




Alicia Keys

Alicia Keys	
	
Keys performing in 2011.	
Background information	
Birth name	Alicia Augello Cook
Also known as	Lellow
Born	January 25, 1981 New York, U.S.
Genres	R&B, pop, soul
Occupations	Actress, musician, pianist, record producer, singer-songwriter
Instruments	Piano, vocals, keyboards
Years active	1996–present
Labels	Arista, Columbia, J, RCA
Associated acts	Swizz Beatz, Usher, Beyoncé Knowles, Kerry Brothers, Jr., Maxwell
Website	www.aliciakeys.com ^[1]

Alicia Augello Cook (born January 25, 1981), known professionally as **Alicia Keys**, is an American R&B singer-songwriter, pianist, musician, record producer, and actress. Keys released her debut album with J Records, having had previous record deals first with Columbia and then Arista Records. Keys' debut album, *Songs in A Minor*, was a commercial success, selling over 12 million copies worldwide. She became the best-selling new artist and best-selling R&B artist of 2001. The album earned Keys five Grammy Awards in 2002, including Best New Artist and Song of the Year for "Fallin'" becoming the second American recording artist to win five Grammys in one night. Her second studio album, *The Diary of Alicia Keys*, was released in 2003 and was also another success worldwide, selling eight million copies. The album garnered her an additional four Grammy Awards in 2005. Later that year, she released her first live album, *Unplugged*, which debuted at number one in the United States. She became the first female to have an *MTV Unplugged* album to debut at number one and the highest since Nirvana in 1994.

Keys made guest appearances on several television series in the following years, beginning with *Charmed*. She made her film debut in *Smokin' Aces* which included Ben Affleck, Andy Garcia, Chris Pine, Ryan Reynolds, Taraji P. Henson, Jeremy Piven and also went on to appear in *The Nanny Diaries* which starred Scarlett Johansson, Laura

Linney, Paul Giamitti and Chris Evan in 2007. Her third studio album, *As I Am*, was released in the same year and sold five million copies worldwide, earning Keys an additional three Grammy Awards. The following year, she appeared in *The Secret Life of Bees* with Queen Latifah, Jennifer Hudson, Sophie Okonedo, and Dakota Fanning, which earned her a nomination at the NAACP Image Awards. She released her fourth album, *The Element of Freedom*, in December 2009, which became Keys' first chart-topping album in the United Kingdom. She released her fifth album, *Girl on Fire*, in November 2012, which became Keys' fifth chart-topping album in the United States. Throughout her career, Keys has won numerous awards and has sold over 65 million records worldwide. *Billboard* magazine named her the top R&B songs artist of the 2000s decade. In 2010, VH1 included Keys on its list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time.^[2] *Billboard* magazine placed her number ten on their list of Top 50 R&B/Hip-Hop Artists of the Past 25 Years. BlackBerry (formerly RIM) named her as its Global Creative Director at the BlackBerry 10 Experience event in New York City on January 30, 2013. Keys then opened Super Bowl XLVII in New Orleans, Louisiana on February 3, 2013, by singing the "The Star-Spangled Banner".

Life and career

1981–2001: Early life and career beginnings



Keys was born Alicia Augello Cook on January 25, 1981, in the Hell's Kitchen area of Manhattan, in New York City. She is the only child of Teresa Augello, a paralegal and part-time actress, and Craig Cook, a flight attendant. Keys' mother is of half Italian and half English, Irish, and Scottish descent,^[3] and Keys' father is African American;^[4] Keys has expressed that she was comfortable with her biracial heritage because she felt she was able to "relate to different cultures". Her parents separated when she was two and she was subsequently raised by her mother during her formative years in Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan. In 1985, Keys made an appearance on *The Cosby Show* at the age of four, where she and a group of girls played the parts of Rudy Huxtable's sleepover guests in the episode "Slumber Party". Throughout her childhood, Keys was sent to music and dance classes by her mother. She began playing the piano when she was seven and learned classical music of composers such as Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin. Keys enrolled in the Professional Performing Arts School at the age of 12, where she majored in choir and began writing songs at the age of 14. She graduated in four years as valedictorian at the age of 16.

In 1994, Keys met long-term manager Jeff Robinson after she enrolled in his brother's after-school program. The following year Robinson introduced Keys to her future A&R at Arista Records, Peter Edge, who later described his first impressions to HitQuarters: "I had never met a young R&B artist with that level of musicianship. So many people were just singing on top of loops and tracks, but she had the ability, not only to be part of hip-hop, but also to go way beyond that." Edge helped Robinson create a showcase for Keys and also got involved in developing her demo material. He was keen to sign Keys himself but was unable to do so at that time due to being on the verge of leaving his present record company. Keys signed to Columbia Records soon after. At the same time as signing a recording contract with Columbia Records, Keys was accepted into Columbia University. At first, Keys attempted to manage both, but after a month, she dropped out of college to pursue her musical career full-time.

Keys signed a demo deal with Jermaine Dupri and So So Def Recordings, where she appeared on the label's Christmas album performing "The Little Drummer Girl". She also co-wrote and recorded a song titled "Dah Dee Dah (Sexy Thing)", which appeared on the soundtrack to the 1997 film, *Men in Black*. The song was Keys' first professional recording; however, it was never released as a single and her record contract with Columbia ended after a dispute with the label. Keys was unhappy with the label because her career had stalled during her two years under contract at Columbia due to executive indecision over her direction and major changes within the company. Keys called Clive Davis, who sensed a "special, unique" artist from her performance and signed her to Arista Records, which later disbanded. Keys almost chose Wilde as her stage name until her manager suggested the name Keys after

a dream he had. Keys felt that name represented her both as a performer and person. Following Davis to his newly formed J Records label, she worked with Kerry "Krucial" Brothers and recorded the songs "Rock wit U" and "Rear View Mirror", which were featured on the soundtracks to the films *Shaft* (2000) and *Dr. Dolittle 2* (2001), respectively.

2001–02: *Songs in A Minor*



Keys performing in Frankfurt, Germany, 2002



"Fallin" (2001)

"Fallin" is a gospel-influenced piano ballad. Often considered her signature song, it describes the "ins and outs" of being in a relationship.

Problems playing this file? See media help.

Keys' first studio album *Songs in A Minor* was released in June 2001. Musically, it incorporated classical piano in an R&B, soul and jazz album. Jane Stevenson of *Jam!* described the music as "old-school urban sounds and attitude set against a backdrop of classical piano and sweet, warm vocals". *USA Today*'s Steve Jones wrote that Keys "taps into the blues, soul, jazz and even classical music to propel haunting melodies and hard-driving funk". Debuting at number one on the *Billboard* 200 with first-week sales of 236,000 units, it went on to sell over 6.2 million copies in the United States and 12 million copies internationally. Additionally, it was certified six times Platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America. *Songs in A Minor* established Keys' popularity both inside and outside of the United States where she became the best-selling new artist of the year.

The album's release was preceded by the April release of her debut single "Fallin" which spent six weeks atop the *Billboard* Hot 100. The album's second single, "A Woman's Worth", was released in February 2002 and peaked at seven on the Hot 100 and number three on *Billboard*'s Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs; becoming her second top ten single on both charts. Released in June, "How Come You Don't Call Me" served as the album's third single, peaking at 59 on the Hot 100. The album's fourth single "Girlfriend" was released in the United Kingdom where it peaked at 82. The following year, the album was reissued as *Remixed & Unplugged in A Minor*, which included eight remixes and

seven unplugged versions of the songs from the original.

Songs in A Minor led Keys to win five awards at the 2002 Grammy Awards: Song of the Year, Best Female R&B Vocal Performance, and Best R&B Song for "Fallin'", Best New Artist, and Best R&B Album; "Fallin'" was also nominated for Record of the Year. Keys became the second female solo artist to win five Grammy Awards in a single night, following Lauryn Hill at the 41st Grammy Awards. That same year, she collaborated with Christina Aguilera for the latter's upcoming album *Stripped* on a song titled "Impossible", which Keys wrote, co-produced, and provided with background vocals. During the early 2000s, Keys also made small cameos in television series *Charmed* and *American Dreams*.

2003–05: *The Diary of Alicia Keys and Unplugged*

Keys followed up her debut with *The Diary of Alicia Keys*, which was released in December 2003. The album debuted at number one on the *Billboard* 200, selling over 618,000 copies its first week of release, becoming the largest first-week sales for a female artist in 2003. It sold 4.4 million copies in the United States and was certified four times Platinum by the RIAA. It sold eight million copies worldwide, becoming the sixth biggest-selling album by a female artist and the second biggest-selling album by a female R&B artist. The album's lead single, "You Don't Know My Name", peaked at number three on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number one on *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs* for eight consecutive weeks, her first Top 10 single in both charts since 2002's "A Woman's Worth". The album's second single, "If I Ain't Got You", was released in February 2004 and peaked at number 4 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number one on the *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs* for six weeks. The album's third single, "Diary", peaked at number 8 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number two on the *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs* chart, being their third consecutive Top 10 single in both charts. The album's fourth and final single, "Karma", which peaked at number 20 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number 17 on the *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs*, first release to fail to achieve top ten status on both charts. "If I Ain't Got You" became the first single by a female artist to remain on the *Billboard* Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart for over a year. Keys also collaborated with recording artist Usher on the song "My Boo" from his 2004 album, *Confessions (Special Edition)*. The song topped the *Billboard* Hot 100 for six weeks and *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs* for three weeks, became her first number-one single in *Hot 100* since 2001's "Fallin".

Keys won Best R&B Video for "If I Ain't Got You" at the 2004 MTV Video Music Awards; she performed the song and "Higher Ground" with Lenny Kravitz and Stevie Wonder. Later that year, Keys released her novel *Tears for Water: Songbook of Poems and Lyrics*, a collection of unreleased poems from her journals and lyrics. The title derived from one of her poems, "Love and Chains" from the line: "I don't mind drinking my tears for water." She said the title is the foundation of her writing because "everything I have ever written has stemmed from my tears of joy, of pain, of sorrow, of depression, even of question". The book sold over US\$500,000 and Keys made *The New York Times* bestseller list in 2005. The following year, she won a second consecutive award for Best R&B Video at the MTV Video Music Awards for the video "Karma". Keys performed "If I Ain't Got You" and then joined Jamie Foxx and Quincy Jones in a rendition of "Georgia on My Mind", the Hoagy Carmichael song made famous by Ray Charles in 1960 at the 2005 Grammy Awards. That evening, she won four Grammy Awards: Best Female R&B Vocal Performance for "If I Ain't Got You", Best R&B Song for "You Don't Know My Name", Best R&B Album for *The Diary of Alicia Keys*, and Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals for "My Boo" with Usher.

Keys performed and taped her installment of the *MTV Unplugged* series in July 2005 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. During this session, Keys added new arrangements to her original songs and performed a few choice covers. The session was released on CD and DVD in October 2005. Simply titled *Unplugged*, the album debuted at number one on the U.S. *Billboard* 200 chart with 196,000 units sold in its first week of release. The album sold one million copies in the United States, where it was certified Platinum by the RIAA, and two million copies worldwide. The debut of Keys' *Unplugged* was the highest for an *MTV Unplugged* album since Nirvana's 1994 *MTV Unplugged in New York* and the first *Unplugged* by a female artist to debut at number one. The album's first single, "Unbreakable",

peaked at number 34 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number four on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs. It remained at number one on the *Billboard* Hot Adult R&B Airplay for 11 weeks. The album's second and final single, "Every Little Bit Hurts", was released in January 2006, it failed to enter the U.S. charts.

Keys opened a recording studio in Long Island, New York, called The Oven Studios, which she co-owns with her production and songwriting partner Kerry "Krucial" Brothers. The studio was designed by renowned studio architect John Storyk of WSDG, designer of Jimi Hendrix' Electric Lady Studios. Keys and Brothers are the co-founders of KrucialKeys Enterprises, a production and songwriting team who assisted Keys in creating her albums as well as create music for other artists.

2006–08: Film debut and *As I Am*

In 2006, Keys won three NAACP Image Awards, including Outstanding Female Artist and Outstanding Song for "Unbreakable". She also received the Starlight Award by the Songwriters Hall of Fame. In October 2006, she played the voice of Mommy Martian in the "Mission to Mars" episode of the children's television series *The Backyardigans*, in which she sang an original song, "Almost Everything Is Boinga Here". That same year, Keys nearly suffered a mental breakdown. Her grandmother had died and her family was heavily dependent on her. She felt she needed to "escape" and went to Egypt for three weeks. She explained: "That trip was definitely the most crucial thing I've ever done for myself in my life to date. It was a very difficult time that I was dealing with, and it just came to the point where I really needed to—basically, I just needed to run away, honestly. And I needed to get as far away as possible."

Keys made her film debut in early 2007 in the crime film *Smokin' Aces*, co-starring as an assassin named Georgia Sykes opposite Ben Affleck and Andy García. Keys received much praise from her co-stars in the film; Reynolds said that Keys was "so natural" and that she would "blow everybody away". *Smokin' Aces* had a hit moderate performance at the box office, earning only \$57,103,895 worldwide during its theatrical run. In the same year, Keys earned further praise for her second film, *The Nanny Diaries*, based on the 2002 novel of the same name, where she co-starred alongside Scarlett Johansson and Chris Evans. *The Nanny Diaries* had a hit moderate performance at the box office, earning only \$44,638,886 worldwide during its theatrical run. She also guest starred as herself in the "One Man Is an Island" episode of the drama series *Cane*.



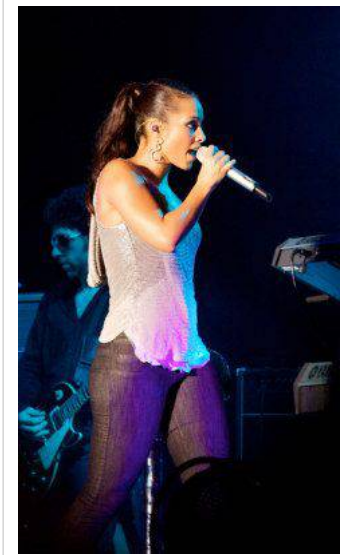
Keys performing live, March 19, 2008

Keys released her third studio album, *As I Am*, in November 2007; it debuted at number one on the *Billboard* 200, selling 742,000 copies in its first week. It gained Keys her largest first week sales of her career and became her fourth consecutive number one album, tying her with Britney Spears for the most consecutive number-one debuts on the *Billboard* 200 by a female artist. The week became the second largest sales week of 2007 and the largest sales week for a female solo artist since singer Norah Jones' album *Feels like Home* in 2004. The album has sold three million copies in the United States and has been certified three times Platinum by the RIAA. It has sold five million copies worldwide. Keys received five nominations for *As I Am* at the 2008 American Music Award and ultimately won two. The album's lead single, "No One", peaked at number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for five consecutive weeks and Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs for ten consecutive weeks, became her first number-one single in *Hot 100* since 2004's "My Boo" and becoming Keys' third and fifth number-one single on each chart, respectively. The album's second single, "Like

You'll Never See Me Again", was released in late 2007 and peaked at number 12 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and number one on the *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs* for seven consecutive weeks. From October 27, 2007, when "No One"

reached No. 1, through February 16, 2008, the last week "Like You'll Never See Me Again" was at No. 1, the Keys was on top of the chart for 17 weeks, more consecutive weeks than any other artist in *Hot R&B/Hip/Hop Songs* chart. The album's third single, "Teenage Love Affair", which peaked at number 54 on the *'Billboard Hot 100* and number three on the *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs*. The album's fourth and final single, "Superwoman", which peaked at number 82 on the *Billboard Hot 100* and number 12 on the *Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs*.

"No One" earned Keys the awards for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance and Best R&B Song at the 2008 Grammy Awards. Keys opened the ceremony singing Frank Sinatra's 1950s song "Learnin' the Blues" as a "duet" with archival footage of Sinatra in video and "No One" with John Mayer later in the show. Keys also won Best Female R&B Artist during the show. She starred in "Fresh Takes", a commercial micro-series created by Dove Go Fresh, which premiered during *The Hills* on MTV from March to April 2008. The premiere celebrated the launch of new Dove Go Fresh. She also signed a deal as spokesperson with Glacéau's VitaminWater to endorse the product, and was in an American Express commercial for the "Are you a Cardmember?" campaign. Keys, along with The White Stripes' guitarist and lead vocalist Jack White, recorded the theme song to *Quantum of Solace*, the first duet in Bond soundtrack history. In 2008, Keys was ranked in at number 80 the *Billboard Hot 100 All-Time Top Artists*. She also starred in *The Secret Life of Bees*, a film adaptation of Sue Monk Kidd's acclaimed 2003 bestseller novel of the same name alongside Jennifer Hudson, Dakota Fanning, Paul Bettany and Queen Latifah, released in October 2008 via Fox Searchlight. *The Secret Life of Bees* had a hit moderate performance at the box office, earning only \$39,947,322 worldwide during its theatrical run. Her role earned her a nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture at the NAACP Image Awards. She also received three nominations at the 2009 Grammy Awards and won Best Female R&B Vocal Performance for "Superwoman".



Keys performing at the 2008 Summer Sonic Festival in Tokyo, Japan

In an interview with *Blender* magazine, Keys allegedly said "'Gangsta rap' was a ploy to convince black people to kill each other, 'gangsta rap' didn't exist" and went on to say that it was created by "the government". The magazine also claimed she said that Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G. were "essentially assassinated, their beefs stoked by the government and the media, to stop another great black leader from existing". Keys later wrote a statement clarifying the issues and saying her words were misinterpreted. Later that year, Keys was criticized by anti-smoking campaigners after billboard posters for her forthcoming concerts in Indonesia featured a logo for the A Mild cigarette brand sponsored by tobacco firm Philip Morris. She apologized after discovering that the concert was sponsored by the firm and asked for "corrective actions". In response, the company withdrew its sponsorship.

2009–11: *The Element of Freedom*, marriage and motherhood



Keys at the 37th Annual American Music Awards red carpet, November 2009.

In 2009, Keys approached Clive Davis for permission to submit a song for Whitney Houston's sixth studio album *I Look to You*. She subsequently co-wrote and produced the single "Million Dollar Bill" with record producer Swizz Beatz. In May, married music producer Swizz Beatz announced that Keys and he were romantically involved. Months later, she was featured on rapper Jay-Z's song "Empire State of Mind" which was the lead single from his eleventh studio album *The Blueprint 3*. The song was a commercial and critical success, topping the *Billboard* Hot 100, becoming her fourth number-one song on that chart. Additionally, it won Grammy Awards for 'Best Rap/Sung Collaboration' and 'Best Rap Song' the following year, among a total of five nominations. The following month, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers honored Keys with the Golden Note Award, an award given to artists "who have achieved extraordinary career milestones". She collaborated with Spanish

recording artist Alejandro Sanz for "Looking for Paradise", which topped the *Billboard* Hot Latin Songs chart, this was Keys' first number one on all three charts, which also made her the first Black-American of non-Hispanic origin to reach #1 on the *Hot Latin Tracks*.

Keys released her fourth studio album, *The Element of Freedom*, in December 2009. It debuted at number two on the *Billboard* 200, selling 417,000 copies in its first week. As part of the promotional drive for the album, she performed at the Cayman Islands Jazz Festival on December 5, the final night of the three-day festival which will be broadcast on BET. It was preceded by the release of its lead single "Doesn't Mean Anything" which peaked at sixty on the Hot 100, and fourteen on *Billboard's* Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs. Keys was ranked as the top R&B recording artist of the 2000–2009 decade by *Billboard* magazine and ranked at number five as artist of the decade, while "No One" was ranked at number six on the magazine's top songs of the decade. In the United Kingdom, *The Element of Freedom* became Keys' first album to top the UK Albums Chart. The album's second single, "Try Sleeping with a Broken Heart", was released in November and peaked at number twenty-seven on the Hot 100 and number two on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. The album's third single "Put It in a Love Song" featured recording artist Beyoncé Knowles. The music video for the single, which was filmed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has been postponed several times, and later it was confirmed that Alicia Keys' team made a decision not to release the video^[citation needed]. In February 2010, Keys released the fourth single, "Empire State of Mind (Part II) Broken Down" peaked at fifty-five on the Hot 100 and seventy-six on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart. In May, "Un-Thinkable (I'm Ready)" featuring rapper Drake was released as the album's fifth single. While only peaking at twenty-one on the *Billboard* Hot 100, it topped the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs for twelve consecutive week. the song became the album's most successful single; Keys eighth number one on the chart; and Key's first number one song in five years. The album's sixth and final single, "Wait Til You See My Smile", was released in December 2010 in the United Kingdom.

In May 2010, a representative for Keys and Swizz Beatz confirmed that they were engaged and expecting a child together. During the time of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the couple had their union and their unborn child blessed in a Zulu ceremony, which took place in the Illovo suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa. Keys and Beatz had a wedding celebration on the French island of Corsica on July 31, 2010. In October, Keys gave birth to their son, Egypt Daoud Ibarr Dean, in New York City. She recorded a song together with Eve called "Speechless" which is dedicated to her son.

In June 2011, *Songs in A Minor* was re-released as deluxe and collector's editions in commemoration of its 10th anniversary. To support the release, Keys embarked on a four-city promotional tour, titled Piano & I: A One Night Only Event With Alicia Keys, featuring only her piano. Keys is also set to co-produce the Broadway premiere of

Stick Fly, which will open in December 2011. On September 26, 2011, was the premiere of *Project 5* known as *Five*, short film that marks the debut of Alicia Keys as a director. It is a documentary of five episodes that tell stories of five women who were victims of breast cancer and how it affected their lives. The production also has co-direction of the actresses Jennifer Aniston, Demi Moore and film director Patty Jenkins. In October 2011, RCA Music Group announced it was disbanding J Records along with Arista Records and Jive Records. With the shutdown, Keys will release her future material on RCA Records.


2012–present: *Girl on Fire*

Keys released her fifth studio album *Girl on Fire* through RCA Records on November 27, 2012. Keys has stated that she wants the album to "liberate" and "empower" fans. The album's title track was released on September 4 as its lead single and peak number eleven on *Billboard* hot 100, the single was Keys's first top twenty own single on the chart since 2007 single "Like You'll Never See Me Again", she performed the song for the first time at the 2012 MTV Video Music Awards on September 6. "Girl on Fire" is an uptempo anthem. "Brand New Me" was released as the album's second single. A softer ballad, it was noted as significantly different to the album's lead single. Prior, two songs from *Girl on Fire* were released as promotion. The first was a song titled "New Day". The song was later revealed to be the solo version of 50 Cent's lead single featuring Dr. Dre and Keys. Another song, "Not Even the King" was uploaded to VEVO as a promotional song. Co-written by Scottish singer-songwriter Emeli Sandé, its lyrics talk about a rich love that couldn't be afforded by "the king". In September 2012, Keys collaborated with Reebok for her own sneakers collection. In October, Keys announced her partnership with Bento Box Entertainment's Bento Box Interactive to create an education mobile application titled "The Journals of Mama Mae and LeeLee" for iOS devices about the relationship between a young New York City girl and her wise grandmother. The app will feature two of Keys' original songs, "Follow the Moon" and "Unlock Yourself". In January 2013, BlackBerry CEO Thorsten Heins and singer Alicia Keys officially unveiled the BlackBerry 10 mobile platform in New York City. Keys has now signed up to help sell BlackBerry devices. BlackBerry CEO Thorsten Heins announced on January 30, 2013 that the Grammy Award winning singer would be the company's new Global Creative Director. In 2013



Keys at NRJ Music Awards 2013

Artistry

	<p>"If I Ain't Got You" (2003) Keys often incorporates piano into her songs</p>
<p><i>Problems playing this file? See media help.</i></p>	

An accomplished pianist, Keys incorporates piano into a majority of her songs and often writes about love, heartbreak and female empowerment. She has cited several musicians as her inspirations, including Whitney Houston, Prince, Nina Simone, Barbra Streisand, Marvin Gaye, Quincy Jones, Donny Hathaway and Stevie Wonder.

Keys' style is rooted in gospel and vintage soul music, supplemented by bass and programmed drumbeats by Joseph Quevedo. She heavily incorporates classical piano with R&B, soul and jazz into her music. She began experimenting with other genres, including pop and rock, in her third studio album, *As I Am*, transitioning from neo soul to a 1980s and 1990s R&B sound with her fourth album, *The Element of Freedom*. Patrick Huguenin of the *New York Daily News* stated that her incorporation of classical piano riffs contributed to her breakout success. *Jet* magazine states she "thrives" by touching her fans with "piano mastery, words and melodious voice". *The Independent* described her style as consisting of "crawling blues coupled with a hip-hop backbeat", noting that her lyrics "rarely stray from matters of the heart". *Blender* magazine referred to her as "the first new pop artist of the millennium who was capable of changing music."



Keys playing the piano while performing, surrounded by three backing vocalists

Keys has a vocal range of a contralto, which spans three octaves. She can sing from B flat over an octave below middle C (Bb_2) to B below soprano C (B_3). Often referred to as the "Princess of Soul", Keys has been commended as having a strong, raw and impassioned voice; others feel that her voice is "emotionally manufactured" at times and that she pushes her voice out of its natural range. Keys' songwriting is often criticized for lack of depth, which has led to her writing abilities being called limited: her lyrics have been called generic, clichéd and revolving

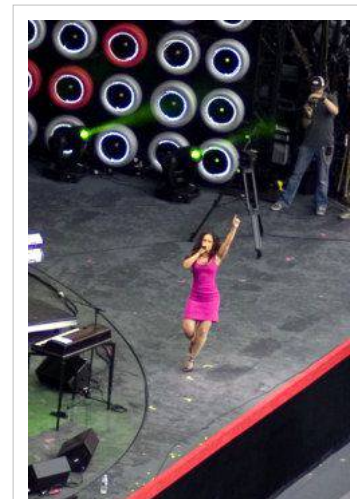
around generalities. Greg Kot of the *Chicago Tribune* feels that she "[pokes] around for multi-format hits rather than trying to project any sort of artistic vision". Diversely, Jon Pareles of *Blender* magazine stated that the musical composition of her songs makes up for their lyrical weakness, while Gregory Stephen Tate of *The Village Voice* compared Keys' writing and production to 1970s music.

Throughout her career, Keys has won numerous awards and is listed on the Recording Industry Association of America's best-selling artists in the United States, with 15 million certified albums. She has sold over 30 million albums worldwide.

Philanthropy

Keys is the co-founder and Global Ambassador of Keep a Child Alive, a non-profit organization that provides medicine to families with HIV and AIDS in Africa. Keys and U2 lead singer Bono recorded a cover version of Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush's "Don't Give Up", in recognition of World AIDS Day 2005. Keys and Bono's version of the song was retitled "Don't Give Up (Africa)" to reflect the nature of the charity it was benefiting. She visited African countries such as Uganda, Kenya and South Africa to promote care for children affected by AIDS. Her work in Africa was documented in the documentary *Alicia in Africa: Journey to the Motherland* and was available in April 2008.

Keys has also donated to Frum tha Ground Up, a non-profit organization that aids children and teenagers with scholarships. She performed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as part of the worldwide Live 8 concerts to raise awareness of the poverty in Africa and to pressure the G8 leaders to take action. In 2005, Keys performed on *ReAct Now: Music & Relief* and *Shelter from the Storm: A Concert for the Gulf Coast*, two benefit programs that raised money for those affected by Hurricane Katrina. In July 2007, Keys and Keith Urban performed The Rolling Stones' 1969 song "Gimme Shelter" at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey at the American leg of the Live Earth concerts.



Keys performing at the Live Earth concert

Keys performed Donny Hathaway's 1973 song "Someday We'll All Be Free" at the *America: A Tribute to Heroes* televised benefit concert following the September 11 attacks. She participated in the Nobel Peace Prize Concert which took place at the Oslo Spektrum in Oslo, Norway, on December 11, 2007, along with other various artists. She recorded a theme song for Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama. She joined Joss Stone and Jay-Z on the effort, which served as a theme song for Obama's campaign. For her work, Keys was honored at the 2009 BET Awards with the Humanitarian Award. Keys performed the song "Prelude to a Kiss", retitled "Send Me an Angel", from her 2007 album *As I Am* for the "Hope for Haiti Now: A Global Benefit for Earthquake Relief" telethon in response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake. In December 2012, Keys performed alongside many other native New Yorkers in 12-12-12: The Concert for Sandy Relief to benefit victims of Hurricane Sandy.

In September 2012, she was featured in a campaign called "30 Songs / 30 Days" to support *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, a multi-platform media project inspired by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's book. In March 2013, Keys teamed up with Greater Than AIDS to launch EMPOWERED, a new public information campaign to reach women in the U.S. about HIV/AIDS. Appearing in a revealing PSA for EMPOWERED, Alicia Keys speaks with five women whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

Discography

- *Songs in A Minor* (2001)
- *The Diary of Alicia Keys* (2003)
- *As I Am* (2007)
- *The Element of Freedom* (2009)
- *Girl on Fire* (2012)

Concert tours

- Songs in A Minor Tour (2001–02)
- Verizon Ladies First Tour (2004)
- Diary Tour (2005)
- As I Am Tour (2008)
- Freedom Tour (2010)
- Piano & I: An Intimate Evening with Alicia Keys and Her Piano (2011)
- Set the World on Fire Tour (2013)

Filmography

List of television and films credits

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1985	<i>The Cosby Show</i>	Maria	"Slumber Party" (Season 1, Episode 22)
2001	<i>Charmed</i>	P3 VIP Patron (uncredited)	"Size Matters" (Season 4, Episode 5)
2001—2010	<i>Saturday Night Live</i>	Herself / Musical Guest	"Reese Witherspoon/Alicia Keys" (Season 27, Episode 1) "Charles Barkley/Alicia Keys" (Season 35, Episode 11)
2003	<i>American Dreams</i>	Fontella Bass	"Rescue Me" (Season 2, Episode 6)
2003	<i>The Proud Family</i>	Herself (voice)	"The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" (Season 3, Episode 46)
2005	<i>Sesame Street</i>	Herself	Episode #36.26 (Season 36, Episode 26)

2006	<i>The Backyardigans</i>	Mommy Martian (voice)	"Mission to Mars" (Season 2, Episode 1)
2007	<i>Cane</i>	Herself	"One Man Is an Island" (Season 1, Episode 7)
2007	<i>Elmo's Christmas Countdown</i>	Herself	Christmas television special
2007	<i>Smokin' Aces</i>	Georgia Sykes	Debut film
2007	<i>The Nanny Diaries</i>	Lynette	
2008	<i>Dove: Fresh Takes</i>	Alex	Lead role
2008	<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i>	June Boatwright	Nominated – NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture
2009	The X Factor (UK)	Herself; Performance	The X Factor (UK series 6)
2011	<i>Five</i>	Director	Nominated – Directors Guild of America Award
2012	<i>Firelight</i>		Executive Producer
2012	<i>The X Factor</i> (Australia)	Herself; Guest Mentor	Season 4
2012	The X Factor (UK)	Herself; Performance	The X Factor (UK series 9)
2012	The X Factor (U.S.)	Herself; Performance	Season 2
2013	<i>The Inevitable Defeat of Mister and Pete</i>		Executive Producer, Composer
2014	<i>The Ninth Wave</i>	Lena Horne	

References

- [1] <http://www.aliciakeys.com>
- [2] Who Will Come Out On Top Of VH1's 100 Greatest Artists Of All Time? (<http://blog.vh1.com/2010-08-25/who-will-come-out-on-top-of-vh1s-100-greatest-artists-of-all-time/>)
- [3] <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1006024/bio>
- [4] "A lot of people believe I'm part Jamaican, though I'm not. I'm definitely black and Italian and a little Irish or Scottish" (European American)
-

Further reading

- Keys, Alicia (2001). *Songs in A Minor*. Hal Leonard Corporation. ISBN 0-634-03776-5.
- Keys, Alicia (2004). *The Diary of Alicia Keys*. Hal Leonard Corporation. ISBN 0-634-07764-3.
- Keys, Alicia (2004). *Tears for Water: Songbook of Poems and Lyrics*. G. P. Putnam's Sons. ISBN 0-425-20560-6.
- Keys, Alicia (2006). *Unplugged*. Hal Leonard Corporation. ISBN 1-4234-0822-5.
- Keys, Alicia (2006). *How Can I Keep from Singing?: Transforming the Lives of African Children and Families Affected by AIDS*. Umbrage. ISBN 1-884167-60-8.

External links

- Official website (<http://www.aliciakeys.com/>)
- Alicia Keys (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1006024/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- Alicia Keys (<http://www.billboard.com/artist/278600/alicia+keys/chart>) at Billboard.com
- Alicia Keys (<http://www.discogs.com/artist/Alicia+Keys>) at Discogs
- Alicia Keys (<http://www.metacritic.com/person/alicia-keys>) at Metacritic
- Alicia Keys (<https://plus.google.com/+AliciaKeys/posts>) on Google+

Awards and achievements		
Preceded by Macy Gray	MTV Video Music Award for Best New Artist 2001	Succeeded by Avril Lavigne
Preceded by Nelly	BET Award for Best New Artist 2002	Succeeded by 50 Cent
Preceded by Carl Thomas	NAACP Image Award for Outstanding New Artist 2002	Succeeded by Ashanti

Preceded by Chris Cornell You Know My Name, 2006	<i>James Bond title artist</i> Another Way to Die, 2008	Succeeded by Adele Skyfall, 2012
--	---	--

Media offices		
Preceded by Queen Latifah and Arsenio Hall	Soul Train Music Awards host 2004	Succeeded by Brian McKnight, Fantasia, Nick Cannon, and Nicole Richie

Image:Gnome-mime-sound-openclipart.svg *Source:* <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Gnome-mime-sound-openclipart.svg> *License:* unknown *Contributors:* User:Eubulides

File:Alicia Keys Sing.jpg *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Alicia_Keys_Sing.jpg *License:* Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 2.0 *Contributors:* José Goulão from Lisbon, Portugal

File:Alicia Keys at the Summer Sonic Festival crop.jpg *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Alicia_Keys_at_the_Summer_Sonic_Festival_crop.jpg *License:* Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 *Contributors:* Alicia_Keys_at_the_Summer_Sonic_Festival.jpg; LuxTonnerre derivative work: DiverseMentality

File:Alicia Keys cropped.jpg *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Alicia_Keys_cropped.jpg *License:* Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 *Contributors:* Keith HInkle

File:Alicia Keys NRJ Music Awards 2013 2.jpg *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Alicia_Keys_NRJ_Music_Awards_2013_2.jpg *License:* Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 *Contributors:* JJ Georges, PierreSelim

File:Alicia Keys at the Summer Sonic Festival on piano crop.jpg *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Alicia_Keys_at_the_Summer_Sonic_Festival_on_piano_crop.jpg *License:* Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 *Contributors:* Alicia_Keys_at_the_Summer_Sonic_Festival_on_piano.jpg; LuxTonnerre derivative work: DiverseMentality

File:Alicia Keys at Live Earth.jpg *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Alicia_Keys_at_Live_Earth.jpg *License:* Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 2.0 *Contributors:* audrey_sel

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)