

People & Places

Obituary

'60s rock 'n' roll icon

Ronnie Spector, singer of 'Be My Baby,' dead

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): **Ronnie Spector**, the cat-eyed, bee-hived rock 'n' roll siren who sang such 1960s hits as "Be My Baby," "Baby I Love You" and "Walking in the Rain" as the leader of the girl group The Ronettes, has died. She was 78. Spector died Wednesday after a brief battle with cancer, her family said. "Ronnie lived her life with a twinkle in her eye, a spunky attitude, a wicked sense of humor and a smile on her face. She was filled with love and gratitude," a statement said. No other details were revealed.

Tributes flooded social media, from Stevie Nicks to Brian Wilson, who wrote on Twitter: "I loved her voice so much and she was a very special person and a dear friend." Diane Warren called her "The voice of a million teenage dreams including mine."

"I'm in total shock! Did not see this one coming. Please give me time to process my thoughts to give Ronnie the proper tribute she deserves. She and I shared so much together," Darlene Love said, via Facebook.

"I just heard the news about Ronnie Spector and I don't know what to say. I loved her voice so much and she was a very special person and a dear friend. This just breaks my heart. Ronnie's music and spirit will live forever," Brian Wilson, via Twitter.

The Ronettes' sexy look and powerful voices — plus songwriting and producing help from Phil Spector — turned them into one of the premier acts of the girl-group era, touring England with The Rolling Stones and befriending the Beatles.

Spector, alongside her sister Estelle Bennett and cousin Nedra Talley, scored hits with pop masterpieces like "Baby, I Love You," "Walking in the Rain," "I Can Hear Music" and "Be My Baby," which was co-written by Spector, Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich.

Memoir

"We weren't afraid to be hot. That was our gimmick," Spector said in her memoir. "When we saw The Shirelles walk on stage with their wide party dresses, we went in the opposite direction and squeezed our bodies into the tightest skirts we could find. Then we'd get out on stage and hike them up to show our legs even more."

Spector, born Veronica Bennett, and her multiracial bandmates grew up in the Washington Heights area of Manhattan. They began singing and dancing in clubs as Ronnie and the Relatives, becoming noteworthy for their liberal use of eyeliner and mascara.

"The louder they applauded, the more mascara we put on the next time," she wrote in her memoir. "We didn't have a hit record to grab their attention, so we had to make an impression with our style. None of it was planned out; we just took the look we were born with and extended it."

In March 1963, Estelle Bennett managed to arrange an audition in front of Phil Spector, known for his big, brass-and-drum style dubbed the "wall of sound." They were signed to Philles Records in 1963. After being signed, they sang backup for other acts until Spector had the group record "Be My Baby" and "Baby I Love You."

The group's debut album, "Presenting the Fabulous Ronettes Featuring Veronica," was released in 1964. Five of its 12 tracks had made it to the US Billboard charts.

"Nothing excites me more than just being on-stage, having fun and flirting and winking to the guys and stuff like that," she told People magazine in 2017. "I just have so much fun. It's just the best feeling when I go out and they say, 'Ladies and gentlemen...' -my heart stops for a minute...' Ronnie Spector and the Ronettes!" Then I just go out there and the crowd reacts the way they react and I can go on singing forever."

Influence

After touring Germany in 1967, the Ronettes broke up. Spector married Ronnie in 1968, then she said he kept her locked in their Beverly Hills mansion. Her 1990 autobiography "Be My Baby: How I Survived Mascara, Miniskirts And Madness" tells an unhappy story of abuse. The couple divorced in 1974. Phil Spector was sent to prison in 2009 for the murder of actress Lana Clarkson and died in 2021.

Ronnie Spector's influence was felt far and wide. Brian Wilson became obsessed with "Be My Baby" and Billy Joel wrote "Say Goodbye to Hollywood" in Spector's honor. Amy Winehouse frequently cited Spector as an idol.

Martin Scorsese used "Be My Baby" to open his 1973 film "Mean Streets" and the song appears in the title sequence of "Dirty Dancing" and the closing credits of "Baby Mama." It also appeared on TV in "Moonlighting" and "The Wonder Years."

When the Ronettes were inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones remembered opening for the trio in England in the mid-1960s. "They could sing all their way right through a wall of sound," Richards said. "They didn't need anything. They touched my heart right there and then and they touch it still."

After the Ronettes broke up, Spector continued to tour and make music, including "Take Me Home Tonight" with Eddie Money, recording Joel's "Say Goodbye to Hollywood" with Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, and recording the 1999 EP "She Talks to Rainbows," which included her first ever recording of "Don't Worry Baby," written for her by Brian Wilson.

In 2006, she released "Last of the Rock Stars," her first album in 20 years and it featured appearances by the Raconteurs, Keith Richards, Patti Smith and the Raconteurs. In 2010 she released a doo-wop Christmas EP called "Ronnie Spector's Best Christmas Ever" and in 2016 released "English Heart," her covers of songs from Britain in the '60s.

She is survived her husband, Jonathan Greenfield, and two sons, Jason and Austin.



Spector



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Will Smith, (center), with Demi Singleton, (left), and Saniyya Sidney in a scene from 'King Richard.' (AP)

Awards

Plenty of famous faces in the hunt this year

Smith, Gaga, Affleck score SAG noms

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): The Oscar race may be missing in-person glitz this year, but it doesn't lack for star power. Will Smith, Lady Gaga and Ben Affleck landed individual nominations for the 28th Screen Actors Guild Awards on Wednesday, while the casts of "Belfast" and "CODA" were among those nominated for the guild's top award, best ensemble.

The nominees were announced Wednesday by actors Vanessa Hudgens and Rosario Dawson on Instagram Live. While the nominations were conducted virtually due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, the streamed announcement still represented one of the most meaningful mornings in an awards season largely snuffed out by the pandemic.

Joining Kenneth Branagh's semi-autobiographical "Belfast" and the coming-of-age drama "CODA" for best ensemble were the casts for Ridley Scott's true-tale, high-camp "House of Gucci." Adam McKay's apocalypse comedy "Don't Look Up" and the family tennis drama "King Richard." Notably left out were the casts of Steven Spielberg's lavish "West Side Story" revival (which landed a supporting nod for Ariana DeBose) and Jane Campion's "The Power of the Dog." Campion's gothic drama, though, landed individual SAG nominations for Benedict Cumberbatch, Kirsten Dunst and Kodi Smit-McPhee.

The SAG Awards have more of the awards season spotlight this year since the Golden Globes — usually the kick-off party to final Oscar stretch — made barely a peep. The Globes were unceremoniously announced Sunday on Twitter in a private ceremony due to Hollywood's boycott of the beleaguered Hollywood Foreign Press Association over diversity and ethical issues. The omicron surge also prompted the Critics Choice Awards to postpone its Jan. 9 in-person gala. For the second straight year, Oscar season has gone virtual — and struggled to make much noise.

But the SAG nominations suggest that plenty of famous faces are in the hunt this year. Along with Will Smith ("King Richard") and Cumberbatch, the nominees for best male lead actor are: Denzel Washington ("The Tragedy of Macbeth"), Andrew Garfield ("Tick, Tick ... Boom!"), and Javier Bardem ("Being the Ricardos").

Up for best female lead are: Lady Gaga ("House of Gucci"), Jessica Chastain ("The Eyes of Tammy Faye"), Olivia Colman ("The Lost Daughter"), and Nicole Kidman ("Being the Ricardos").

Joining Dunst and DeBose in the best female supporting category are Caitriona Balfe ("Belfast"), Cate Blanchett ("Nightmare Alley") and Ruth Negga ("Passing"). The best male supporting nominees are: Affleck ("The Tender Bar"), Bradley Cooper ("Licorice Pizza"), Troy Kotsur ("CODA"), Jared Leto ("House of Gucci") and Smit-McPhee.

Kotsur is the first deaf actor to land an individual SAG nomination.

The SAG Awards, presented by the actors guild SAG-AFTRA, are among the most reliable Oscar bellwethers. Seldom does a movie or performance

not nominated by the screen actors end up winning at the Academy Awards. Actors make up the biggest percentage of the film academy, so their choices have the largest sway.

But last year, SAG and the academy diverged more than usual. Only one of its acting winners — Daniel Kaluuya ("Judas and the Black Messiah") — repeated at the Oscars. (The other SAG winners were Chadwick Boseman and Viola Davis in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," and Yuh-Jung Youn in "Minari.") The Aaron Sorkin courtroom drama "The Trial of the Chicago 7" won best ensemble at a virtual SAG Awards while Chloé Zhao's "Nomadland" — which included many nonprofessional actors and went un-nominated for SAG's ensemble award — triumphed at the Oscars.

That history will give hope to supporters of Kristen Stewart ("Spencer"), maybe the most notable performer overlooked Wednesday. Others that missed out include Peter Dinklage ("Cyrano"), Ciarán Hinds ("Belfast") and Rachel Zegler ("West Side Story"). While some have rooted for some of the year's most popular blockbusters to give the flagging Oscars a populist jolt, "Spider-Man: No Way Home," "Dune" and "No Time to Die" received no major nominations from the actors guild. "Dune" and "No Time to Die" did, though, join "Black Widow," "The Matrix Resurrections" and "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" in the stunt ensemble category.

Popular

Yet possibly the most popular TV series of 2021 did haul in plenty of recognition. Netflix's much-watched "Squid Game" was nominated for four SAG awards including best drama series.

Series creator Hwang Dong-hyuk on Wednesday recalled watching the hoopla at awards ceremonies held at the Shrine Auditorium across the street from the University of Southern California when he was studying there.

"At the time, I told myself I'd like to feature my work at American film awards one day," he said in an interview. "Now, I think back to those memories." The series' star Lee Jung-jae said he felt an "electrical shock" when his name was announced among the nominees. A veteran of Korean TV and film, he's laughed off US media questions about overnight success.

"I've decided I'm now a newbie actor!" he said Wednesday, clutching a bottle of wine.

The television nominations were also led by HBO's "Succession" (four nods including best drama series and best actor for Jeremy Strong and Brian Cox); "Ted Lasso" (five nods including best comedy series); and "The Morning Show" (four nods including best drama series).

The 28th annual SAG Awards are to be held Feb. 27 and will be broadcast on TNT and TBS. The Oscars are scheduled for March 27.

Nominations for the 28th annual Screen Actor Guild Awards, which will be handed out on Feb. 27:

Film

■ Ensemble: "Belfast"; "CODA";

"Don't Look Up"; "House of Gucci"; "King Richard."

■ Male actor in a leading role: Javier Bardem, "Being the Ricardos"; Benedict Cumberbatch, "The Power of the Dog"; Andrew Garfield, "tick, tick ... BOOM!"; Will Smith, "King Richard"; Denzel Washington, "The Tragedy of Macbeth."

■ Female actor in a leading role: Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"; Olivia Colman, "The Lost Daughter"; Lady Gaga, "House of Gucci"; Jennifer Hudson, "Respect"; Nicole Kidman, "Being the Ricardos."

■ Male actor in a supporting role: Ben Affleck, "The Tender Bar"; Bradley Cooper, "Licorice Pizza"; Troy Kotsur, "CODA"; Jared Leto, "House of Gucci"; Kodi Smit-McPhee, "The Power of the Dog."

■ Female actor in a supporting role: Caitriona Balfe, "Belfast"; Cate Blanchett, "Nightmare Alley"; Ariana DeBose, "West Side Story"; Kirsten Dunst, "The Power of the Dog"; Ruth Negga, "Passing."

■ Stunt Ensemble: "Black Widow"; "Dune"; "The Matrix Resurrections"; "No Time to Die"; "Shang-Chi and the Ten Rings."

Television

■ Drama ensemble: "The Handmaid's Tale"; "The Morning Show"; "Squid Game"; "Succession"; "Yellowstone."

■ Comedy Ensemble: "The Great"; "Hacks"; "The Kominsky Method"; "Only Murders in the Building"; "Ted Lasso."

■ Female actor in a drama series: Jennifer Aniston, "The Morning Show"; Jung Ho-Yeon, "Squid Game"; Elisabeth Moss, "The Handmaid's Tale"; Sarah Snook, "Succession"; Reese Witherspoon, "The Morning Show."

■ Male actor in a drama series: Brian Cox, "Succession"; Billy Crudup, "The Morning Show"; Kieran Culkin, "Succession"; Lee Jung-Jae, "Squid Game"; Jeremy Strong, "Succession."

■ Female actor in a comedy series: Elle Fanning, "The Great"; Sandra Oh, "The Chair"; Jean Smart, "Hacks"; Juno Temple, "Ted Lasso"; Hannah Waddingham, "The Lasso."

■ Male actor in a comedy series: Michael Douglas, "The Kominsky Method"; Brett Goldstein, "Ted Lasso"; Steve Martin, "Only Murders in the Building"; Martin Short, "Only Murders in the Building"; Jason Sudeikis, "Ted Lasso."

■ Male actor in a TV limited series or movie: Murray Bartlett, "The White Lotus"; Oscar Isaac, "Scenes from a Marriage"; Michael Keaton, "Dope Sick"; Ewan McGregor, "Halston"; Evan Peters, "Mare of Easttown."

■ Female actor in a TV limited series or movie: Jennifer Coolidge, "The White Lotus"; Cynthia Erivo, "Genius: Aretha"; Margaret Qualley, "Maid"; Jean Smart, "Mare of Easttown"; Kate Winslet, "Mare of Easttown."

■ Stunt Ensemble: "Cobra Kai"; "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier"; "Loki"; "Mare of Easttown"; "Squid Game."



In this video grab issued Wednesday, Jan. 12, by the SAG Awards, Rosario Dawson, (top), and Vanessa Hudgens, (bottom), present the nominees for the 28th SAG Awards. This year's awards are scheduled for Feb. 27. (AP)

Variety

COLUMBIA, Mo: The University of Missouri has named a choral hall after musician **Sheryl Crow**, who graduated from the school in 1984 with a degree in music education.

The Columbia Missourian reports that the newly named hall is located inside of the Jeanne and Rex Sinquefeld Music Center.

Crow held a benefit concert in 2015 to help raise money for the \$24 million center, which opened in 2020.

Julia Gaines, director of the School of Music, said they had hoped to align the unveiling of the hall with Crow headlining the Roots N Blues Festival this past September. But Crow's COVID-19 policies prevented her from visiting the school.

Gaines said the hall will be used primarily as a performance space. Several classes, including choral and conducting, also will take place there.

Crow is an American musician, singer, songwriter and actress. Her music incorporates elements of pop, rock, country, jazz and blues. She has released ten studio albums, four compilations and two live albums, as well as contributed to several film soundtracks. Her most popular songs include "All I Wanna Do" (1994), "Strong Enough" (1994), "If It Makes You Happy" (1996), "Everyday Is a Winding Road" (1996), "Tomorrow Never Dies" (1997), theme song for the James Bond eponymous film, "My Favorite Mistake" (1998), "Picture" (2002, duet with Kid Rock) and "Soak Up the Sun" (2002).

Crow has sold more than 50 million albums worldwide and won nine Grammy Awards (out of 32 nominations) from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. As an actress, Crow has appeared on various television series including 30 Rock, Cop Rock, GCB, Cougar Town, **Jon Stewart** and **Stephen Colbert**'s Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear, One Tree Hill and NCIS: New Orleans. (Agencies)

SANTA FE, NM: A damaged **Georgia O'Keeffe** painting is back on display after conservators spent 1,250 hours and \$145,000 restoring it.

Dale Kronkright, head of conservation at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, called the job the most massive restoration project he has ever worked on.

The results will be on display at the museum through Oct. 10. The painting will then travel to the **San Diego** Museum of Art in 2023.

The late American modernist artist painted the piece, titled "Spring," in 1948. It was last seen by the public in 2019, the Albuquerque Journal reported.

The painting combines such O'Keeffe trademarks as desert primroses, a large vertebra and the northern **New Mexico** mountain peak named Pedernal. Measuring about 4 by 7 feet (1.2 by 2.1 meters), it was the largest canvas the artist had painted up to that point.

The water damage likely was caused by a tarantula tunneling through the roof

at the artist's 18th century adobe home in **Abiquiú**, in northern New Mexico.

Conservators had to repair not only the water damage but previous restoration work that had failed. The artwork also had been varnished, a process no longer used in conservation.

"The damage is consistent with it being stacked against another painting," Kronkright said. "It's clear at some point that it was sanded. It was almost as if the paint had been pulled off."



Stewart



Crow

O'Keeffe Museum Curator **Ariel Plotek** said the work feels like a statement about a new chapter in the artist's life. The painting of "Spring" coincided with O'Keeffe's return from **New York** — where she spent three years settling the estate of her late husband, **Alfred Stieglitz** — and the remodeling of her New Mexico home.

"The primrose is associated with mourning; the bones are connected to death. It's interpreted as kind of a memorial to **Alfred Stieglitz**," Plotek said. (AP)