

SYLVESTER

b. September 6, 1947, Los Angeles, California

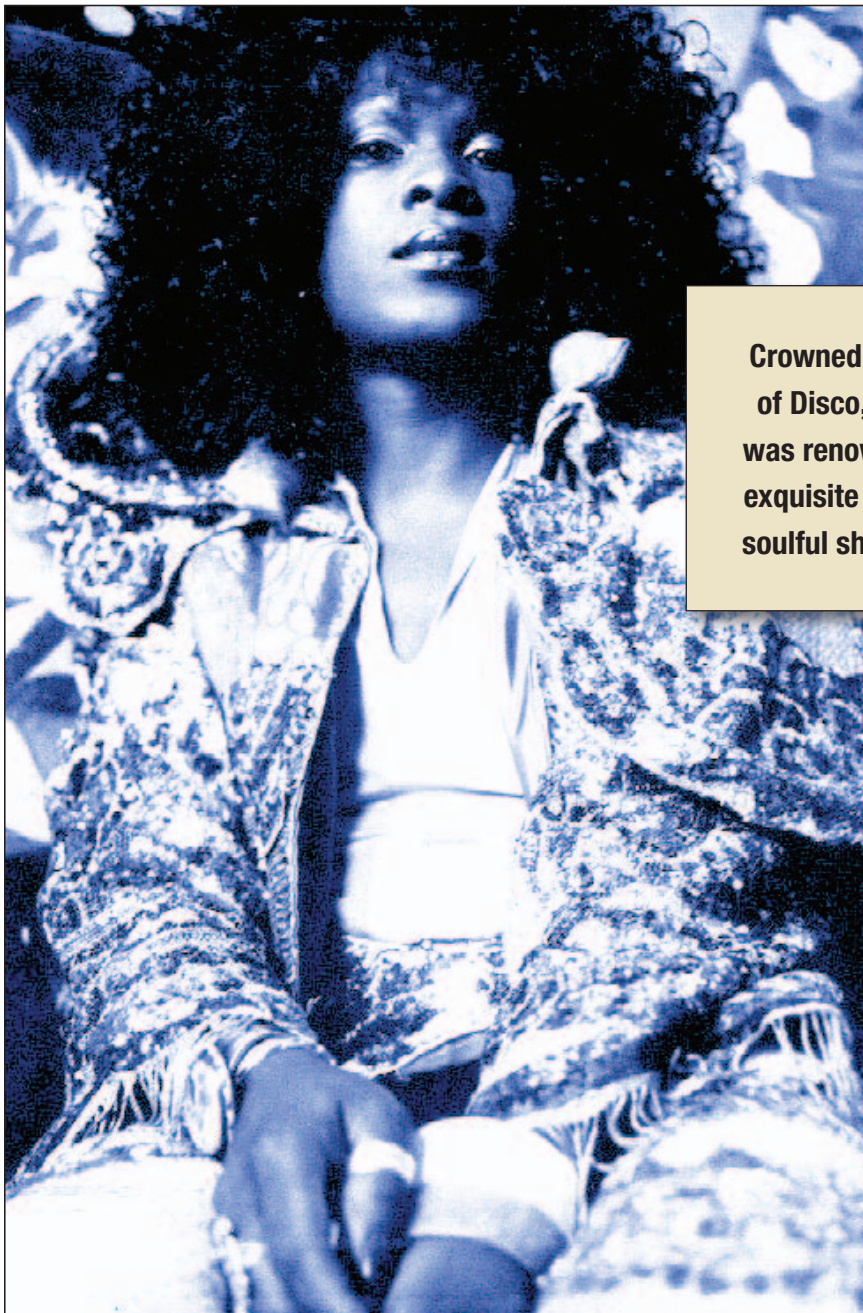
d. December 16, 1988, San Francisco, California

SINGER

*My mother said, “You’re very strange,”
and I said, “That’s OK.”*

Before he became “Sylvester” and before he was crowned the “Queen of Disco,” Sylvester James Jr. was a member of a group of transvestites known as the Disquotays. While many Disquotays explored their identities as trans women in a cross-dressing party circuit, Sylvester identified as male.

After the dissolution of the Disquotays, Sylvester joined the Cockettes, a San Francisco drag theater troupe. While Sylvester appreciated the open lifestyle of the Cockettes, he maintained a distance from their psychedelic performances.



Crowned the “Queen of Disco,” Sylvester was renowned for his exquisite falsetto and soulful showmanship.

After the Cockettes, Sylvester—known by his first name only—struck out on a solo career. Songs like “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” and “Dance (Disco Heat)” made it to the top of the pop music charts. Sylvester became renowned for his exquisite falsetto and soulful showmanship.

When Joan Rivers called him a drag queen, a peeved Sylvester corrected her, declaring, “I’m Sylvester!” A critic of conformity, Sylvester decried Castro clones—gay men who idealized masculine attire and scorned flamboyance.

Sylvester was vocal about LGBT issues, especially AIDS awareness and prevention. He wrote songs about AIDS and held AIDS benefit concerts. At age 41, he died from complications of AIDS.

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