

AMY WINEHOUSE (1983-2011)

When Amy Winehouse died of alcohol poisoning on July 23, 2011, she had not released a new album in five years, since she put out her landmark, multi-Grammy-winning classic « Back to Black » in 2006. That

Winehouse was just 27 years old when she died, unfortunately she joined the mythic 27 Club, the singers and musicians dead at 27 : Kurt Cobain, Jimi Hendrix, Brian Jones, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Robert Johnson (King of the Delta Blues Singers)

Winehouse knew it was her destiny to make music

Amy was born to a Jewish family and was raised primarily by her mother, a pharmacist, who divorced her father, a taxicab driver, when Winehouse was nine.

Winehouse was always a rebel, doing always things her way. Her mother Janis admits that she was determined and **stubborn** (tête de mule) even as a small child. When her parents **split up** (se séparer), Amy declared her own independence, collecting tattoos, smoking marijuana and cutting school. The only future she saw for herself was as a musician, and she poured her soul into writing deeply confessional **lyrics** (paroles) and singing around London, her hometown. She was a unique talent, a jazz fanatic with the voice of a soul singer, and she was quickly signed by Island Records.

Frank, Winehouse's first album, came out in 2003 when she was only 20-years-old. It was an instant hit, rising to No. 3 on the British **Billboard chart** (hit parade) and earning her both awards and financial freedom. It **hinted** (faire allusion) at her propensity for drinking and **indulging in** (se livrer) other vices — the song "Mr. Magic," the hidden last **track** (morceau) of that album, was about **substance abuse** (toxicomanie)— but it was **in the aftermath** (à la suite) of its success that Winehouse truly began the struggle with narcotics and liquor that would inspire her greatest work and then **steal** the talent that had made it so transcendent.

Suddenly thanks to a **six-figure** (à 6 chiffres) advance that would soon be followed by much larger paychecks, Winehouse bought her first apartment in London's Camden neighborhood, long **the mecca** (la Mèque) for punk musicians, drug dealers and people who enthusiastically consumed both their products. With little to do but work on her music, she embraced the local scene with open arms, becoming a regular at its pubs. It was during this time that she met Blake Fielder-Civil, a charming addict who became the center of Winehouse's world and her most dangerous addiction.

"Amy changed **overnight** (du jour au lendemain) after she met Blake," her first manager, Nick Godwyn, told The Times in 2007. "She just sounded completely different. Her personality became more distant. And it seemed to me like that was down to the drugs. When I met her she smoked **weed** (de l'herbe) but she thought the people who took class-A drugs were stupid. She used to laugh at them."

Pain (douleur, souffrance) was Winehouse's muse and her combustible relationship with Fielder-Civil provided plenty of inspiration. He introduced her to heroin and other hard drugs; she had his name tattooed over her right **breast** (sein) and he inked hers behind his right ear. Theirs was an on-and-off relationship at first, as they were frequently separated by his infidelities and **stints** (séjour) in prison.

The **grief** (chagrin) and **turmoil** (tourmente) fueled her creativity, and the tumult with Fielder-Civil would inspire many of the lyrics in Back in Black, her **heartbreak** (peine de coeur), frustrations, and **unhealthy** (malsain) addictions with the sounds of '60s girl groups. The most famous of the songs, "Rehab," would prove to be **apocryphal** (apocryphe = texte dont l'authenticité est douteuse).

Despite several attempts to go to rehab, Amy continued **to spiral out of control** (devenir incontrôlable).

In the **fall** (automne) of 2005, her manager had seen enough of his client and close friend **stumbling** (trébucher) through Camden and closer and closer to the edge of **squandering** (gaspiller) her talent, not to mention her life. He tried to convince her to go to rehab, but she **swore up and down** (to swear up and down = jurer ses grands dieux) to her father that she didn't need the detox time, so the effort itself was very **short-lived** (courte durée). Her song « Rehab » however, became Winehouse's most iconic tune, an **anthem** (hymne) for her way of life and ultimate **demise** (disparition).

Winehouse did **eventually** (finalement) agree to go to rehab, and more than once, but the

months and years in between her brief attempts at sober living were increasingly sordid and sad, filled with private chaos performed for the public.

« Back in Black » was released in the United States in March 2007, at which point she was fully in the **grip** (emprise) of drink and drugs. She'd dated a chef named Alex Claire for nine months, which provided a bit more stability, but she ultimately reunited with Fielder-Civil in February.

In April 2007, Winehouse and Fielder-Civil were engaged. Winehouse revealed that her romance with the 23-year-old was the inspiration for several of the Back to Black tracks. The couple married on May 18, 2007, in a ceremony in Miami, Florida.

In US she played festivals and made TV appearances that were increasingly erratic and then disastrous. Her U.S. tour was canceled due to "**exhaustion**." (épuisement)

In October 2007, Winehouse and Fielder-Civil were arrested in Norway for marijuana possession, and in December, she was photographed **wandering** (errant) around Camden in just **her bra** (soutien-gorge) and jeans, looking **emaciated** (décharné). Soon after, in January 2008, **footage** (images) of the singer smoking crack showed up in the English tabloid The Sun.

The arrested **prompted** (provoquer) her first **stab** (coup de couteau) at rehab, **though** (cependant) not before she performed for the live telecast of the Grammys via satellite, as her growing legal problems meant it was impossible for her to get a work visa in time to come back to the U.S.

That night at the Grammys would prove to be the **pinnacle** (l'apogée) of her career, as she won five awards, including the two biggies, Record of the Year and Song of the Year. During the broadcast, she thanked her "Blake, incarcerated," which served to introduce the rest of the world to her husband, who was in jail due to a bar fight in 2006. Winehouse herself would be arrested several times, for charges that included assaulting a fan, though she never spent time in jail.

Winehouse' blood alcohol level was more than five times the legal limit when she died. The world watched as Winehouse malfunctioned, her saga growing sadder by the month. She fainted in the summer of 2008 and was diagnosed with emphysema, a shocking warning that more smoking and drinking would permanently ruin her natural gifts.

The message didn't take; Winehouse was **booed** (hué) off the stage at **gigs** (concerts) around the world when she was too drunk to perform and canceled more concerts than she played. She left the stage in the middle of a performance in St. Lucia in early 2009, unable to remember lyrics and, in her own words, "bored." Winehouse's **commitment** (engagement) to record a song for the James Bond movie Quantum of Solace fell through, and while she claimed to have quit doing drugs in 2008, alcohol became her constant companion.

There were bright moments, including performances for Nelson Mandela's birthday and **stretches** (période) of sobriety, when she'd begin working on new material and perform in successful concerts and TV broadcasts. But then she'd fall back into her old ways, with more assault charges and personal drama.

Fielder-Civil filed for divorce in 2009, citing Winehouse's infidelity. A new album promised for 2010 never transpired, and aside from a song she recorded with Tony Bennett, she never did record more music.

Winehouse checked back into rehab in the spring of 2011, emerging in May with hope of putting it all back together. But her final performance was a **shambolic** (chaotique) disaster in Belgrade, Serbia in early June and she was found dead in her dirty, **dingy** (sombre) home on July 23. That fall, the coroner announced that she'd died of accidental alcohol poisoning, as her blood alcohol level was .416% at the time of her death.

"Back To Black"

He left no time to regret
Kept his **dick** wet (bite)
with his same old safe bet
Me and my head high
And my tears dry, get on without my **guy** (mec)
You went back to what you knew
So far removed from all that we went through
And I **tread** (marche) a troubled track
My odds are stacked, (tout joue contre moi)
I'll go back to black
We only said goodbye with words
I died a hundred times
You go back to her
And I go back to
I go back to us
I love you much
It's not enough, you love **blow** (slang = cocaïne) and I love **puff** (slang= marijuana)
And life is like a pipe
And I'm a tiny penny rolling up the walls inside
We only said goodbye with words
I died a hundred times
You go back to her
And I go back to
We only said goodbye with words
I died a hundred times
You go back to her
And I go back to
Black, black, black, black
Black, black, black...

I go back to
I go back to
We only said goodbye with words
I died a hundred times
You go back to her
And I go back to
We only said goodbye with words
I died a hundred times
You go back to her
And I go back to black