

Lady Gaga biography

A.J. Smuskiewicz, for ABC-CLIO



Lady Gaga is a singer, songwriter, performance artist, and actress. Since rising to pop music stardom in the early 2000s with her catchy dance songs—as well as her highly original persona and avant-garde, often outrageous outfits—she has expanded the scope of her career and explored various public images. She has also frequently used her fame to advocate for a number of social causes, including issues related to bullying, sexual assault, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights.

Early Life

Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta was born on March 28, 1986, in New York City. Her father, Joseph, was an Internet entrepreneur, owning a company that installed Wi-Fi in hotels. Her mother, Cynthia, also worked in the telecommunications industry. She grew up in the generally affluent Upper West Side of Manhattan. Stefani began playing piano when 4 years old and studied classical music while attended a private all-girls Catholic elementary and high school called the Convent of the Sacred Heart.

An aspect of Germanotta's early life that she has frequently spoken about is always feeling “different,” “insecure,” “eccentric,” and “like a freak,” and, consequently, finding herself being bullied and ridiculed by peers. Peer rejection, she said, was a major reason that she sought refuge in art.

At age 17, Germanotta started attending New York University's Tisch School for the Arts, where she continued her music studies. However, she quit during her second year to pursue cabaret and rock singing, songwriting, performance art, and other artistic endeavors. Her Stefani Germanotta Band, which developed a local fan following at bars and clubs on New York's Lower East Side, played classic rock covers and original songs. She also worked as a go-go dancer.

Early Career

In 2007, Germanotta began working as a songwriter for Interscope Records, where she penned numerous songs for such pop artists as Britney Spears, Fergie, The Pussycat Dolls, and New Kids on the Block. That same year, her own performances were discovered by the singer and music producer Akon while Germanotta was on stage in an original burlesque show titled "Lady Gaga and the Starlight Revue." Akon signed her to his record label. Germanotta had adapted her stage name from the 1984 song "Radio Ga Ga," by the glam-rock band Queen. She had developed her stage persona with the help of Lady Starlight, a New York performer who was her frequent collaborator, and a music producer named Rob Fusari.

Pop Music Stardom

Lady Gaga's 2008 debut album, titled *The Fame*, was an enormous popular and critical success, with such hit songs as "Poker Face," "Just Dance," and "Paparazzi." Gaga's 2009 album, *The Fame Monster*, solidified her growing and rabid fan base with such hits as "Bad Romance," "Alejandro," and "Telephone" (recorded with Beyonce). She gave the nickname "Little Monsters" to her devoted fans, many of whom identified with her personal stories of feeling like an outcast, misfit, and victim of bullying. *Born This Way*, her album released in 2011, featured the title song, which was dedicated to her Little Monsters, most obviously members of the LGBT community. Other hits on that album included "Marry the Night," "Judas," "Americano," and "The Edge of Glory."

As equally compelling as Gaga's music have been many of the original costumes that she has worn during her concert performances, at awards ceremonies, and at other public appearances. She has worn dresses made of raw meat and giant plastic bubbles, she has hung over a stage by one arm with her body covered in blood, and she has arrived at an awards show wearing a violet gown while sitting atop a white mechanical horse operated by two men hidden beneath the contraption. Examples of some of her most extreme outfits can be seen at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/lady-gaga-top-30-outrageous-outfits-gallery-1.2580141?pmSlide=1.1527790>.



Career Evolution

Gaga's restless creativity has led her to pursue many new and diverse career paths. She surprised her Little Monsters in 2014 by putting aside her hard-driving electronic dance music to record and perform with octogenarian pop/jazz crooner Tony Bennet. In 2016, she released the album *Joanne*, which had strong country and rock influences. She has acted in a number of television shows and motion pictures, including the 2013 movie *Machete Kills* and the 2014 movie *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*. In 2015 and 2016, she had recurring appearances in the *American Horror Story* television series, for which she won

a Golden Globe award. In 2017, a remake of the movie *A Star is Born*, starring Gaga and Bradley Cooper, was being filmed.

Gaga has received numerous awards and honors for her songs, albums, and music videos, including Grammy Awards and MTV Video Music Awards.

Advocacy

Lady Gaga has long been warmly embraced by the LGBT community as an ally to their causes and even as an icon. She has credited strong support from gays as being key to her early career successes, noting “The turning point for me was the gay community” and “...the gay men in my life ... helped me to become a woman.” She has described herself as bisexual. At the National Equality March in 2009, Gaga performed John Lennon’s “Imagine” to show her support for LGBT rights, proclaiming “Bless God and bless the gays!” During her halftime performance at the Super Bowl in 2017, she drew national attention to LGBT rights with a lengthy, dramatic performance of *Born This Way*.

At the Academy Awards event in 2016, Gaga cast a spotlight on college sexual assault by performing the song “Til It Happens to You,” in which she was joined onstage by a number of rape survivors. Gaga’s non-profit organization, Born This Way Foundation, is dedicated to fighting youth bullying and fostering youth empowerment and mentoring.

