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Jessica Simpson Biography

July 10, 1980 • Richardson, Texas

Singer



Simpson, Jessica.

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Pop star Jessica Simpson's career has been something of a roller coaster ride, rife with stomach-lurching highs and lows and unexpected turns. She began singing Christian music professionally as a preteen and earned a record deal in her early teens. After several disappointments, she made the transition to pop music. Her star never quite reached the heights that Britney Spears achieved—not until she and husband Nick Lachey appeared in their own reality television series, *Newlyweds*. Then Simpson's career took off with the release of her most successful album to date, *In This Skin*, the launch of her own line of beauty products, and a sitcom in the works.

(Sang in church

Jessica Simpson was born on July 10, 1980, in Richardson Texas, north of Dallas. Her father, Joe, was a psychologist and a youth minister. Simpson's first singing experiences were in the church choir. Her talent was evident at an early age and she had begun performing publicly on the gospel circuit by age eleven. When the budding performer found out in 1992 that the Disney Channel was holding auditions for the *New Mickey Mouse Club*, she jumped at the opportunity. Simpson tried out at a regional audition in Dallas and was selected out of more than thirty thousand other contestants as a finalist for a cast position. She lost out to Britney Spears (1981–) and Christina Aguilera (1980–). Although she was disappointed, Simpson's close-knit family encouraged her not to give up on her dream of becoming a singer.

Simpson persisted and a year later, at age thirteen, she was discovered while singing at church camp. The camp's guest speaker, who was in the process of launching a record label, saw her belting out an a cappella version of "Amazing Grace." He quickly signed her to the fledgling gospel label, Proclaim Records, and Simpson began working on her first album, *Jessica*. But once the album was completed, Proclaim Records folded, leaving Simpson with a record but no one to sell it. Once again her family

urged her to keep fighting for her dream, and Simpson's grandmother put up the money she needed to release *Jessica* herself. To promote the album, Simpson and her father hit the Christian music circuit. Joe Simpson would preach to young adults and Jessica would be the featured musical performer. Afterward, Jessica would sell her CD to moved listeners. Simpson became popular on the circuit and proceeded to open for such well-known spiritual performers as CeCe Winans and Kirk Franklin.

"I'm such a sucker for big sappy songs. I'm a big romantic and I love love. I love singing about it and listening to songs about it."

Simpson also took her album to several other Christian record companies, but was turned away again and again. The primary reason for her rejection was her beauty and curvy figure. "They said it could cause guys to lust," Simpson explained to the Knight/Ridder Tribune News Service. "...I didn't understand why they were passing judgment on me, especially since I walked in in overalls, nothing revealing."

Unable to obtain a record deal in Christian music, Simpson decided to branch out into pop music. In order to help their daughter make this transition, the Simpson family hired entertainment attorney Tim Medlebaum, who proceeded to set up meetings with nine record labels. When she met with and sang for Sony Music executive Tommy Motolla, he signed her on the spot. Now, with the backing of a major label, Simpson was ready to record her pop debut.

(Ashlee Simpson

Ashlee Simpson may be following in her older sister's footsteps, releasing a record and starring in her own reality television show, but she is paving her own road to success. While Jessica Simpson has made a name for herself with several pop albums, Ashlee prefers rock music and cites such influences as Janis Joplin (1943–1970) and Chrissie Hynde (1951–). Jessica, who performed on VH1's *Divas Live* in 2004, is the glamorous sister, with her long, blond hair in waves. Ashlee's style is more punk; she frequently wears jeans and lets her hair—dyed brunette—hang straight and loose.

Ashlee Nicole Simpson was born on October 3, 1984, in Texas. She began taking dance lessons at age three. At age eleven, Ashlee was the youngest person ever admitted to the prestigious School of American Ballet. The Simpson family moved to Los Angeles when Ashlee was 14, and she performed with her sister as a background dancer. She then began to pursue an acting career, winning a guest appearance on *Malcolm in the Middle*. In 2002 Simpson earned a regular role on the WB's *7th Heaven*, playing Cecilia Smith for two years.

Simpson's first musical break came in 2003 when her song "Just Let Me Cry" was selected for the soundtrack of *Freaky Friday*. She then signed a record deal with Geffen Records and began work on her debut album. MTV cameras followed Simpson as she met with record executives, co-wrote songs, and recorded tracks. The resulting series, *The Ashlee Simpson Show*, aired in June of 2004. Viewers watched as Simpson went through the process of trying to find the right producers and the right focus for her album, which she hoped to make a reflection of herself and not her famous sister. "[Jessica] is an amazing artist with a beautiful voice," Ashlee told Chuck Taylor of *Billboard*. "But I have never listened to the kind of music that she does. We're both doing music—but in very different ways, and it's cool." The junior Simpson's debut album, *Autobiography*, was released in 2004.

Released debut pop album

Sweet Kisses was released in 1999. The album contained catchy ballads and pop tunes, all emphasized by the singer's expressive vocal ability.



Jessica Simpson performs at VH1 Divas concert, April 18, 2004.

Kevin Mazur/WireImage.com.

The album climbed the charts and eventually reached platinum status. The same year Simpson also recorded "Did You Ever Love Somebody" for the soundtrack to the popular television show *Dawson's Creek*. Simpson, well on her way to becoming a major star, toured to promote her album, opening for well-known artists such as Latin pop star Ricky Martin and boy band 98 Degrees. "It was an amazing time for me," Simpson commented on her Web Site. "I was 17 and seeing the world, doing what I loved and doing it in a way that felt right." Simpson also began dating Nick Lachey (1973–), a member of 98 Degrees.

Simpson shortly found herself a major player in the teen pop arena, sharing chart space and magazine covers with other female hit makers including Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, and Mandy Moore (1984–). The Texas-born vocalist was able to distinguish herself by both exercising her talent and presenting a sexy, though wholesome image. "My whole thing is that I think innocence is sexy. That's my image—that you can be sexy and innocent," Simpson told Ray Rogers in *Interview*. Simpson was an advocate for premarital abstinence and worked hard to be a positive role model for teen girls. In 2000 she turned down the lead in the film *Coyote Ugly* because a particular sex-inclusive scene conflicted with her values.

In 2001, Simpson released her sophomore effort, *Irresistible*, which was a more sophisticated record that reflected the singer's maturity. "This record is about who I am now," she told *Cosmopolitan*. "The music is edgier, and I'm all grown up." Now twenty-one years old, Simpson had learned who she was as a person

and an artist. This album, however, did not fare as well commercially as *Sweet Kisses*.

Branching out into acting, Simpson made a guest appearance on *That '70s Show* in 2002, reprising this role twice more in 2003. She also appeared in an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. She then took on a role that would bring her both personal happiness and professional success: the role of wife. Although she and Lachey had broken up for a period of six months in 2001, in part because Simpson, who was eighteen when she began dating Lachey, needed some time on her own to learn who she was independent of a relationship. But the pair soon realized that they belonged together. On October 26, 2002, the two were married. MTV chronicled their lives as a newly married couple with *Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica*, which debuted in August of 2003. The reality show became a huge hit, with 2.7 million viewers tuning in each week. "Going into the show, we both were very clear to each other that we wanted it to be raw and natural and we weren't going to be afraid to fight," Lachey told *Entertainment Weekly*. And so, in addition to the adjustments that came with married life, the couple also had to adjust to the presence of cameras. But they soon got used to the cameras. "We don't have anything to hide.... We wanted people to know how normal we are—that we get frustrated dealing with newlywed things," Simpson told *Redbook*.

(Chicken or fish?)

Their normalcy is part of what attracted viewers to the show. Simpson and Lachey argued over bills and housekeeping chores, went on a camping trip together, and adjusted to living with each other. As Lachey told *Redbook*, "It's an adjustment getting used to the things she does and her getting used to things that I do. She's sloppier than I would like. She leaves towels lying around and doesn't turn off lights.... It's about finding a middle ground." Viewers have also enjoyed the comic moments of their lives, especially the more ditzy comments that Simpson has made. Her most infamous "dumb blond" moment occurred when, after opening a can of Chicken of the Sea brand tuna, she wondered if she was eating chicken or tuna.

Now a television star, Simpson released her third album, *In This Skin*. The song "With You" was the fastest-rising single of her career. Fans of *Newlyweds* particularly enjoyed her sense of humor about her image, as demonstrated in the music video for "With You," which featured Simpson eating tuna fish. "It's okay to stick your foot in your mouth," she told *Entertainment Weekly*, "just laugh at yourself with everybody else." An expanded version of *In This Skin* was released in the summer of 2004 and included footage from *Newlyweds*. Simpson then went on tour to support her new album.

Building on the success of *Newlyweds* (a second season aired in January of 2004), after her concert tour Simpson tackled several other projects. ABC tapped Simpson and Lachey for the *Nick & Jessica Variety Hour*, which aired in April of 2004. Also in April, Simpson launched a line of kissable, tasteable beauty products, called Dessert Beauty. She also had a sitcom in the works, and was being considered for several movie roles. Simpson has persevered through early career disappointments to achieve her dream of becoming a professional singer, and has surpassed that dream, achieving stardom as a television personality. "I think my definition of true success is success within myself," Simpson told Lance Bass in *Interview*. "People can talk about how many albums you're supposed to sell, or what your videos are supposed to look like, but who are they? If I feel confident about what I'm doing, then I feel successful."

(For More Information

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