

R.I.P. Irene Cara

Singer and actress Irene Cara has died at age 63. Cara became famous in the '80s for her role as Coco on the show *Fame* and for singing the theme song "What A Feeling" from the *Flashdance* soundtrack. Cara was a New York City native who started her career as a child by competing in the Little Miss America pageant. As a seven-year-old, she sang in a mambo band where her father Gaspar Escalera was a saxophone player. She started her acting career with television appearances on *The Electric Company* with co-stars Morgan Freeman, Bill Cosby and Rita Moreno and *Johnny Carson's The Tonight Show* during the '70s. Her acting chops were also formed by her work on Broadway and off-Broadway plays like *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *The Me Nobody Knows*. She and Stephanie Mills worked together on the Broadway play *Maggie Flynn as children*. In 1976, she starred in the Black cult classic *Sparkle* which was scored by Curtis Mayfield. Phillip Michael Thomas, Lonette McKee and Dorian Harewood were her co-stars and the 2012 remake would feature Whitney Houston's last acting role. By the late '70s, Cara's name was growing internationally and she was recognized for her work on *Roots: The Next Generations* and *Guyana Tragedy: The Story Of Jim Jones*.

Her 1980 role as Coco in the movie *Fame* is what made her famous. She sang the title track "Fame" and the film's other song "Out Here On My Own." Both songs had Academy Award nominations and "Fame" was the winner. In 1982 she would win another Academy Award, a Grammy, an American Music Award and a Golden Globe for co-writing "What A Feeling" for *Flashdance* which was one of the biggest movies of the decade. Her time in the limelight ended after a 1985 lawsuit against music executive Al Coury for royalties which was resolved with her winning \$1.5 million in 1993. She had a role in the 1983 film *D.C. Cab* but she never gained the same previous momentum. Her recording career produced four studio albums including one

with her all-woman band Hot Caramel. She sang the title song for the American television drama *Downtown: A Street Tale* in 2004. At the time of her passing, there were plans for new projects that her publicist said would still be done.

Unfortunately, yes. Her business manager and I were notified a few hours ago. I'm her publicist. Believe me, I wish it weren't true. We were working on amazing projects that would have made her and her fans incredibly happy. Her manager and I will finish them. She'd want that.

– Irene Cara (@Irene_Cara) [November 26, 2022](#)

Throwback: B-Boying & B-Girling

Graffiti Rock

Beatstreet

Flashdance

Malcolm McLaren's "Buffalo Gals"

Wild Style

Michael Jackson

B-Boying started in the late '60's and '70's in the Bronx section of New York City but like so many Black cultural products was heavily influenced by James Brown. The 'B' means in most cases the boy who would dance to the break part of the song cued up by the DJ. The dances were called top-rocking, up rocking, power moves and the suicide or freeze started by Frosty Freeze and the west coast contributions of popping and locking. The backslide was a dance that b-boys were doing and it eventually became commercially known as the moonwalk when Michael Jackson learned it from Jeffrey Daniel and Geron "Casper" Candidate and did it on Motown's 25th Anniversary show. Early pioneers of b-boying include The Rock Steady Crew, The New York City Breakers, [LA Breakers](#), [The Electric Boogaloos](#) and The Lockers. [There were B-Girls such as Bunny Lee who was the first female to join the Rock Steady Crew, Debi Mazar, Baby Love and Suga Pop.](#)

['Xanadu'](#) was the first film to show locking with an appearance from the Electric Boogaloos. Fred Berry who was a member of The Lockers is best remembered for playing Rerun on the TV show 'What's Happening.' 'Wild Style' was the first hip-hop movie and The Rock Steady Crew are captured performing at their best. 'Beatstreet' from 1984 was directed by Stan Lathan (Sanaa's dad) and produced by Harry Belafonte and it features the famous clip of The Rock Steady Crew and The New York City Breakers facing off in a battle. Malcolm McLaren's "Buffalo Gals" video has dancing from The Rock Steady Crew and it helped hip-hop become popular in England. Michael Holman hosted the first hip-hop TV show in 1984 called 'Graffiti Rock' where The NYC Breakers also get camera time. The movie ['Breakin''](#) showcased the dancing of Shabba Doo who was a member of The Lockers and Michael Chambers who was a well-known street dancer. This movie gave the media license to call B-Boying breakdancing which is a term most purists detest."Flashdance" from 1983 also gave The Rock Steady Crew

another display for their talents. Most people know that Jennifer Beals had a body double to do most of the dance scenes but they don't know that Crazy Legs put a wig on to do the famous continuous backspin on the floor during the audition scene. Like the other elements of hip-hop culture B-Boying spread to the entire world. Contemporary b-boy crews that are recognized include [Flying Steps](#), [Massive Monkees](#), [Gamblerz](#) and [Last For One](#).