

SHRINK RAP

Inside the head of...
Dionne Warwick

She suffered racial abuse, being made bankrupt and having her songs pinched by Cilla and Dusty. But the night President Obama sang to her made it all worthwhile

What is your earliest memory?

Growing up in East Orange in New Jersey. It was a vibrant neighbourhood – and very racially mixed. It was a wonderful place to grow up – very inclusive. When she was four years old my cousin Whitney [Houston] moved there as well.

What sort of child were you?

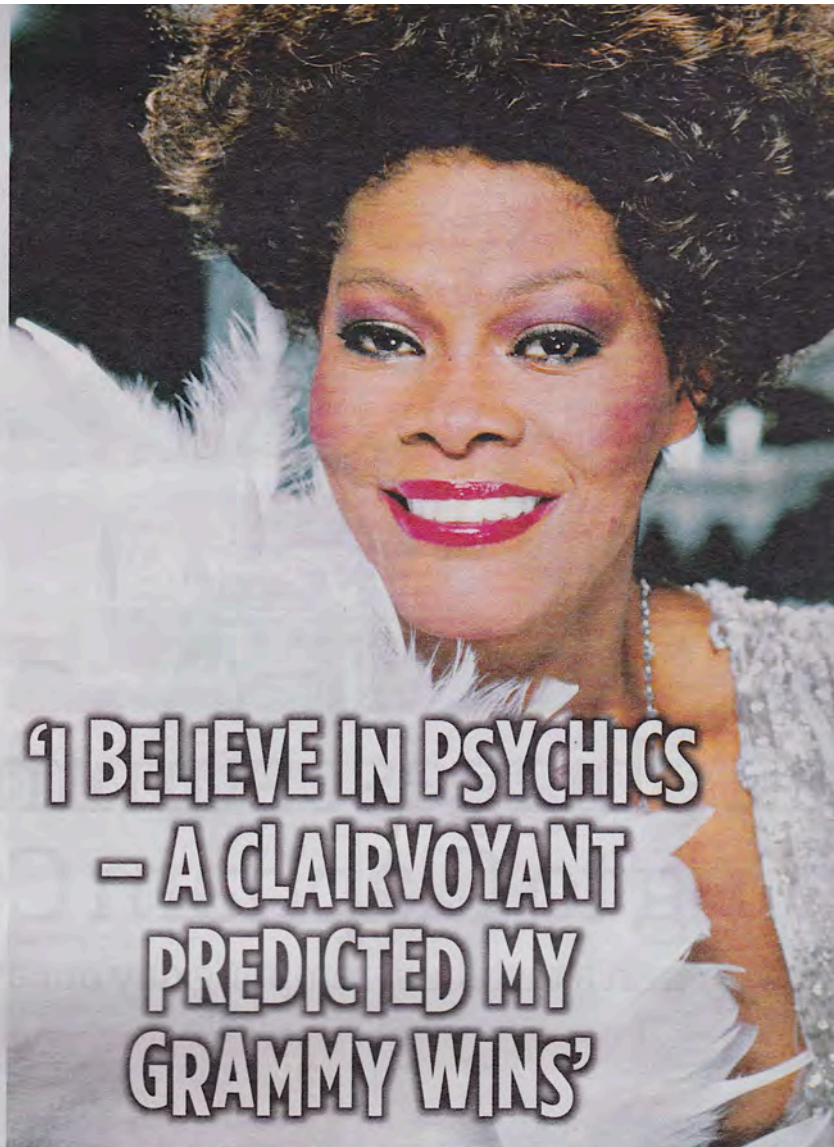
Outgoing and inquisitive and I loved performing. My mother would tell people that I was born singing. I didn't really have a choice. I came from a family of singers, so it was inevitable that it would be a big part of my life. At the weekends, while other children played, I caught the bus from New Jersey to New York to sing and to record. I'd record backing vocals or demos – anything to get noticed.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

Being racially abused. In the Sixties I was considered a 'crossover' artist, which I was told brought resistance from both whites AND blacks.

Tell us a secret about yourself

I believe in psychics. In the Nineties I got involved with the Psychic Friends Network, a telephone service that connected callers with clairvoyants. What started me off was when I spoke to a clairvoyant back in 1987 and she predicted I would win two Grammy awards that year – and I did for *Déjà Vu* and *I'll Never Love This Way Again*. It freaked me out but I was hooked



And that I was also made bankrupt [in 2013]. When you hire people to take care of your business affairs, you expect them to do that.

What do you think is your best character trait?

I have a great work ethic. I was the breadwinner in my marriage but I think it was hard for my husband; the male ego is a fragile thing.

Who would you like to say sorry to you, and why?

Cilla Black, Sandie Shaw and Dusty

What is your biggest achievement?

My biggest hit: *Heartbreaker*. It came about when my boss Clive Davis met Barry Gibb from the Bee Gees at a wedding and he told him he had always been a fan of mine and had a song for me. Clive put us in touch. I was not initially keen on the track but it ended up going platinum. I had no criteria on how to pick a hit record. I didn't want to record *Do You Know The Way to San Jose* either but that turned out to be huge, too.

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Who would you like to see in the film?

Lupita Nyong'o
She is beaut

How do you feel about the event?

I go to Braz
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... and I'll never Love This Way Again. It freaked me out but I was hooked.

What is the worst thing anyone has ever said to you?

Roger Waters [from Pink Floyd] called me 'ignorant' over a concert I was due to play in Tel Aviv earlier this year. We have different political views but Tel Aviv has done nothing to Dionne so Dionne has no reason to do anything to Tel Aviv. Roger Waters boycotted there. He is entitled to think whatever he wants but don't tell me to feel that way because I don't have to.

What is your biggest regret?

I have two. First, that my marriage to [actor] William Elliot didn't work out.

sorry to you, and why?

Cilla Black, Sandie Shaw and Dusty Springfield. I was very upset that over the years a lot of my songs have been covered by British artists. I didn't like that the original versions weren't given enough time to be heard, and I didn't like being told that record company executives wanted my songs recorded by someone else.

Who would be your dream dinner date?

President Obama – that would be wonderful. He is one of the most honest people in the world. I met him briefly at a campaign rally in New Jersey and he sang *Walk On By* to me. He has a very good voice.

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What is your guiltiest pleasure?

I love tennis. I watch any match I can – it doesn't matter who is playing. I love Wimbledon and particularly Andy Murray.

What are you scared of?

Dying in the shower. I nearly checked out earlier this year when I passed out in the shower. My blood-sugar levels had dropped and I fell

definitely retire

When did you feel really ha

At the birth
grand
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LAST BOOK YOU READ?

'Barbara Jordan', about the first southern black congresswoman.

LAST GIG YOU WENT TO?

Johnny Mathis in New York.

LAST TV SHOW YOU LOVED?

Scandal on ABC. The storylines are exceptional.

D

over and damaged my ankle but it could have been a lot worse. I was in hospital for six weeks while the doctors tried to save my foot.

Who would play you in the film of your life?

Lupita Nyong'o from *12 Years A Slave*. She is beautiful but has real grit.

How do you relax?

I go to Brazil. I always feel relaxed when I am there. I think I will definitely retire there.

When did you last feel really happy?

At the birth of my seventh grand-child last year. Her name is Whitney, after Whitney Houston.

It's nice to have that legacy being kept alive in the family.

Interview by
Oliver Buxton

Warwick is on
the Legends Live
Tour in October

with Roberta Flack,
Mary Wilson and The
Drifters, legendslive.org

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