

MICHAEL STIPE

b. January 4, 1960

ROCK STAR

*“My feeling is that labels are for canned food ...
I am what I am—and I know what I am.”*

**He is best known as
the front man for the
alt rock band R.E.M.**

Michael Stipe is a singer and lyricist, a producer, and a photographer. Praised for his distinctive baritone vocals that range from keening to crooning, he is best known as the front man for the American alternative rock band R.E.M.

Born John Michael Stipe, in Decatur, Georgia, he was a military brat who spent his childhood moving from place to place with his parents and two brothers. They settled in Illinois, where Stipe graduated high school. He attended the University of Georgia.

As a teenager, Stipe loved punk rock and idolized Patti Smith. He frequented a record store in Georgia, where he met Peter Buck. They decided to form a band, taking on members Bill Berry and Mike Mills to create R.E.M. Stipe is said to have picked the name randomly from a dictionary. R.E.M. quickly found success with their first single,

“Radio Free Europe,” and were signed by I.R.S. Records. They released their first EP, “Chronic Town,” in 1982.

Between 1982 and 2011, when the group disbanded, R.E.M. released 15 studio albums, five live albums, and numerous compilations and singles. The band earned countless national and international nominations and awards, including 12 MTV Video Music Awards, four BMI Pop Awards, and three Grammys. R.E.M. was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2007. They have sold more than 85 million albums.

In 1987 Stipe founded the independent film company C-00 Films with Jim McKay. They have produced movies such as “Being John Malkovich” and “Saved.”

Stipe has collaborated with other popular musicians, including Tori Amos, Peter Gabriel, Warren Zevon, and Natalie Merchant (with whom he had an affair). Stipe was very close to fellow indie rocker Kurt Cobain and is the godfather of Cobain’s child with Courtney Love.

In the 2000s, Stipe got into photography, shooting concerts for The Runaways, Queen, and The Ramones. He has released several photography books, which include concert photos as well as individual portraits of other music artists.

In the 2010s, Stipe became a Democratic party activist. He has rallied for gun control and other social justice issues.

Stipe continues to write music, publish, and produce, and is working on his first art show. He released his first solo single in 2019 and is on track to release his first solo album late in 2023. He says he knew he was “queer” before he was 10, although he prefers not to label his sexuality. He lives in New York and Berlin with his partner, Thomas Dozol, a photographer.

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