

# Sharon Jones

**Sharon Lafaye Jones** (May 4, 1956 – November 18, 2016) was an American soul and funk singer. She was the lead singer of **Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings**, a soul and funk band based in **Brooklyn, New York**.<sup>[1]</sup> Jones experienced breakthrough success relatively late in life,<sup>[2]</sup> releasing her first record when she was 40 years old.<sup>[3]</sup> In 2014, Jones was nominated for her first **Grammy**, in the category **Best R&B Album**, for *Give the People What They Want*.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

## 1 Early life

Jones was born in **Augusta, Georgia**,<sup>[6]</sup> the daughter of **Ella Mae Price Jones**<sup>[7]</sup> and **Charlie Jones**,<sup>[8]</sup> living in adjacent **North Augusta, South Carolina**.<sup>[6]</sup> Jones was the youngest of six children; her siblings are **Dora**, **Charles**, **Ike**, **Willa** and **Henry**.<sup>[9]</sup> Jones's mother raised her deceased sister's four children as well as her own. She moved the family to **New York City** when Sharon was a young child. As children, she and her brothers would often imitate the singing and dancing of **James Brown**.<sup>[10]</sup> Her mother happened to know Brown, who was also from **Augusta**.<sup>[10]</sup>

Jones grew up in the **Bedford Stuyvesant** neighborhood of **Brooklyn, New York**.<sup>[11]</sup> In 1975, she graduated from **Thomas Jefferson High School** in **Brooklyn**.<sup>[11][12]</sup> She attended **Brooklyn College**.<sup>[8]</sup>

## 2 Career

### 2.1 Early career

A regular **gospel** singer in church, during the early 1970s Jones often entered **talent shows** backed by local funk bands. Session work then continued with backing vocals, often credited to Lafaye Jones, but in the absence of any recording contract as a solo singer, she spent many years working as a **corrections officer** at **Rikers Island** and as an armored car guard for **Wells Fargo**, until receiving a mid-life career break in 1996 after she appeared on a session backing the soul and **deep funk** legend **Lee Fields**.<sup>[13]</sup>

The session was organized by **Gabriel Roth** and **Philippe Lehman**, then the owner of the now-defunct French record label **Pure Records**. Jones was the only one of three singers called to the session to show up. Having completed all the backing parts herself, Roth and

Lehman were suitably impressed with her performance and recorded "Switchblade", a solo track with Jones. This track and "The Landlord" were included on the Soul Providers' album *Soul Tequila*, released by Lehman on Pure circa 1996. The Soul Providers—with members of the Brooklyn bands **Antibalas** and the **Mighty Imperials**—later formed the Dap-Kings, who became Jones's regular backing band.<sup>[14]</sup>

Lehman and Roth started a new label based in Brooklyn, **Desco Records**, now also defunct. *Soul Tequila* was re-released as *Gimme the Paw*, which omitted "The Landlord" but kept "Switchblade". Jones recorded and released three 45-rpm **singles** for Desco: "Damn It's Hot" part 1 backed by part 2, "Bump N Touch" part 1 backed by "Hook and Sling Meets the Funky Superfly" (a medley cover of tracks by **Eddie Bo** and **Bobby Williams**), and "You Better Think Twice" backed by "I Got the Feeling" (a **James Brown** cover). The singles gained some notice among 45 soul and funk collectors, particularly because in the early days of Desco Records some collectors may have believed them to be originals from the early seventies, as they were not dated. These singles were also released on a compilation CD, the **Desco Funk 45' Collection**, with tracks by various other artists in the Desco stable. Desco had established a firm reputation among enthusiasts. Desco continued to release 45-rpm singles and also released LPs by **Lee Fields**, the **Sugarman 3**, the **Daktaris** and the **Mighty Imperials** as well as a further compilation of funk 45s. The **Mighty Imperials** album was the last release on the Desco label, and Lehman and Roth parted ways in 2000. Lehman started another independent label, **Soul Fire Records**, now also defunct. Roth went on to start **Daptone Records** with the saxophonist **Neal Sugarman** of **Sugarman 3**.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 2.2 Daptone Records

Launched on the back of the popularity of Desco Records, Daptone Records' first release was a full-length album by Sharon Jones. A new band, the Dap-Kings, was formed from the former members of the Soul Providers and the **Mighty Imperials**. Some of the musicians went on to record for Lehman's Soul Fire label, while some formed the **Budos Band**, an **Afro-beat** band. From the original Soul Providers, Roth (also known as **Bosco Mann**) on bass, guitarist and emcee **Binky Griptite**, percussionist **Fernando Velez**, trumpet player **Anda Szilagyi** and organist **Earl Maxton** were joined by original **Mighty Imperials** saxophonist **Leon Michels** and drum-

mer **Homer Steinweiss**, plus **Neal Sugarman** from **Sugarman 3**, to form **The Dap-Kings**.<sup>[16]</sup>



*Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings at the Moers Festival, 2007*

In 2002, under the name **Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings**, the group released the album *Dap Dippin' with Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings*, for which they received immediate attention and acclaim from enthusiasts, DJs and collectors. With three more albums under their belt, *Naturally* (2005), *100 Days, 100 Nights* (2007) and *I Learned the Hard Way* (2010)<sup>[17]</sup> they are seen by many as the spearhead of a revival of soul and funk.<sup>[18]</sup>

In 2015, during an interview with *Billboard* about her Grammy nomination, Jones discussed her commitment to the Daptone Label, an independent. She cited artistic freedom and the commitment to the band.<sup>[19]</sup>

## 2.3 Film

Jones had a small part in the 2007 film *The Great Debaters*, starring **Denzel Washington** and **Forest Whitaker**, in which she played **Lila**, a juke joint singer. Her performance of **Lucille Bogan's** "That's What My Baby Likes" is featured in the film, and additional covers by Jones of songs from the 1930s are included on the film's soundtrack.<sup>[20]</sup> In 2015, a documentary titled *Miss Sharon Jones!*, directed by **Barbara Kopple**, debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival.<sup>[21]</sup>

## 2.4 Collaborations

- 2007: She performed on tour with **Lou Reed**, although her appearance in *The Great Debaters* caused Jones to turn down a stint as back-up singer for Reed's fall 2007 live show built around his *Berlin* album.<sup>[14]</sup> She performed one song on the **David Byrne–Fatboy Slim** collaboration, *Here Lies Love*.<sup>[22]</sup>
- 2009: Jones sang backup for **Phish** during their 2009 Halloween performance of the Rolling Stones' *Exile on Main St.*, at Festival 8, in Indio, California.<sup>[23]</sup>

- 2009: Jones performed a duet of "Baby (You've Got What It Takes)" with **Michael Bublé** on his 2009 album *Crazy Love*.<sup>[24]</sup>
- 2013: Jones & The Dap-Kings performed on a float during the 87th annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.<sup>[25]</sup>
- 2015: Jones performed "Wade in the Water" on the BBC television program *Reginald D Hunter's Songs of the South*, presented by **Reginald D. Hunter**.<sup>[26]</sup>
- 2016: Jones performed "100 Days, 100 Nights" in the closing scenes of the Marvel Netflix TV series *Luke Cage*. Jones and her band were shown performing live in a Harlem night club central to one of the main story arcs of the series.<sup>[27]</sup>

## 3 Influences

Jones has sometimes been called, especially early in her late renaissance of a career, the Female **James Brown**.<sup>[10]</sup>

Among Jones' influences were **James Brown**, **Sam Cooke**, **Aretha Franklin**, **Ella Fitzgerald**, **Thom Bell**, **Otis Redding**, **Ike & Tina Turner**, **Marva Whitney** and everyone from **Motown**. In addition, Jones also cited more recently known artists, such as **Michael Jackson**, **Prince**, **Erykah Badu** and **Beyoncé**.<sup>[28]</sup>

## 4 Personal life

For several years she lived with her mother in the **Far Rockaway** section of **Queens, New York**.<sup>[1]</sup>

### 4.1 Health and death

It was announced on June 3, 2013, that Jones had been diagnosed with **bile duct cancer**<sup>[29]</sup> and had undergone surgery, which forced her to postpone the release of the group's fifth album, *Give the People What They Want*.<sup>[30]</sup> The diagnosis was later changed to stage II **pancreatic cancer**, for which Jones had surgery on her liver and underwent chemotherapy.<sup>[31]</sup> The chemotherapy caused hair loss, and for a time she performed bald, refusing to wear wigs.<sup>[32][33]</sup>

During the screening of her documentary at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival,<sup>[34]</sup> Jones revealed that her cancer had returned,<sup>[35]</sup> and that she would be undergoing chemotherapy again.<sup>[36]</sup> She suffered a stroke while watching the 2016 United States presidential election results and another the following day.<sup>[37]</sup> Jones remained alert and lucid during the initial period of her hospital stay, jokingly claiming that the news of **Donald Trump's** victory was responsible for her stroke.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

Jones died on November 18, 2016, in Cooperstown, New York, aged 60.

## 5 Discography

Source:<sup>[40]</sup>

### 5.1 Records

- *Dap Dippin' with Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings* (2002)
- *Naturally* (2005)
- *100 Days, 100 Nights* (2007)
- *I Learned the Hard Way* (2010)
- *Soul Time!* (compilation) (2011)
- *Give the People What They Want* (2014)
- *It's a Holiday Soul Party* (2015)
- *Miss Sharon Jones!* Soundtrack (compilation) (2016)

### 5.2 Singles

- “Damn It’s Hot” (1996)<sup>[41][42]</sup>
- “Bump N Touch” / “Hook N Sling Meets The Funky Superfly” (1997)<sup>[42]</sup>
- “You Better Think Twice” / “I Got The Feeling” (1998)<sup>[42]</sup>
- “I’m Gonna Get Ya!” (1999)<sup>[43]</sup>
- “Got a Thing on My Mind” (2001)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Make It Good to Me” / “Casella Walk” (2002)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Got to Be the Way It Is” (2002)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “What Have You Done for Me Lately” (2002)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Pick It Up, Lay It in the Cut” / “Hard Eight” (2002)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Genuine” (2004)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Taxes” / “This Land Is Your Land” (2004)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “How Long Do I Have to Wait for You?” (2004)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “My Man Is a Mean Man” / “How Do I Let a Good Man Down?” (2005)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “I Just Dropped In to See What Condition My Condition Is In” (2007)<sup>[44]</sup>

- “I’m Not Gonna Cry” / “Money Don’t Make the Man” (2007)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “100 Days, 100 Nights” / “Settling In” (2008)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Tell Me” (2008)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “How Long Do I Have to Wait For You? (Ticklah Remix)” / “How Long Do I Have to Dub For You?” (2008)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Ain’t No Chimneys in the Projects” / “Binky’s Message” (2009)<sup>[45]</sup>
- “Day Tripper” / “Money” (split with The Budos Band) (2010)<sup>[46]</sup>
- “When I Come Home” (2011)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “Better Things” / “Window Shopping” (2011)<sup>[44]</sup>
- “He Said I Can” / “It Hurts to Be Alone” (2011)<sup>[44]</sup>

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## 7 External links

- [Official website](#)
- [Sharon Jones at AllMusic](#)
- [Sharon Jones at the Internet Movie Database](#)
- [Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, Live at Amoeba: Amoeba Records, Hollywood. December 3, 2007.](#)
- [Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, NPR Showcase @ Stubb's \(audio of concert\) / KEXP @ SXSW. "I'll Still Be True," "Road of Broken Hearted Men," "I'm Not Gonna to Cry" \(video of songs\). March 17, 2010.](#)
- [Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, Austin City Limits. June 18, 2011.](#)



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