

# coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN



Linda Ronstadt

## Linda Ronstadt and others are feted at Kennedy Center Honors

Though they hadn't met before this year's Kennedy Center Honors, Linda Ronstadt became accustomed to being mistaken for a fellow honoree.

"I used to sign Sally Field's autograph in the '60s," the music icon reveals. "People would come up to me and say, 'Could I have your autograph, Miss Field?' I'd say I wasn't her, and they wouldn't believe me, so I just signed her name. There was about a year-and-a-half where we really lined up in terms of our looks."

One of the top-selling female recording artists in history, 10-time Grammy winner Ronstadt receives one of the most prestigious of all entertainment awards in a CBS telecast Sunday, Dec. 15. Taped the previous weekend at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and hosted by past recipient LL Cool J, the 42nd annual event also salutes two-time Oscar winner Field and the children's series "Sesame Street" (which is marking its 50th anniversary), conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and music's Earth, Wind & Fire.

"It's hard to accept and evaluate your own work," the good-humored Ronstadt reflects. "I just know it took me a lot of years." As for the part of receiving the honor she may appreciate the most, she adds, "I'm so happy I don't have to give a speech! I've developed quite a stam-

mer because of the Parkinson's (disease, which Ronstadt was diagnosed with in 2012)."

Since a brief filmed biography of the honoree is part of the presentation, Ronstadt notes she finds any career recap "a little daunting. I don't want people to think the (the work in the) '70s is all I did. I did my best singing in the '90s, and I really only started learning how to sing in the '80s."

Fans of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member Ronstadt might challenge that. After scoring her first success with The Stone Poneys and the tune "Different Drum," she launched a parade of solo singles including "You're No Good," "When Will I Be Loved," "Heat Wave," "It's So Easy," "The Tracks of My Tears" and "Poor Poor Pitiful Me" (and such albums as "Heart Like a Wheel," "Prisoner in Disguise" and "Living in the USA"). Her work eventually covered a number of genres.

"I don't like listening to my own stuff, because it's frozen in time," explains the subject of the well-reviewed documentary "Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice," which CNN will show on New Year's Day. "It makes me think that I was never able to sing. If I do listen to it, I'm astonished at how much work it was and how long it took. And the better I got, the more respect I got."

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