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Paul Simon – A Musical And Cultural Icon Returns To The Stage

By Jay Nault

Paul Simon is a music and entertainment beacon, and fans of several generations will be thrilled to hear that he is returning to the stage with a full schedule of shows around the United States in 2006. Simon's work evokes different meanings for different people, but the fact remains that very few performers draw from as diverse a fan base as Simon. A look at his life and influences may help to explain why.

Early Life

Simon was born on October 13, 1941 in Newark Heights, New Jersey, but his family soon moved to Queens, which was where Simon was introduced to the world. Simon was raised in a typical family setting, and attended Forest Hills High School, where he became very interested in music.

It was here that Simon met and befriended Art Garfunkel, and the two began playing music together sporadically under the band name "Tom and Jerry". The immediate bond the two shared centered on their mutual admiration of The Everly Brothers, and they released their first single, Hey, Schoolgirl, in 1957 and it climbed to number 49 on the charts. However, the duo did not begin their famous duo effort at this time. Instead, Simon continued to play on his own and with other artists.

Simon continued his education at Queens College, and he ultimately got his degree in English Literature. During this time, until he finished college, Simon was introduced to the folk music scene in New York City, and he continued to work on his own compositions. Simon released more than 30 songs before he graduated from college, most of which were released on small record labels.

A Legendary Duo

In 1964, Simon and Garfunkel began their longstanding work together by signing a record deal with Columbia Records, and they released their first album, Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M. that same year. One of the singles from that first album, "The Sound of Silence", climbed to number one on the charts, and a dynamic duo was born.

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For the next six years, the two singers released seven albums, one of which being the soundtrack for the legendary movie, "The Graduate". Although none of the singles from these albums achieved huge commercial success, the duo's work achieved cult status that's hard to match. A testament to their underground popularity was seen in 1981, when Simon and Garfunkel got together for a concert in Central Park that drew over 500,000 people.

Going Solo

After Simon and Garfunkel split in 1970, Simon continued to release albums, and his influence never waned. Simon released 14 albums during his time as a solo artist, and overall, Simon's commercial success actually grew, as he produced 17 singles that made the US charts. He also became a renowned musical writer, helping produce several platinum albums for other artists and Broadway productions. Simon continues to write and compose to this day.

Achievements

Paul Simon's status as an icon was cemented by several honors he received in reflection of his musical influence. Simon was inducted, with Art Garfunkel, into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1990. Simon was again recognized when he received Kennedy Center Honors in 2002. A year later, Simon and Garfunkel received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, which led to a tour that wrapped up at the Colosseum in Rome in front of a staggering 600,000 fans.

Paul Simon has been perfecting the art of music and performing for nearly 50 years, and this summer's tour will be an opportunity for fans of all ages to bask in the glow of a musical legend.

Written by Jay Nault sponsored by

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American Idol Auditions For Season 6!

By Edward Charkow

It's that time of year again --- the time when thousands line up in arenas all over the United States

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hoping to get a chance to audition their talents (or lack thereof) in front of judges Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul and Randy Jackson. These audition hopefuls often endure a couple of days of intense summer sun, pouring rain, no showers and no comfortable beds just to get a chance to throw out what might be just ONE note of music to associate judges who sit in tents screening thousands.

At American Idol auditions, very few people actually see the inside of a building. Instead they wait in long lines to approach an associate judge at a table in a tent. Once you get to the front of the line, you are moved in a cattle call fashion to where judges sit at tables ready to hear you sing a note or two. It takes hours and hours to get this point, but there is merely a second in your favor for one of these judges to see if you're otherwise amazingly good or excruciatingly bad. From what we hear, there is not much in the way of middle ground. You have a chance of moving forward to auditions stage 2 if you have a great voice or if you are horrific looking or sounding. Sad, but true. Many very good singers do not get through this stage at all. At this point, American Idol is seeking the best freaks and geeks who fill up the extremely popular audition specials that will start in January of 2007. Those who know their voice will most likely not carry them through to see Nigel Lithgoe or Simon Cowell will dress in chicken suits, clown shoes, cyborg costumes or exceedingly low cut shirts. Anything to get in to the building where Nigel Lithgoe and Simon Fuller make up the next stage of the judging process. If you are either fantastic or horrific, you might just get that shot in the dark to see Randy, Paula and Simon.

Cameras wait in the parking lots of each audition location to catch the cast-offs cry, collapse on the pavement, or else storm the cameras to get their own justice on American Idol. At the auditions, everyone does what it takes to get their few moments on television. And if not, they'll certainly be back next year.

This year's 7 audition cities include: Birmingham, AL, Los Angeles, CA, San Antonio, TX, East Rutherford, NJ, Memphis, TN, Minneapolis, MN and Seattle, WA.

Find more out about American Idol Auditions at

<http://www.idol-mania.com>



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