

# Throwback: Anita Baker: Will You Be Mine



Anita Baker's "Will You Be Mine" was an album cut from her first solo effort, *The Songstress*. Baker was a member of the Detroit funk band Chapter 8 and recorded with them on their initial album for indie label Ariola. The band folded soon after the album was released, and the label was sold to Arista. Baker started her solo career with *The Songstress* in 1983 after Otis Smith, who was affiliated with Ariola, invited her to record on his Beverly Glen imprint. Smith and Patrick Moten produced *The Songstress*, and famous drug trafficker

Freeway Rick Ross contributed money to the album. Baker's first album had moderate success thanks to the singles "Angel," "You're The Best Thing Yet," "No More Tears," and "Feel the Need," which were all heard on Detroit radio. She knew how to pack powerful feelings into a ballad with a contralto-situated voice that she said was influenced by Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn. "Will You Be Mine" nailed the angst of desire in what she called "fireside love songs with jazz overtones."

The album cut was heard during Quiet Storm programming hours and was another reason that, despite its commercial failures, it was still a very important album. Baker's connection to jazz upheld that music for another generation and became a pathway for neo-soul artists of the '90s. She left Smith's label in 1984 after being sued by Moten for breach of contract and winning. She soon signed with Elektra, where she would record her breakthrough album, *Rapture*. In 1991, Elektra bought the rights to *The Songstress* and re-released it with new artwork. Anita Baker announced her retirement in 2018 when she turned 60 but later changed her mind after seeing the response from her fans.