

Johnny Nash

John Lester Nash Jr. (August 19, 1940 – October 6, 2020) was an American singer-songwriter, best known in the United States for his 1972 hit "I Can See Clearly Now".^[1] Primarily a reggae and pop singer, he was one of the first non-Jamaican artists to record reggae music in Kingston.^[2]

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Early life

Nash was born in Houston, Texas, the son of Eliza (Armstrong) and John Lester Nash.^[3] He sang in the choir at Progressive New Hope Baptist Church in South Central Houston as a child.^{[4][5]} Beginning in 1953, Nash sang covers of R&B hits on *Matinee*, a local variety show on KPRC-TV;^{[4][5]} from 1956 he sang on Arthur Godfrey's radio and television programs for a seven-year period.^[4]

Career

Signing with ABC-Paramount, Nash made his major label debut in 1957 with the single "A Teenager Sings the Blues". He had his first chart hit in early 1958 with a cover of Doris Day's "A Very Special Love".^[4] Marketed as a rival to Johnny Mathis, Nash also enjoyed success as an actor early in his career, appearing in the screen version of playwright Louis S. Peterson's *Take a Giant Step* in 1959.^{[1][4]} Nash won a Silver Sail Award for his performance from the Locarno International Film Festival. Nash continued releasing singles on a variety of labels such as Groove, Chess, Argo, and Warner Bros.^[4]

Johnny Nash



Nash in 1965

Background information

Birth name	John Lester Nash Jr.
Born	August 19, 1940 <div>Houston, Texas, U.S.</div>
Died	October 6, 2020 <div>(aged 80)</div> <div>Houston, Texas, U.S.</div>
Genres	<u>Traditional pop</u> , <u>reggae</u> , <u>Big Band</u> , <u>Vocal Jazz</u> , <u>Swing</u> , <u>Modern Jazz</u>
Occupation(s)	Singer-songwriter, composer, actor
Years active	1956-2020
Labels	<u>Epic</u> , <u>JAD</u> , Cayman Music
Website	<u>johnnynash.com</u> (<u>htt</u> <u>p://johnnynash.com/</u>)

Nash sang the theme song to the syndicated animated cartoon series *The Mighty Hercules*, which ran on various television stations from 1963 to 1966.^[6]

In 1964, Nash and manager Danny Sims formed JoDa Records in New York.^[7] JoDa released *The Cowsills'* single "All I Really Want to Be Is Me."^[8] Although JoDa filed for bankruptcy after only two years, Nash and Sims moved on to marketing American singers to Jamaica, owing to the low cost of recording in that country.^[7]

In 1965, Nash had a top five hit in the US *Billboard* R&B chart, the ballad "Let's Move and Groove Together."^[4] That year, he and Sims moved to Jamaica.^[9] Their lawyer Newton Willoughby was the father of Jamaican radio host Neville Willoughby.^[10] After selling off his old entertainment assets in New York, Sims opened a new music publishing business in Jamaica, Cayman Music.^[7] Nash planned to try breaking the local rocksteady sound in the United States.^[1] Around 1966 or 1967, Neville Willoughby took Nash to a Rastafarian party where Bob Marley & The Wailing Wailers were performing.^{[9][7]} Members Bob Marley, Bunny Wailer, Peter Tosh, and Rita Marley introduced Nash to the local music scene.^[11] Nash signed all four to an exclusive publishing contract with Cayman Music for J\$50 a week.^[7]

In 1967, Nash, Arthur Jenkins, and Sims collaborated to create a new label, JAD Records (after their first names Johnny, Arthur, and Danny), and recorded their albums at Federal Records in Kingston.^{[7][12]} JAD released Nash's rocksteady single "Hold Me Tight" in 1968; it became a top-five hit in both the U.S. and UK.^[4] In 1971, Nash scored another UK hit with his cover of Marley's "Stir It Up".^[4]

Nash's 1972 reggae-influenced single "I Can See Clearly Now" sold over one million copies, and was awarded a gold disc by the R.I.A.A. in November 1972.^[13] "I Can See Clearly Now" reached #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 on November 4, 1972, and remained atop the chart for four weeks, spending the same four weeks atop the adult contemporary chart. The *I Can See Clearly Now* album includes four original Marley compositions published by JAD: "Guava Jelly", "Comma Comma", "You Poured Sugar On Me", and the follow-up hit "Stir It Up". "There Are More Questions Than Answers" was a third hit single taken from the album.^[14]

Nash was also a composer for the Swedish romance film *Vill så gärna tro* (1971),^[15] in which he portrayed *Robert*.^[16] The movie soundtrack, partly instrumental reggae with strings, was co-composed by Bob Marley and arranged by Fred Jordan.^[15]

JAD Records ceased to exist in 1971,^[1] but it was revived in 1997 by American Marley specialist Roger Steffens and French musician and producer Bruno Blum for the *Complete Bob Marley & the Wailers 1967–1972* ten-album series, for which several of the Nash-produced Marley and Tosh tracks were mixed or remixed by Blum for release. In the UK, his biggest hit was with the song "Tears on My Pillow" which reached number one in the UK Singles Chart in July 1975 for one week.^[17]

After a cover of Sam Cooke's "Wonderful World" in 1976 and "Let's Go Dancing" in 1979, for many years Nash seemed to have dropped out of sight, with the exception of a brief resurgence in the mid-1980s with the album *Here Again* (1986), which was preceded by the minor UK hit, "Rock Me Baby". Younger audiences were introduced to Nash's music with the appearance of Jimmy Cliff's cover of "I Can See Clearly Now" in Disney's 1993 hit film *Cool Runnings*. In May 2006, Nash was singing again at SugarHill Recording Studios and at Tierra Studios in his native Houston. Working with SugarHill chief engineer Andy Bradley and Tierra Studios' Grammy-winning Randy Miller, he began the work of transferring analog tapes of his songs from the 1970s and 1980s to Pro Tools digital format.^{[18][19]}

On June 25, 2019, *The New York Times Magazine* listed Nash among hundreds of artists whose material was reportedly destroyed in the 2008 Universal fire.^[20]

Acting career

Nash has four acting credits in film and television. In 1959, he had the lead role as Spencer Scott in *Take a Giant Step*, directed by Philip Leacock, one of the first black family films written by a black writer.^[21] In 1960 he appeared as "Apple" alongside Dennis Hopper in the crime drama *Key Witness*.^[1] In 1971, he played Robert in the Swedish romance *Vill så gärna tro*.^[16]

Death

Nash died at his home in Houston on October 6, 2020, after a period of failing health. He was 80.^{[22][23]}

Selected discography

Singles

Source: AllMusic^[24]

1961	"Some Of Your Lovin" b/w "World Of Tears"	104	93	-	-	-	-	-	
	"I Need Someone To Stand By Me" Original B-side: "A House On The Hill" Later B-side: "A Thousand Miles Away"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"I'm Counting On You" b/w "I Lost My Baby"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Too Much Love" b/w "Love's Young Dream"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1962	"Don't Take Away Your Love" b/w "Moment Of Weakness"	-	129	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Ol' Man River" b/w "My Dear Little Sweetheart"	120	91	-	-	-	-	-	
1963	"I'm Movin' On" b/w "Cigarettes, Whiskey and Wild, Wild Women"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"I've Got A Lot To Offer Darling" b/w "Helpless"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Deep in the Heart Of Harlem" b/w "What Kind Of Love Is This"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Town Of Lonely Hearts" b/w "It's No Good For Me"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1964	"I'm Leaving" b/w "Oh Mary Don't You Weep"	120	103	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Love Ain't Nothin" b/w "Talk To Me"	-	133	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Teardrops in the Rain</i>
	"Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye" b/w "Always" (Non-album track)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1965	"Strange Feeling" b/w "Spring Is Here" (from <i>Composer's Choice</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Teardrops in the Rain" b/w "I Know What I Want"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	"Let's Move & Groove Together" b/w "Understanding" (from <i>Love Me Tender</i>)	88	92	4	-	-	-	-	Non-album track
1966	"Get Myself Together" b/w "Teardrops in the Rain"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Teardrops in the Rain</i>
	"One More Time" b/w "Tryin' To Find Her"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Love Me Tender</i>

	"Somewhere" b/w "Big City"	120	118	35	–	–	–	–	
	"Amen" b/w "Perfumed Flower"	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1967	"Good Goodness" b/w "You Never Know"	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Non-album tracks
	"(I'm So) Glad You're My Baby" b/w "Stormy"	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1968	"Hold Me Tight" b/w "Cupid"	5	7	21	20	5	1	4	<i>Hold Me Tight</i>
	"You Got Soul" b/w "Don't Cry"	58	55	46	–	6	37	72	
	"Lovely Dovey" b/w "You Got Soul"	130	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1969	"We Try Harder"* b/w "My Time"*	135	–	–	–	–	–	–	<i>Johnny Nash & Kim Weston</i>
	"Sweet Charity" b/w "People in Love" (from <i>Hold Me Tight</i>)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Non-album track
	"Love and Peace" b/w "People in Love" (from <i>Hold Me Tight</i>)	132	–	–	–	–	–	–	<i>Love and Peace</i>
	"Cupid" b/w "Hold Me Tight"	39	36	–	38	6	30	–	<i>Hold Me Tight</i>
1970	"(What A) Groovey Feeling" b/w "You Got Soul" – Part 1 (from <i>Soul Folk</i>)	102	131	–	–	–	–	–	Non-album tracks
	"Falling in and Out Of Love" b/w "You Got To Change Your Ways" (from <i>Hold Me Tight</i>)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1972	"Stir It Up" b/w "Cream Puff"	–	11	–	6	13	7	48	<i>I Can See Clearly Now</i>
	"I Can See Clearly Now" b/w "How Good It Is"	1	1	38	1	5	1	3	
	"There Are More Questions Than Answers" b/w "Guava Jelly"	–	–	–	–	9	–	–	
1973	"Stir It Up" b/w "Ooh Baby You've Been Good To Me"	12 ^[29]	–	–	–	–	–	–	<i>My Merry-Go-Round</i>
	"My Merry-Go-Round" b/w "(Oh Jesus) We're Trying To Get Back To You"	77	74	–	34	–	47	–	
	"Ooh What A Feeling" b/w "Yellow House"	103	–	–	38	–	–	–	
1974	"Loving You"	91	67	40	–	–	–	–	

	b/w "Gonna Open Up My Heart Again"								
	"You Can't Go Halfway" b/w "The Very First Time"	105	90	38	–	–	–	–	<i>Celebrate Life</i>
	"Celebrate Life" b/w "Beautiful Baby"	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
	"(You Gave Me Such) Good Vibrations" b/w "The Very First Time"	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1975	"Tears on My Pillow" b/w "Beautiful Baby" (from <i>Celebrate Life</i>)	–	–	–	–	1	–	69	<i>Tears on My Pillow</i> (UK release only)
	"Let's Be Friends" b/w "The Edge Of Love"	–	–	–	–	42	–	–	
1976	"(What A Wonderful World) b/w "Rock It Baby (Baby We've Got A Date)" (from <i>Tears on My Pillow</i>)	103	82	66	34	25	–	96	<i>What A Wonderful World</i> (UK release only)
1977	"That Woman" b/w "Back in Time"	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1979	"Closer" b/w "Mr. Sea"	–	–	74	–	–	–	–	<i>Let's Go Dancing</i>
1985	"Rock Me Baby" b/w "Love Theme From 'Rock Me Baby'"	–	–	–	–	47	–	99	<i>Here Again</i>
1989	"I Can See Clearly Now" (remix) CD single with three other tracks	–	–	–	–	54	–	–	Non-album track
*with Kim Weston									

Albums

Source: AllMusic^[30]

- 1958: *Johnny Nash* (ABC Paramount)
- 1959: *I Got Rhythm* (ABC Paramount)
- 1959: *Quiet Hour* (ABC Paramount)
- 1960: *Let's Get Lost* (ABC Paramount)
- 1961: *Starring Johnny Nash* (ABC Paramount)
- 1964: *Composer's Choice* (Argo)
- 1968: *Hold Me Tight* (JAD) # 109 US
- 1969: *Prince of Peace* (JAD)
- 1969: *Let's Go Dancing* (Epic)
- 1972: *Teardrops in the Rain* (Cadet)
- 1972: *I Can See Clearly Now* (Epic) # 39 UK, # 23 US, #29 AUS^[28]
- 1973: *My Merry-Go-Round* (Epic US),^[31] # 169 US
- 1974: *Celebrate Life* (Epic)

- 1975: *Tears on My Pillow* (CBS)^[32]
- 1977: *What a Wonderful World* (Epic)
- 1979: *Let's Go Dancing* (Epic)^[33]
- 1986: *Here Again* (London)

Compilations

Source: AllMusic^[34]

- 1977: *Johnny Nash Collection # 18* UK
- 1979: *The Johnny Nash Album* (CBS)
- 1981: *Stir It Up*
- 1993: *The Reggae Collection*
- 1996: *The Best of Johnny*^{[17][35]}

Soundtrack

Nash sang the theme song for the television cartoon series *The Mighty Hercules*, which aired in first-run syndication from 1963 to 1966.^{[36][37]}

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External links

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