

Stand By Me Mr. Ben E. King

Written by bluelover

Sunday, 03 May 2015 19:50 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 May 2015 20:12

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According to the documentary *History of Rock 'n' Roll*, Ben E. King wrote "**Stand By Me**" when he was still the lead singer of The Drifters — but the group didn't want it. As King recalled, the Drifters' manager Mike Stoller told him,

"Not a bad song, but we don't need it."

But after King went solo, Stoller revived "Stand By Me" at the end of a session with Leiber.

"I showed him the song,"

King said.

"Did it on piano a little bit, he

(Stoller)

called the musicians back into the studio, and we went ahead and recorded it."

Stand By Me

Stoller recalls it differently: *"I remember arriving at our office as Jerry(Jerry Leiber, producer) and Ben were working on lyrics for a new song. King had the beginnings of a melody that he was singing a cappella. I went to the piano and worked up the harmonies, developing a bass pattern that became the signature of the song. Ben and Jerry quickly finished the lyrics."*



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"Stand By Me" was the name of a gospel hymn written by the Philadelphia minister Charles Albert Tindley in 1905. His hymn became popular in churches throughout the American south and was recorded by various Gospel acts in the 1950s.



Charles Albert Tindley

In an interview with the TV station WGBH, Jerry Leiber explained: *"Ben E. is not a songwriter, he's a singer, he might have written two songs in his whole career. I would guess that this comes out of church. The whole 'stand by me' and the way the release takes out, it sounds like a gospel-type song."*

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Jerry Keiber and Mike Stoller

Ben E. King was born Benjamin Earl Nelson in Henderson, North Carolina, and moved to New York with his family at the age of nine, part of the migration of black workers from the southern states to the more prosperous cities of the industrialized north. His unusual vocal flexibility, spanning the range from bass to tenor, enabled him to sing virtually all the lead and harmony parts.



The Five Crowns

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At 20, he joined a doo-wop group called The Five Crowns, who became The Drifters after that group's manager fired the band's previous members. He co-wrote and sang on the band's single "There Goes My Baby," which reached number two in the US in 1959.



The Drifters (1959)

When management refused to raise the musicians' \$100-a-week salary, King quit and went solo. He changed his surname and went on to have hits like "Spanish Harlem", "Don't Play That Song (You Lied)", and of course "Stand By Me".



Ben E. King - Spanish Harlem

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King continued to record throughout the 60s, but the uneven quality of albums such as “Ben E King Sings for Soulful Lovers” and “Seven Letters” indicate that he, or his producers, was unsure of his direction.



Ben E. King - Stand By Me (1961)

Further success proved elusive, however, until 1975, when Ertegün encountered him singing in a Miami nightspot and invited him to return to Atlantic. The slinky “Supernatural Thing,” the first record under the new deal, became part of the overture to the disco boom, its success allowing him to emerge from the world of supper clubs and oldies shows.

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Ben E. King's "Stand By Me" is a classic soul song that has become a staple of the Motown sound. It was written by King and published by Motown.



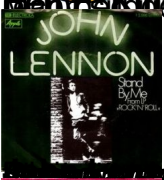
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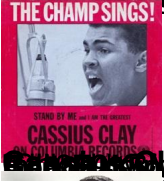
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The Drifters (1961)