

# R.I.P. Bill Withers



Bill Withers, who was known for his collection of soul hits including "Lean On Me" passed Monday at age 81 from heart complications. Withers ascended in the world of soul music in the '70s when he recorded a succession of genre-defining songs which began with the success of "Ain't No Sunshine." Withers' beginning in the music industry was not typical; Clarence Avant signed him to his Sussex Records after a career as a blue-collar worker. Withers would record eight studio albums and one live recording. His legacy was built from songs like "Grandma's Hands," "Use Me," "Who Is He (And What Is He To You)", "Lovely Day" and "Just The Two Of Us" which were all pillars of pop culture. Withers grew tired of the music industry in the '80s and left it altogether. He earned three Grammy Awards and was nominated for six. The documentary about his life *Still Bill* was released in 2010. In 2015, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Later that year Anthony Hamilton, Michael McDonald, Ed Sheeran, Aloe Blacc and Dr. John did a tribute concert to Withers at Carnegie Hall in a nod to his live album that took place there in 1972. Aretha Franklin, Mick Jagger, Michael Jackson, Sting, Al Jarreau and Paul McCartney have covered Withers' music. Will Smith, The Black Eyed Peas, Twista and Blackstreet have

sampled his songs. "Lean On Me" was the title of the 1989 movie starring Morgan Freeman and was played at the inaugurations for Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Withers was put into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2005. He is survived by his wife Marcia and children Todd and Kori.Â

[youtube id="bEeaS6fuUoA"]

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## Throwback: Bill Withers - Lovely Day



[youtube id="7s6Vb0Ensgk"]Bill Withers was a famous singer known for his folk-influenced soul by the time of his sixth album *Menagerie* in 1977. He wrote "Lovely Day" with Skip

Scarborough who had penned songs for other premier R&B acts of the time including Earth, Wind & Fire, LTD and The Emotions. The love dedication had a breezy feeling to it that was uptempo and not as heavy as Withers' earlier work. Withers and Scarborough created a Top Ten record that would be embraced by the public again in the '80s and '90s when the re-release charted in the United Kingdom and it was featured in a Gap commercial directed by Hype Williams. Withers had another signature song with "Lovely Day" that gave him relevance years after he ended his recording career with Columbia Records by refusing to sign with them again after 1985 because of disagreements over the direction of his music. In 2015, Bill Withers was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

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## Jose James Shares New Bill Withers Cover Videos

[youtube id="rwEXu3oo-xg"] [youtube id="x80tq7lTlc4"] Jose James has two new videos for his ongoing tribute to Bill Withers with covers of "Hope She'll Be Happier" and "The Same Love That Made Me Laugh." It is the third song by Withers that James has covered following the premiere of "Better Off Dead" last month. The Lean On Me: Jose James Celebrates Bill Withers tour will begin January 11th in New York City. The band that appears in each video will be the same one to accompany James on tour. Don Was, president of Blue Note, connected James to Bill Withers after James asked for his opinion on doing a Withers tribute tour. He had lunch with his idol who gave the tour his blessing. James told *Billboard*,

*"He's the only artist I've met who has no time for flattery or compliments. He's one of the greatest*

*songwriters of all time; his influence on modern American music is massive. He's seen it all but stays really humble and true to the music.*

In February James will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of his debut album *The Dreamer* with a four-night run at the Blue Note Jazz Club in New York City.

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## **José James Announces Bill Withers Tribute Tour Shares Video For Better Off Dead**

[youtube id="\_EFMz2AX1gE"] Jazz and R&B vocalist José James is embarking on a two-year tour dedicated to Bill Withers' legacy. James has included Withers' music in his live set for the past few years as a medley at the end of his show. On January 11th James will kick off the *Lean On Me: José James Celebrates Bill Withers* tour in New York City. The video of James performing "Better Off Dead" is a preview of the show. Withers is vetting the show which will lead to an album release from James next year.