

coverstory
BY GEORGE DICKIE



HBO's 'Tina' paints an intimate portrait of a music superstar

Music fans who think they know Tina Turner's story may find a few surprises in a documentary upcoming on HBO and HBO Max.

The two-hour film "Tina," premiering Saturday, March 27, gives an unvarnished account of the life and six-plus-decade career of the iconic performer of such hits as "Better Be Good to Me," "The Best" and "What's Love Got to Do With It," looking at her early rise to fame in the late 1950s, her professional and personal struggles in the 1970s and her rousing comeback in the '80s.

Through never-before-seen footage, audio tapes, personal photos and intimate interviews with Turner at her home in Zurich, Switzerland, the film from Oscar-winning documentarians Dan Lindsay and T.J. Martin ("Undeclared," "LA 92") paints a picture of a woman whose personal strength and faith saw her through hard times that included a loveless relationship with her mother, an abusive marriage and subsequent divorce from her former music partner Ike Turner and sexism and racism in the music industry, to become a global icon with platinum records, multiple Grammy Awards and a slew of other accolades to her name before retiring in 2008.

It's ground that's been covered before in print, movies (the 1993 feature "What's Love Got to Do With It") and theater (Broadway's recent "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical"), only here the story is told from Turner's point of view. And both filmmakers hope that gives those familiar and not-so-familiar with her story a new understanding of the artist.

"A lot of the theme of the film is ownership," Martin explains. "Ownership over her being, over her body, ownership over her name and ultimately ownership over her narrative. Her ability to, even when she kind of felt like she was getting control of her life again by giving the narrative to the world, all of a sudden the world had a little bit more control in the perception of what her story is. And so I think the hope amongst many is coming away from this film, you get a little bit more insight into Tina's own point of view of her story."

One thing she makes clear in the documentary is that she doesn't dwell on the past, particularly her marriage to Ike. While she had her first professional success with him, she also experienced much physical and emotional abuse. When they divorced in 1978, he got everything except Tina's name. And that proved to be the most valuable asset by far.

Ultimately, this is a story of survivorship, of a woman who endured several lifetimes' worth of adversity to have a happy, peaceful life with second husband Erwin Bach on a lake in Switzerland.

"She was relevant from almost the beginning of popular music in the late '50s/early '60s until the 2000s, when she retired," Lindsay says. "You look at all these major events along the way in popular music and she's there. ... Obviously everybody appreciates her as a singer but we hope to like slightly reintroduce people, so to speak, to her talent because she is just an absolutely incredible performer."

Tina Turner is profiled in "Tina," premiering Saturday on HBO and HBO Max.

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