

A
Triumphant
50
Years
for a
Legendary
Performer

WARWICK

By TOBI SCHWARTZ-CASELL

50 years in show
business...
5 Grammys...60
charted hit songs...
a presidential
appointment...
and—despite the
recent losses of
some of her closest
colleagues—plus
the distressing
setback of personal
bankruptcy,
this Jersey Girl is
still going strong



Tobi Schwartz-Cassell:
So 50 years in the biz!
Does it feel like 50 years?
Dionne Warwick:
No, not really. It really
doesn't. It went by so
fast!

TSC: How many albums have you recorded?

DW: Oh my goodness! It was usually two albums a year and, of course, all the compilations. I'd say 60 or more.

TSC: Your new CD, *Now*, is a celebration of your 50th anniversary in show business, and there are so many wonderful surprises on it, but I am sure your favorite thing about it is that you got to work with your two sons, David and Damon Elliott.

DW: I don't know how many more buttons I could have popped off my blouses! David is my oldest and he's on the road with me. He sings, writes and does all kinds of wonderful things. And he performs with me. And of course Damon is the engineer of the family. He's a producer, too. So we kept the music in the family.

TSC: You started as a backup singer for some extraordinary performers.

DW: I did recordings in New York City with the most incredible people who were recording at the time. I remember spending my high school years and part of my college years singing backup for The Shirelles, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, The Drifters...the list is quite long.

TSC: You are known as the artist who "bridged the gap" between black and white audiences, and you were the first African-American female artist of your generation to win mainstream success. But your first album came out in 1962, and unfortunately, that wasn't the most mainstream time for African-Americans. Behind the scenes, did you feel like you were being treated in a mainstream way?

DW: There was (inequality) in the music business, but my music seemed to override that. My music spoke for itself, so it didn't matter what color I was in the blonde haired, blue-eyed world.

The only real discrimination I felt was when I was touring in the southern part of the nation. Then I felt discrimination. And it was something I didn't know very much about, growing up in New Jersey. In my neighborhood, it was every race, color and

creed. It was the entire United Nations on my block. So it was something I'd never really experienced at that level until I toured in the south.

TSC: You were a working mom in a big way! How did you manage raising two such successful men? I'm sure you were out on the road a lot.

DW: I took them with me when they were young, and when they got older, I took them with me in the summer months. It was wonderful, because they got to see many different places and cultures. When I was touring, I had a wonderful woman named Julia who took care of them, and my mother was, of course, with them, too. But Julia was just wonderful. She was a jewel.

TSC: And you have six grandchildren?

DW: I have seven! Four girls and three boys from ages 22 to newborn. My youngest, a girl, was just born on Dec 22, 2012.



TSC: On your new CD, *Now*, you recorded, among others, the works of Burt Bacharach and Hal David.

DW: Yes, they were my producers and song writers for 50 years. Hal passed away this past September.

Words cannot express the sorrow I felt upon learning of Hal's transition. I felt as if I'd lost another family member. But knowing I will always have him with me each time I sing the lyrics he wrote for me will continue to bring a sense of him being with me always. My sincere condolences go out to Eunice, his wife, and Jim and Craig, his children. May he now rest in peace.

TSC: And Phil Ramone, the producer of *Now*, passed away shortly before we went to press.

DW: Getting back into the studio with Phil felt like old times. Lots of laughter and of course remembering a few stories of the sessions we had done in the past. I remember the "Promises, Promises" session because the entire cast of the show

was at this session to hear that particular song. After I'd recorded it, Jerry Orbach took me aside and asked, "How do you sing this stuff?" I replied, "Very carefully."

Phil always had a big smile on his face, and what I always marveled at was when we went into the control room to listen back to what we had just recorded. It always sounded as if the recording was ready to be pressed as Phil seemed to mix as he recorded, giving the recording a finished sound. He was MAGIC and the final finished product was the proof! *Now* was the cherry on top of the cake (so to speak) as we revisited songs he had recorded with me during the 60s, 70s and part of the 80s. Listening to it now, it has that current special sound that only Phil could give to a recording.

Phil Ramone has been a part of my musical life and a dear friend since the early 60s. My heart is truly heavy knowing he has made his transition. My prayers are with his wife and children during their time of sorrow. Working with him just a few months ago was a joy and brought back the good times we shared in the studio so many times. God has blessed him and thought the need for the best of the best to work the magic as only he could, for all of those wonderful singers gathered in that heavenly choir. Rest in peace, my dear friend.

TSC: This has been a tough time for you. I'm sure many of your fans are aware that you recently filed for personal bankruptcy.

DW: Yes, but I am okay and don't want anyone to worry about this. As with so many things in our lifetime, things that are sometimes unavoidable will crop up. I ask that all who are concerned please keep a positive thought going around me. And as I have been told on many occasions, "this too shall pass."

TSC: You are an amazing humanitarian with far-reaching interests, and throughout the 1980s, you served as the US Ambassador for Health, appointed by President Ronald Reagan.

DW: I had decided to stop talking about—and start doing something about—the disease ravaging our country and the world called AIDS, and apparently he became aware of it and decided that, since I was doing it on my own, there should be some sort of representation for the United States. So he appointed me the US Ambassador for Health. I traveled the world, getting information from scientists and doctors and unfortunately those who were afflicted with the dis-

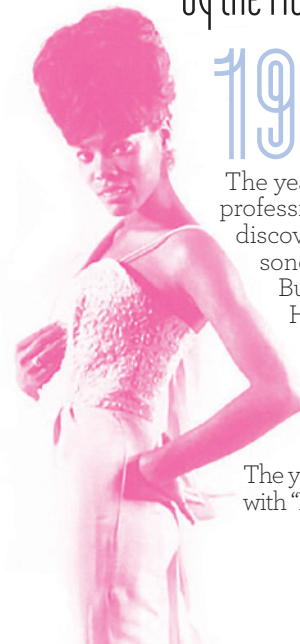
DW by the Numbers

1961

The year DW began singing professionally after being discovered by the young songwriting team of Burt Bacharach & Hal David.

1962

The year DW had her first hit with "Don't Make Me Over"



1968

The year DW received her first Grammy Award for the classic "Do You Know The Way to San Jose?"

\$63,000,000+

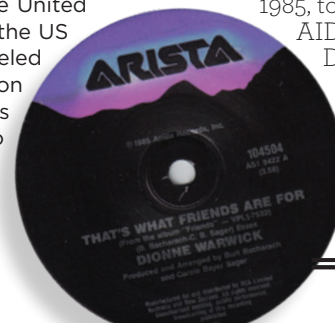
The amount generated, beginning in 1985, to benefit African relief in the long and short term, via DW's participation in the landmark song, "We Are the World." The record was released in March, performed at the Live Aid Concert in July and went quadruple platinum.

100,000,000+

The number of DW records sold so far.

\$3,000,000+

The amount generated, beginning in 1985, to benefit the Foundation for AIDS Research as a result of DW reuniting with Burt Bacharach, Carole Bayer Sager, Gladys Knight, Elton John and Stevie Wonder to record, "That's What Friends are For."



ease itself, and worked very, very closely with the CDC here in the states to find something to stem or hopefully to eventually cure this thing.

TSC: Where did your compassion come from?

DW: My grandfather told me when I was a very, very small child, that we were all individually and collectively put here on this earth to be of service to each other and I find that a very easy thing to do.

And I'm still on the train. I've always looked at it as a train, and I'm on the train, and I will be until we find a cure or at least medication that makes life better for those suffering with AIDS, better than the life they are living now. And there's still a lot of educating to do. We need to get the message out there over and over and over again.

TSC: You were the first musical artist to donate all proceeds from a recording—in this case, "That's What Friends are For"—and you donated it all to The American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR). Which causes do you focus on in addition to the eradication of AIDS through amfAR?

DW: Anything that has to do with children, that's a given. I've done work for the Heart Association, diabetes, anything that I feel I can be of service to and am able to be of some help.

TSC: You have written four books, two for children, and you are now in the process of writing a black history textbook for schools and libraries, about the many, many contributions made by African-Americans.



DW: I've been writing it for 20 years! It's mostly about teachers who've taught African-American history. I walked around with heavy books through the halls in high school and college and I knew so much about American history and European history that I thought, 'Now it's time to learn about myself and who I am. It's time to learn about me.'

TSC: And because of all your good works, especially on behalf of children and education, your old elementary school was named in your honor! How could that possibly make you feel?

DW: (She laughs) What can I say? It was truly the third most beautiful thing that happened to me in my life—the first two being the births of my sons.

TSC: You are about to embark on a world tour, grueling for anyone at any age. First off, do you mind sharing your age with us? We're all Girlfriendz!

DW: I am 72. I started my tour just prior to my birthday on December 12, and I have two more continents to do. My last will be in the United States.

TSC: But it doesn't stop there!

DW: I've just received the Diamond Award in Atlanta from The Not Alone Foundation which has so selflessly dedicated itself to raising funds for those suffering with kidney disease. They also provide the funds needed to help put those in need on a list to receive a kidney transplant, as well as the medications needed to sustain them. In early May, I will be hosting a ballet at the Beacon Theater in New York, where I will be raising funds for Bright Futures International, which benefits educational programs for children in the US and other countries, and in mid-May, I will be honored with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations.

TSC: In celebrating your 50th anniversary in show business, what would you say is your greatest triumph?

DW: There were so many, many wonderful things that have happened to me, it's hard to say!

TSC: Is there anything you'd still like to accomplish?

DW: An Oscar, an Emmy and a Tony. But it doesn't have to be in that order.

TSC: I know you were in the movie Slaves in the 60s, but have you been in any others?

DW: Rent-a-Cop with Burt Reynolds and Liza Minnelli. It was a lot of fun!

TSC: Changing gears a bit, what types of books do you like to read? And what is on your nightstand right now?

DW: Trash. (She laughs) Jackie Collins is my favorite. **g**