

APOLLO EDUCATION



**APOLLO THEATER
WALK OF FAME
LEGEND**

PATTI LABELLE

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With a stage presence as exciting as her **belting soprano voice** and **“Rock and Soul”** sound she helped pioneer in the 1970s, singer Patti LaBelle is nicknamed the “Godmother of Soul.”

Born Patricia Louise Holte on May 24, 1944 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, “Patsy” was shy growing up. After joining her church’s youth choir in her teens, she discovered her singing had the ability to uplift audiences. Word of Holte’s talent spread quickly through Philadelphia, and before she knew it, listeners from around the city were coming to hear her sing.

“FROM THE DAY LABELLE STEPPED OUT ONSTAGE IN THOSE OUTRAGEOUS OUTFITS, PEOPLE WOULD NEVER SEE GIRL GROUPS THE SAME WAY AGAIN.”

DO NOW

Wear Something Silver

Labelle wowed audiences not only with their incredible singing, but also with their extravagant costumes. Their historic 1974 appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House for example, was themed “Wear Something Silver”, and invited attendees to dress in glowing and shiny outfits for the performance.

Encouraged by her experience in church, she formed an all-female **“Doo-Wop”** group in high school named, *The Ordettes*. In 1962, after auditioning with their cover of “I Sold My Heart to the Junkman,” the **vocal quartet** was signed to the Bluebelle Record Company and renamed, *The Bluebelles*. Soon after, Holte took a new name of her own, “Patti LaBelle”; “La Belle” meaning “The Beautiful” in French.

Within days of being signed, *Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles* were booked on the nationally televised music program, *American Bandstand*. The following year in 1963, they played the World Famous Apollo Theater in Harlem for the first time. Audiences loved the girls so much they nicknamed them the **“Sweethearts of the Apollo.”**

When the **British Invasion** of Rock and Roll hit the U.S. in the mid-1960s, the Bluebelles started touring with popular English rock bands, including The Rolling Stones and The Who. Patti and her friends packed away the formal gowns of the “Doo Wop” era, in exchange for an extravagant new fashion sense that complimented their increasingly electric, **“Rock and Soul”** sound.

Taking on a new band name for the third time, Labelle became an iconic **girl group** of the

1970s **Disco Era**, ushering in a period of **empowerment** for both women and artists of color in the entertainment industry. Marked by their historic 1974 appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, Labelle became the first African American vocal group to perform at the distinguished theater.

Following the group's breakup in 1976, Patti launched a successful solo career starring in Broadway musicals, movies, and on television. She also released popular hit singles including "If You Asked Me To" and "On My Own."

Performing by herself never felt as fulfilling as performing with her friends however. So in 1991, Patti invited former Labelle members, Nona Hendryx and Sara Dash, to reunite with her at the Apollo for the filming of a live television special. It was the first time the childhood friends had performed together in 15 years.

From overcoming her childhood shyness to becoming a world famous singer, actress, author, and entrepreneur, Patti LaBelle – the "Godmother of Soul" – continues to excite and uplift audiences every time she performs.

Patti LaBelle was inducted into the Apollo Theater Walk of Fame in 2009.

NAME GAME

Patti LaBelle's life story includes a lot of names. From Patricia to "Patsy", the Bluebelles to Labelle, names can change over time. Have you ever gone by a different name?

Sometimes we can even have nicknames such as Patti's: "The Godmother of Soul". Do you have a nickname? If so, is there a story behind it? Share with a partner.

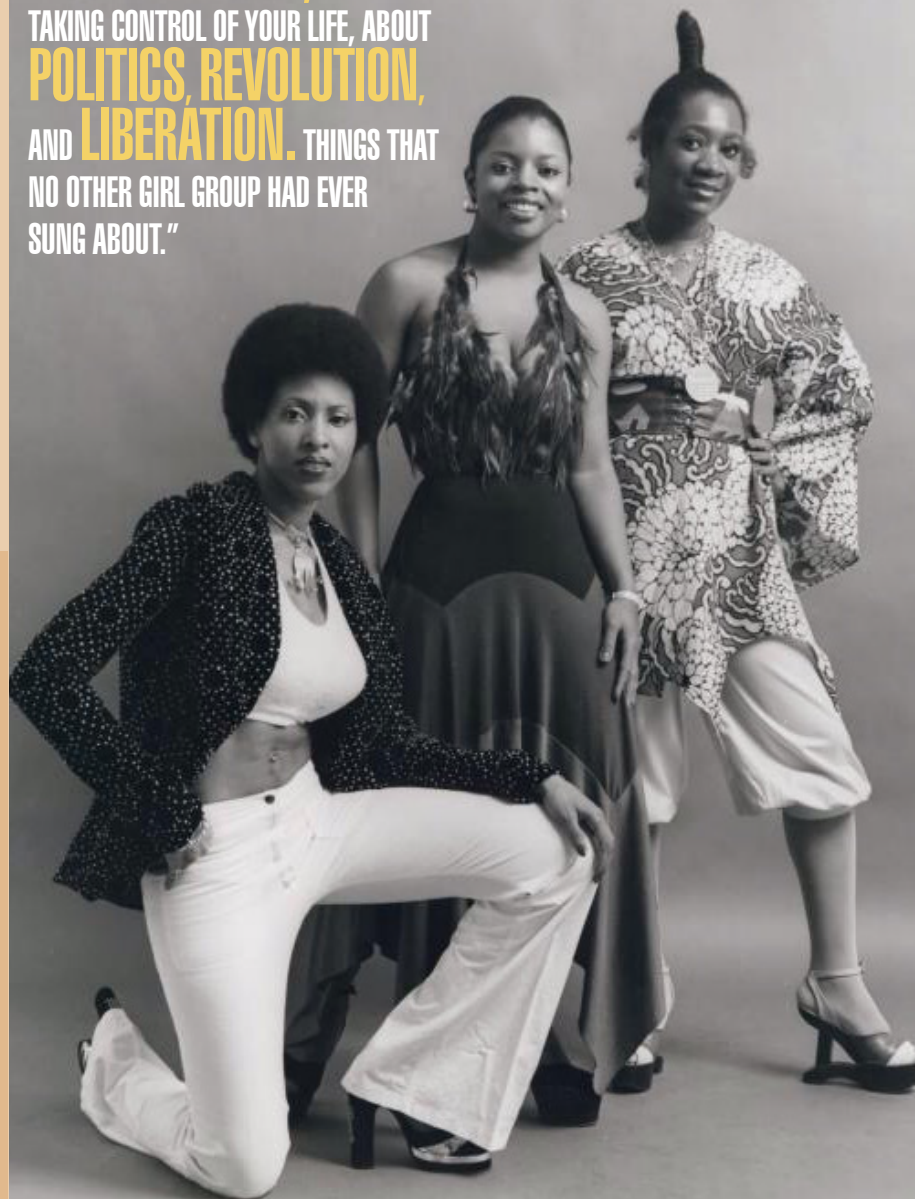
If not to have a nickname already, have a partner name something that they think is cool about you, then you do the same in return. See if you can come up with cool nicknames for each other!

DID YOU KNOW?

Following their 1991 reunion, Labelle returned to the Apollo several times, most notably in 2010. Within 20 minutes of their show beginning, the sound system lost power due to a heavy winter storm. Instead of canceling the performance, Patti, Nona, and Sara sang **a cappella** for nearly two hours, much to the delight of all in attendance.

In her early years at the Apollo, trying to save money on food, Patti was known to bring her own hot dogs and heat them over the light bulbs in her dressing room!

"LABELLE'S SONGS WERE ABOUT **EMPOWERMENT**, ABOUT TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE, ABOUT **POLITICS, REVOLUTION,** AND **LIBERATION**. THINGS THAT NO OTHER GIRL GROUP HAD EVER SUNG ABOUT."





WORDS TO KNOW

Empowerment

To become stronger and more confident.

Vocal Quartet

A group of four singers.

Girl Group

An all-female group who may sing, dance, or play instruments together.

Doo-Wop

A style of music popular in the 1950s; often performed by a vocal trio, quartet, or quintet singing in harmony.

Belting

A singing technique performed in a high vocal register and at a loud volume.

Soprano Voice

The highest vocal range of the singing voices.

British Invasion

A cultural movement in which Rock and Roll bands from the United Kingdom became popular in the United States, beginning in the mid-1960s.

Rock and Soul

An electrifying style of music blending British Rock and Roll with African American vocal and rhythmic traditions.

Disco Era

An electronic style of dance music popular in nightclubs during the 1970s.

A cappella

Singing without instrumental accompaniment.

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