Bayram al-Farouk's style considered to be indigenously Egyptian. This represented a dramatic departure from the modernist romantic songs of the 1930s. The result was a populist repertory that had lasting appeal for the Egyptian audience.

The duration of Umm Kulthum's songs in performance was not fixed, but varied based on the level of emotive interaction between the singer and her audience. A typical improvisatory technique of hers was to repeat a single phrase or sentence of a song's lyrics over and over, subtly altering the emotive emphasis and intensity each time to bring her audiences into a euphoric and ecstatic state, and was considered to "have never sung a line the same way twice." [citation needed] Thus, while the official recorded length of a song such as Enta Omri (You Are My Life) is approximately 60 minutes, a live performance could extend to many hours as the singer and her audience fed off each other's emotional energy. This intense, highly personalized creative relationship was undoubtedly one of the reasons for Umm Kulthum's tremendous success as an artist.

#### Acting

In parallel to her singing career, Umm Kulthum at one point pursued an acting career and starred in six films. However, she gave it up because of the lack of personal and emotional contact with the audience. The lights used to shoot these films also damaged her eyes, which required that she wear dark glasses in the presence of bright lights.

#### Personal life

Umm Kulthum was rumored to have had a romantic affair with Sherif Sabri Pasha, one of the uncles of King Farouk, in the 1940s. In 1955, in what was perceived as a possible attempt to quash rumors surrounding her personal life, she hastily married a

personally, she hadly married a dermatologist named Hassen El Hafnaoui, taking care to include a clause in the marriage contract that would allow her to initiate a divorce if necessary. The couple had no children.

#### Death

In 1967, Umm Kulthum was diagnosed with a severe case of nephritis. She gave her last concert at the Palace of the Nile in 1973. Tests at that time indicated that her illness was incurable. She moved to the United States, where she benefited for some time from the advanced medical technology, but in 1975, upon re-entering her home country, she required hospitalization due to declining health. Umm Kulthum died in a Cairo hospital on February 3, 1975.

Her funeral was attended by over 4 million mourners—one of the largest gatherings in history—and descended into pandemonium when the crowd seized control of her coffin and carried it to a mosque that they considered her favorite, before later releasing the coffin for burial.[citation needed]

On the occasion of her passing, biographer Virginia Danielson wrote in Harvard Magazine, "Imagine a singer with the virtuosity of Joan Sutherland or Ella Fitzgerald, the public persona of Eleanor Roosevelt and the audience of Elvis and you have Umm Kulthum, the most accomplished singer of her century in the Arab world".

#### Legacy

Monument to Umm Kulthum in Zamalek, Cairo. It is located on the site of the former house of the singer.

Umm Kulthum has been a significant influence on a number of musicians, both in the Arab World and beyond. Among others, Jah Wobble has claimed her as a significant influence on his work. Bob Dylan has been

ON HIS WORK. Bob Dylan has been quoted as saying, "She's great. She really is. Really great." Maria Callas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Marie Laforêt, Salvador Dalí, Nico, Bono and Led Zeppelin are also known to be admirers of Kulthum's music. One of her best known songs, "Enta Omri," has been the basis of many reinterpretations, including one 2005 collaborative project involving Israeli and Egyptian artists.

She was referred to as "The Lady" by Charles de Gaulle, and is regarded as "The Incomparable Voice" by Maria Callas. Umm Kulthum is remembered in Egypt, the Middle East, and the Arab world as one of the greatest singers and musicians to have ever lived. It is difficult to accurately measure her vocal range at its peak, as most of her songs were recorded live, and she was careful not to strain her voice due to the extended length of her songs. Even today, she has retained a near-mythical status among young Egyptians. She is also notably popular in Israel among Jews and Arabs alike, and her records continue to sell about a million copies a year. In 2001, the Egyptian government opened the Kawkab al-Sharq (Star of the East) Museum in the singer's memory. Housed in a pavilion on the grounds of Cairo's Manasterly Palace, the collection includes a range of Umm Kulthum's personal possessions, including her trademark sunglasses and scarves, along with photographs, recordings, and other archival material.

#### Voice

Kulthum had a contralto vocal range. It is known that she had the ability to sing as low as the second octave, as well as the ability to sing as high as between the seventh and the eighth octaves at her vocal peak; yet she also could easily sing over a range surpassing two octaves near the end of her career. Her remarkable ability to produce approximately 14,000 vibrations per second with her vocal

vibrations per second with her vocal cords, her unparalleled vocal strength (no commercial microphone utilized for singing could withstand its strength, forcing her to stand at a 1- to 3-meter radius away from one), and her voice's unique and breathtaking beauty that surpassed convention arguably made her the most incomparable voice of all time. Her ability and capability to sing every single Arabic scale makes her one of only five women in the history of the Arab world to be able to do this, along with Asmahan, Fairouz, and Sabah and the latest Thekra. In her final years, recordings show a slight coarsening of her voice and a loss of the silken golden thread of coloratura that, in her earlier years, in songs such as Bairam al-Tunsi's "Beredaak", she displayed with an ease and stupendous nonchalance.

Selected discography

\* Aghadan alqak (1971)maqam  
ajam

\* Alif Leila wa Leila ("One  
Thousand and One  
Nights").....maqam nahawand (1969)

\* Arouh li Meen or Arook Lemeen  
("Whom Should I Go To").....maqam  
rast (1958)

\* Al Atlal ("The Ruins").....maqam  
huzam (1966)

\* Amal Hayati"; Sono ("Hope of My  
Life") (1965)

\* Ansak Ya Salam (1960)maqam  
rast

\* Aqbal al-layl (1969)

\* Araka asiya al-dam

\* 'Awwid 'ayni (1958) maqam kurd

\* Baeed Anak ("Away From  
You").....maqam bayyati (1965)

\* Betfaker fi Meen ("Who Are You  
Thinking Of?").....maqam bayati

\* Dalili Ehtar (1958) maqam kurd

\* Dhikrayatun (Qessat Hobbi)  
(1956)

\* El Hobb Kolloh ("All The  
Love").....maqam rast

\* Enta Fein Well Hobbi Fein  
("Where are You and Where Is  
Love?").....maqam bayyati

\* Ental Hobb ("You Are The

Enta Hobb ("You Are The Love").....maqam nahwand  
 \* Enta Omri –Sono ("You Are My Life")..... maqam kurd (1964)  
 \* Es'al Rouhak ("Ask yourself", or "Ask Your Soul")maqam hugaz kar  
 \* Fakarouni ("They thought of me to be").....maqam rast (1966)  
 \* Fit al-ma' ad ("It Is Too Late")  
 Sono Cairo.....maqam sikah (1967)  
 \* Gharib' Ala Bab erraja (1955)  
 \* Ghulubt asalih (1946)  
 \* Hadeeth el Rouh ("The Talk of The Soul").....maqam kurd (1967)  
 \* Hagartek or Hajartak ("I Abandoned You") EMI (1959)  
 \* Hasibak lil-zaman (1957)  
 \* Hathehe Laylati ("This is My Night").....maqam bayyati  
 \* Hayarti Qalbi Ma'ak ("You Confused My Heart").....maqam nahwand (1961)  
 \* Hakam 'alayna al-haw'a (1973)  
 \* Hobb Eih ("Which Love").....maqam bayyati (1960)  
 \* Howwa Sahih El-Hawa Ghallab (1960)  
 \* Kull al-ahabbah (1941)  
 \* Kull laylah wi-kull yum (Betfakkar fi min?) (1962)  
 \* La Diva –CD, EMI Arabia, 1998  
 \* La Diva II –CD, EMI Arabia, 1998  
 \* La Diva III –CD, EMI Arabia, 1998  
  
 \* La Diva IV –CD, EMI Arabia, 1998  
  
 \* La Diva V –CD, EMI Arabia, 1998  
 \* Leilet Hobb ("Night of Love") (1973)  
 \* Lel Sabr Hedod ("Patience Has Limits").....maqam sikah (1965)  
 \* Lessa Faker ("You Still Remember").....maqam ajam (1963)  
 \* Men Agl Aynayk (1957)  
 \* Othkorene ("Remember Me")  
 \* Raq il Habeeb ("My Beloved Tendered Back") (1941)  
 \* Retrospective –Artists Arabes Associes  
 \* Rihab al-huda (al-Thulathiyah al-Muqaddisah) (1972)  
 \* Rubaiyat Al-Khayyam ("Quatrains of Omar Khayyám").....maqam rast (1949)  
 \* Sira' al-Hubb ("Tale of

Sirat el HOUB ( Tale of  
Love").....maqam sikah (1964)  
\* Toof we Shoof (1967)  
\* The Classics –CD, EMI Arabia,  
2001  
\* Wi-darit il-ayyam ("And The Days  
Passed By").....maqam nahwand  
(1970)  
\* Ya Karawan (1926)  
\* Yali Kan Yashqiq Anini (1949)  
\* Ya Msaharny ("You that keeps  
me awake at night") (1972)  
\* Ya Zalemny (1951)  
\* Zalamna El Hob ("We Have  
Sinned Against Love") (1962)

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Umm Kulthum, Oum Kalsoum, Oum  
Kalthum, Omm Kolsoum, Um  
Kalthoom, Omme Kolsoum , Om  
Kalsoum, Umm Kulthum, Om  
Koultoum, Om Kalthoum, Oumme  
Kalsoum , Umm Kolthoum , Ümmü  
Gülsüm , أم كلثوم  
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