

DONNA SUMMER

Her lifetime in music was a study in contrasts: The “Queen Of Disco” who was a church-reared gospel singer throughout childhood, and wrote most of her own songs; the Diva De Tutti Dive, the first true pop diva of the modern era, who spent her formative years in a psychedelic rock band, even auditioned for Broadway’s Hair in the early ’70s. She did not get the part, but when Hair opened in Germany, Boston’s LaDonna Adrian Gaines (1948-2012) was cast as Sheila. She settled in Germany and began a long-term association with Munich songwriters-producers Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte. They heard her demo lyric “love to love you baby” and at Casablanca Records president Neil Bogart’s request, turned it into a 17-minute opus of orgasmic delight (Donna said she was evoking Marilyn Monroe). The song was Summer’s U.S. chart debut and first of nineteen #1 Dance hits between ’75 and 2008 (second only to Madonna). Summer made chart history in 1978-80, as the only artist to have three consecutive double-LPs hit #1: Live And More, Bad Girls and On The Radio. She was also the first female artist with four #1 singles in a 13-month period: “MacArthur Park,” “Hot Stuff,” “Bad Girls” and “No More Tears” (with Barbra Streisand). Her first U.S.-recorded LP, 1982’s self-titled Donna Summer, produced by Quincy Jones, featured Bruce Springsteen, Roy Bittan and many American rockers. “She Works Hard For The Money” kept Donna on top in 1983, followed by the Top 10 “This Time I Know It’s For Real” in ’89. Starting in 2009, she extended her string of #1 U.S. Dance hits with “I’m A Fire,” “Stamp Your Feet,” “Fame (The Game)” and “To Paris With Love.” Endless covers and sampling of her music by producers and DJs have kept the five-time Grammy Award-winner’s pioneering body of work on the front-line.