

# This Day in History... January 19, 1943

## Birth of Singer Janis Joplin

Janis Lyn Joplin was born on January 19, 1943, in Port Arthur, Texas. The “Queen of Psychedelic Soul,” Joplin infused her blues-inspired songs with a raw emotion and distinctive voice that made her one of the era’s leading female rockers.

Joplin was a shy girl, often the target of bullies who made her a loner by her teen years. She took comfort in poetry, painting, and music, being particularly inspired by Blues greats Bessie Smith, Odetta, and Big Mama Thornton. She attended Lamar State College of Technology and the University of Texas at Austin, though she didn’t graduate.

Joplin recorded her first song, “What Good Can Drinkin’ Do,” in 1962. In January 1963, she hitchhiked her way to San Francisco, California. She got into drugs and her friends convinced her to return to Texas, where her family could help her get better. She turned her life around, quitting drugs and alcohol, and attended Lamar University, studying anthropology. She sang and played acoustic guitar. In 1966, the San Francisco band Big Brother and Holding Company invited her to join them, which she ultimately did that June.

The band got their big break the following year at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival. The band got a record contract based on that performance and Joplin became a national star. She received great praise in the press, with *Time* magazine calling her “probably the most powerful singer to emerge from the white rock movement” and *Vogue* calling her “the most staggering leading woman in rock.”



*Imperforate Joplin Stamp*

The extra attention Joplin got created resentment in the band and she left at the end of 1968. Joplin then formed a new backup group, the Kozmic Blues Band, which toured Europe. In 1969, Joplin performed at Woodstock in front of a massive crowd. That year she also performed at Madison Square Garden, singing a duet with Tina Turner. The Kozmic Blues Band broke up by the end of the year, and after a trip to Brazil, Joplin formed the Full Tilt Boogie Band, which many considered to be her best group. Though Joplin’s time with them was short, it did produce her most popular album, the posthumously released *Pearl*, and her only number-one hit, “Me and Bobby McGee.” She made her last public performance with the band on August 12, 1970.

That October, Joplin was recording *Pearl* with her band. However, her struggle with drugs and alcohol had persisted despite repeated efforts to quit, and she died of an apparent overdose on October 4, 1970. Though her career lasted just four years, Joplin remains one of the most recognizable singers of her time. She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995 and was named on *Rolling Stone*’s list of 100 Greatest Artists. She also was given a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005

### The 2014 US Janis Joplin Stamp

The image for the Janis Joplin stamp was taken from a June 1970 photo by David Gahr. The original was a black and white photo, but US Postal Service art director Antonio Alcalá colored the photo in shades of blue with Joplin’s trademark sunglasses tinted pink. The printing on the stamp is similar to the psychedelic style used in the 1960s. During the First Day of Issue ceremony, which took place at the Outside Lands Music Festival in San Francisco, one of the officials called Joplin “one of the most important musicians of the 20th century.”

As with all the stamps in the Music Icons Series, this sheet is designed to look like a 45rpm record sleeve, with a portion of the record at the top. The back of the stamp sheet includes a May 1968 photo of Joplin at the First International San Jose Pop Festival. The words describe the many music styles Janis sang. A short biography of Joplin accompanies the photo.



*Joplin was the fifth honoree in the Music Icons Series.*



*Joplin performed at about 2:00 a.m. on Sunday August 17 at Woodstock.*

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