

JANELLE MONÁE

b. December 1, 1985

SINGER, SONGWRITER & ACTOR

She is an eight-time Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter and an award-winning actor and activist.

“I’ve never lived my life in a binary way.”

Janelle Monáe is an eight-time Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter and an award-winning actor and activist. Known for her bold fashion choices and music videos, which she calls her “emotion pictures,” Monáe describes herself as a nerdy polymath, Afrofuturist storyteller and pansexual android.

Janelle Monáe Robinson was born to working-class parents in Kansas City, Kansas. Her father struggled with addiction. Her mother devoted herself to God and family and, along with her grandmother, supported Monáe’s participation in musicals, talent shows and playwriting groups. Monáe credits her family with her intense work ethic.

By age 16, Monáe had established her own record label. When the American Musical and Dramatic Academy awarded her a college scholarship, she moved to New York City. As the only Black woman in her drama classes, she felt typecast and grew frustrated. She dropped out and moved to Atlanta.

In Atlanta, Monáe established an artist’s collective, the Wondaland Arts Society. In 2005 she made her professional debut as a featured artist on several OutKast tracks. Two years later, she released a solo concept EP, “Metropolis: Suite 1,” on which she introduced herself as an android. She received her first Grammy nomination for the album.

Monáe carried the android persona into her next two albums, “The ArchAndroid” (2010) and “The Electric Lady” (2013). In 2013 she made her first appearance as a musical guest on “Saturday Night Live.” When asked about her signature black-and-white tuxedo, she explained, “My mother was a janitor and my father collected trash, so I wear a uniform too.”

In 2016 Monáe made her film debut in “Moonlight” and played Mary Jackson, one of the starring roles, in “Hidden Figures.” Monáe received Critics Choice Award nominations for both. She won for “Moonlight,” as part of the ensemble cast.

In 2018 Monáe came out publicly as a “queer Black woman.” She founded Fem The Future, a mentoring organization and movement for women, and released the radical, critically acclaimed album, “Dirty Computer.” She said she wanted “young girls, young boys, nonbinary, gay, straight, [and] queer people who are having a hard time dealing with their sexuality . . .” to know she saw them. “This album is for you,” she said. “Be proud.”

In 2019 Monáe appeared as Marie in “Harriet,” a biopic about the abolitionist Harriet Tubman. In 2020 she starred in the horror film “Antebellum.”

Among countless awards and nominations for her music, videos and acting, Monáe has also received a GLAAD Media Award, an NAACP Image Award and two Council of Fashion Designers of America Awards.

Monáe resides in Atlanta and Los Angeles.



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