

# LESLEY GORE

## SINGER & COMPOSER

b. May 2, 1946

d. February 16, 2015

**She was a national singing and songwriting sensation, best known for her 1960s pop hits.**

*“I just kind of lived my life naturally and did what I wanted to do.”*

Lesley Gore was a singer and songwriter, best known for her 1960s pop hits, including “It’s My Party” and “Sunshine, Lollipops, and Rainbows.”

Gore, née Lesley Sue Goldstein, was born in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up in Tenafly, New Jersey, and attended Dwight School for Girls. At age 16, she was discovered by the prominent music producer Quincy Jones.

In 1963 Gore recorded her first and biggest hit, “It’s My Party.” The single quickly went gold, selling more than 500,000 copies. The same year, Gore released her first album, “I’ll Cry If I Want To,” which included other favorites like “Judy’s Turn to Cry.” Her second album followed shortly thereafter. It comprised more big hits, such as “Sunshine, Lollipops, and Rainbows” and the feminist anthem “You Don’t Own Me.”

Gore graduated from high school in 1964 and appeared in the concert film “T.A.M.I. Show,” alongside top artists such as Chuck Berry, Marvin Gaye, The Supremes, and The Beach Boys. In 1965 she performed three songs in the movie “The Girls on the Beach.”

Gore studied literature at Sarah Lawrence College. She graduated in 1968. Although she had signed a five-year contract with Mercury Records that was extended for a sixth year (through 1969), rock music had begun to dominate the airways. By then, her songs had stopped selling as well.

After her contract with Mercury Records ended, she signed with MoWest records. She released her first album in a half decade, but it did poorly. In 1980 she composed songs for the film “Fame,” including the Academy Award-nominated “Out Here on My Own.”

Gore co-wrote the song “My Secret Love” for the 1996 film “Grace of My Heart,” about a closeted lesbian singer. It was loosely based on her life. Throughout 2003, Gore served as a recurring host of the LGBTQ public television newsmagazine “In the Life.”

In 2005 Gore came out publicly on “AfterEllen” and disclosed that she had been in a relationship with Lois Sasson, a jewelry designer, since 1982. Although Gore never tried to hide her sexuality, she said she had not advertised it, due to the music industry’s homophobia.

During her career, Gore released 12 albums, composed music for numerous productions, and appeared in films, documentaries, and television episodes. She has been praised as a feminist and LGBTQ rights activist.

Gore died of lung cancer at age 68, just a few months before her wedding to Sasson. The couple set the date immediately after same-sex marriage was legalized. They had been together for 33 years.

© GETTY IMAGES

**lgbt**<sup>™</sup>  
**HISTORY**  
**MONTH**

[www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com](http://www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com)

Copyright © 2023 – A Project of Equality Forum