



Hollywood: Her Story December 2023 ENewsletter Kennedy Center Honorees

The 2023 Kennedy Center Honors were bestowed earlier this month, recognizing artists who have made profound contributions to the cultural life of our nation over a lifetime of artistic achievements. In 2021, Bette Midler was one of the honorees. Queen Latifah was one of the recipients in this, the 46th year. Let's learn more about both of these amazing women.



When the Kennedy Center honored **Bette Midler** in 2021, they said she was “an artistic tour de force and America’s Divine Miss M.” She “has enjoyed an unrivaled and prolific career, entertaining millions with her wondrous voice and trademark comedic wit.” A singer, actress, comedienne, and author, Midler has won Grammys, Emmys, and Tonys and has been nominated for two Academy Awards –*The Rose* (1980) and *For the Boys* (1992).

The “Divine Miss M” majored in drama in college in Hawaii and appeared as an extra in movies as early as 1966. After moving to New York, she appeared in off-off-Broadway plays and honed her skills at the Continental Baths, a gay bathhouse. In 1970, she became friends with pianist (and her sometimes accompanist) Barry Manilow, who also appeared at the Continental Baths. He produced her first album, *The Divine Miss M*, in 1972. The album reached the Top Ten, was certified Platinum, and won her a Grammy for Best New Artist. Her first starring role in a film was *The Rose*, which resulted in an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. The film’s soundtrack went double platinum.



Honored in the most recent class by the Kennedy Center, **Queen Latifah** “shaped and innovated the art form in its earliest days, representing black women everywhere and using the idiom to become a powerful voice for change.” A rapper, actress and singer, Queen Latifah has appeared in films for three decades and was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar in 2003 for *Chicago*. She has won a Grammy and an Emmy and appeared in films, on television, and produced albums.

Queen Latifah’s first album debuted when she was 19 years old. Her third album became the first album from a solo female rapper to be certified gold. That album also resulted in a single that reached the Top 40 and won a Grammy Award. The television film which she co-produced and in which she starred profiling blues singer Bessie Smith won a Primetime Emmy. Queen Latifah said, “I decided early on that I was going to put on my crown and rule my world by acting right and treating myself like a queen.”

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

Jill S. Tietjen and Barbara Bridges

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