

Artspeak: So long Donna Summer...Disco Queen par excellence

Written by Irma McClaurin, PhD
Tuesday, 22 May 2012 14:02

Yes, I admit to rocking a Donna Summer in my afro “do” with bell bottomed jeans, and platform shoes.

I even do the Hustle on occasion, if the right jam plays.

The death of the sultry “Queen of Disco” on May 18, 2012 is a different kind of tragedy than that of songstress Whitney Houston. Donna Summer succumbed to death after losing her battle with lung cancer at age 63. The singer believed that the cause of her illness was “inhaling toxic particles” after 9/11, according to TMZ. Summer made history back in the 1970s disco era as a five-time Grammy winner and with the success of her iconic songs such as “Last Dance,”

“Bad Girls” and “Hot Stuff,” she became a disco legend. Hers was an unexpected success story. And if you of the younger generation have never heard “Love to Love You Baby,” then you haven’t lived. Nelly and all those who talk about sex in their music have yet to master the sensual poetry of Summer. With just six words, “ooooh, love to love you baby,” Summer was able to invoke sensuality, pleasure, and mood, with just a few moans. Now that’s music!

We may never know the cause of Summer’s deadly lung cancer. But if her beliefs are correct, then all of us, not just the environmentalists, must pay attention to how we treat the air we breathe, and better prepare for disasters of any kind that have an impact on our environment. If it wasn’t the toxic particles, but the fault of the cigarettes she smoked or the smoked-filled air she inhaled when performing in clubs, then those who smoke should pay attention how their bad habits impact themselves and others who breathe the air they pollute. I am annoyed every time I walk in front of a public building and become enveloped in smoke by those who stand right in front and blow out their bad habits. There should be a smoking bubble that people have to go into—like at some airports, to isolate those who have to indulge. With smokers in my family, I know that it is an addiction, and I hope they find a cure soon.

Summer’s music has survived beyond the moment when it was first introduced. I imagine her in heaven doing a “last dance,” fogging up the place with her sultry voice, and very possibly preparing to rock it with the recently departed Andy Gibbs of the Bee Gees.

Now that’s a performance worth seeing.

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