

LEGENDS · SPECIAL EDITION

FREDDIE MERCURY

1946-1991



Stories behind his music

A LEGENDS special edition about the life, songs, stories
and legacy of one of the most remarkable voices in
popular music.

BY ADRIAN ANTOINE

The music lives on. Legends never fade.

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01 / A life in music

01 · A voice born far from London

Born Farrokh Bulsara in Zanzibar on September 5, 1946, Freddie spent part of his childhood in India, where he studied and received musical training. His family moved to England in 1964. Long before Queen, his life was shaped by several cultures.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

02 · From art school to the stage

In London he studied graphic design at Ealing College of Art. That education did not remain separate from his music: Freddie helped develop the name, emblem and visual identity of Queen. Music and staging belonged to the same artistic vision.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

03 · Four musicians, one singular band

Alongside Brian May, Roger Taylor and John Deacon, Freddie helped develop a sound combining rock, piano, layered vocals and theatricality. He wrote daring songs, while the other band members also made essential contributions as composers.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

04 · A songwriter beyond categories

From the elaborate sections of Bohemian Rhapsody to the direct rock and roll of Crazy Little Thing Called Love, Freddie explored markedly different musical languages. His solo work included dance music and, eventually, a collaboration with Montserrat Caballé.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

05 · Music that remains

Freddie died on November 24, 1991. Queen's songs, concerts and recordings continue to connect with listeners around the world. His legacy lies not only in his voice but also in his willingness to bring unconventional musical ideas to a huge audience.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

02 / The Freddie Mercury you may not know

01 · The boy who collected stamps

As a child, Freddie assembled a stamp collection, now preserved in London. It shows an early interest in arranging pictures and shapes. The collection does not prove a direct connection to his later design work, but offers a glimpse of a quieter side of his youth.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

02 · Queen's zodiac crest

Freddie designed Queen's crest using the zodiac signs of its four members. Two lions stand for Roger Taylor and John Deacon, the crab for Brian May, and Virgo figures for Freddie. The band's visual identity mattered to him from the beginning.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

03 · Fifteen pages for Bohemian Rhapsody

Manuscripts auctioned by Sotheby's in 2023 included eight lyric pages and seven mainly devoted to vocal harmonies. An early draft was titled Mongolian Rhapsody. The handwriting preserves revisions and decisions behind a celebrated recording.

Sources and verification: Sotheby's

04 · Ten minutes and a bathtub

According to his bandmates' recollections, Freddie conceived Crazy Little Thing Called Love while taking a bath in Munich. Inspired by 1950s rock and roll, it was much more direct in structure than many other Queen compositions.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

05 · A rock singer at the ballet

In October 1977 Freddie made an unannounced appearance at a charity gala at the London Coliseum organized by Royal Ballet dancer Wayne Eagling. Wearing a silver sequined costume, he performed Eagling's choreography. His curiosity extended well beyond rock concerts.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

06 · His admiration for Montserrat Caballé

Freddie deeply admired soprano Montserrat Caballé. Peter Freestone recalled that the collaboration was initially intended as one single, but Caballé suggested an entire album. With musician Mike Moran, Freddie developed Barcelona into a much bigger project.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

07 · A laboratory before Bohemian Rhapsody

The March of the Black Queen, from Queen II, already explored abrupt changes of section and elaborate vocal layers. Listening to it reveals an important musical precursor to Bohemian Rhapsody.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

08 · When Michael Jackson heard a future hit

John Deacon's Another One Bites the Dust had a funk-oriented sound that did not immediately convince everyone in Queen. Roger Taylor recalled Michael Jackson encouraging the group to release it as a single. Deacon wrote it; Freddie's vocal performance helped make it a massive hit.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

09 · Making an audience part of the band

In concert, Freddie moved between songs and improvised call-and-response exchanges. His ability to listen and react made audiences active participants rather than passive spectators.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

10 · A star who could laugh at himself

In the 1987 video for The Great Pretender, Freddie appeared beside oversized cardboard images of himself. The production also referred to earlier theatrical costumes, including It's a Hard Life. He treated his own star image with humor.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

11 · Live Aid took preparation

Queen's appearance at Live Aid on July 13, 1985, was brief but thoroughly rehearsed. The band booked London's Shaw Theatre for three days, tightening the transitions between hits to make the most of their limited stage time.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

12 · A different sound outside Queen

On his 1985 solo album Mr. Bad Guy, Freddie explored dance music and electronic production. Solo work expanded his palette; it did not replace his role in Queen.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

13 · The goodbye nobody announced

Queen ended the Magic Tour at Knebworth Park on August 9, 1986. It proved to be Freddie's last public concert with the group. He thanked the crowd without announcing a final farewell; the night acquired that meaning only later.

Sources and verification: Queen Official

03 / The songs and their stories

01 • Bohemian Rhapsody

Queen • A Night at the Opera • 1975

Composition: Freddie Mercury

Freddie joined ballad, opera-inspired passages and rock with intricate studio vocals. Drafts reveal the working title Mongolian Rhapsody and revisions to lyrics and harmonies.

Sources and verification: [Sotheby's](#)

02 • Killer Queen

Queen • Sheer Heart Attack • 1974

Composition: Freddie Mercury

Its piano, vocal harmonies and stylish melody showed Queen could move beyond a single hard-rock sound. The single became a commercial breakthrough.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

03 • Love of My Life

Queen • A Night at the Opera • 1975

Composition: Freddie Mercury

Originally a finely arranged piano ballad, this song took on another life onstage. Brian May's acoustic treatment invited crowds to sing along, particularly memorably in South America.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

04 · Crazy Little Thing Called Love

Queen · single 1979; The Game · 1980

Composition: Freddie Mercury

A quickly written tribute to classic rock and roll, according to his bandmates. Its simplicity highlights another side of the writer of Bohemian Rhapsody.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

05 · Somebody to Love

Queen · A Day at the Races · 1976

Composition: Freddie Mercury

Overdubs by Freddie, Brian May and Roger Taylor create the impression of a large choir. Gospel-inspired harmonies frame an emotionally demanding lead vocal.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

06 · We Are the Champions

Queen · News of the World · 1977

Composition: Freddie Mercury

The melody and chorus were made for voices joining together. A Queen recording became an anthem at sports celebrations around the world.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

07 · Don't Stop Me Now

Queen · Jazz · 1978

Composition: Freddie Mercury

Driving piano accompaniment propels this high-energy song. Its popularity grew with later generations and its use in films and other media.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

08 · Living on My Own

Freddie Mercury · Mr. Bad Guy · 1985

Composition: Freddie Mercury

The 1985 recording reflects Freddie's dance-music experiments. A 1993 remix found later chart success, but this edition's playlist uses the ORIGINAL 1985 album recording.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

09 · Barcelona

Freddie Mercury & Montserrat Caballé · single 1987; album 1988

Composition: Freddie Mercury and Mike Moran

Written with Mike Moran, Barcelona allowed a rock singer and an opera soprano to meet on equal artistic terms. The collaboration became a defining solo project.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

10 · The Show Must Go On

Queen · Innuendo · 1991

Composition: Queen (official credit)

Brian May played a central role in developing the song. Freddie's demanding performance, recorded during serious illness, became one of the most affecting of his final recordings.

Sources and verification: [Queen Official](#)

04 / Listen to his music

These ten original recordings accompany the stories in this edition. The official Spotify playlist link will be added after the playlist is published.

01. Bohemian Rhapsody — Queen

02. Killer Queen — Queen

03. Love of My Life — Queen
04. Crazy Little Thing Called Love — Queen
05. Somebody to Love — Queen
06. We Are the Champions — Queen
07. Don't Stop Me Now — Queen
08. Living on My Own — Freddie Mercury
09. Barcelona — Freddie Mercury & Montserrat Caballé
10. The Show Must Go On — Queen

Version note: Living on My Own must be the ORIGINAL 1985 Mr. Bad Guy recording, not the 1993 remix. Verify the audio even if Spotify labels the release as a reissue.

05 / Discover LEGENDS

LEGENDS is an Adrian Antoine project celebrating the music and stories of artists who shaped generations, through books, concerts, videos and special editions.

THE LEGENDS BOOK · True stories about music, life and legacy

What lies behind a song everyone knows? Which choices, struggles and encounters shaped its creator? In LEGENDS, Adrian Antoine brings together 46 chapters about major figures in music, exploring their human stories, beginnings, obstacles, turning points and cultural influence. You do not need to be a musician to enjoy them.

Discover the LEGENDS book on [Amazon](#)

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06 / A legacy that still resonates

Freddie Mercury showed that a song could be spectacle, intimacy, experimentation and shared emotion. His recordings still bring new generations together, long after the final concert.

The music lives on. Legends never fade.