

YOU HAVE SUFFERED, IKE TURNER.

You have suffered more than any of us could ever imagine.

You have suffered more than anyone who speaks ill of you.

You have suffered more than anyone who wishes suffering upon you.

You have suffered from the cruelty of those who've never met you but still feel fit to judge your character.

You have suffered more than Tina, that's for sure.

IT MAY AMAZE YOU TO LEARN that Ike Turner has done things in his life beyond committing acts of domestic violence against Tina Turner.

Back in 1951, he played piano on "Rocket 88," a rolling, locomotive-powered slice of Nigrabillly often pointed to by nerdy historians as "the first rock 'n' roll record." Ike's piano style was later copped by emotionally unstable piano-maniacs Little Richard (who admits it) and Jerry Lee Lewis (who, to my knowledge, doesn't). Ike claims that Elvis Presley used to watch him playing at Sun Studios in Memphis long before Elvis first set his white-chocolate voice to wax there in 1954. Blues chubster B.B. King, whose career Turner guided in the 1950s, calls him "one of the founding fathers" of rock 'n' roll.

As a talent scout and record producer, Ike Turner became a scholar of blues and jazz and country. He can play guitar, piano, bass, drums, everything...playing juke joints like he did fifty years ago, you had to fill in on every instrument when one of the musicians had to go take a piss.

He recorded his first song with Tina in 1960. On '61's "Things Are Gonna Work Out Fine," a love duet between Ike and Tina, his guitar is all deep, fuzzy, wiggled-out jaggedness. His low, comical spoken voice provides a safety net for Tina's feline shrieking as she tells him she went to see the preacher man and has started making wedding plans. On this record at least, things work out fine. Ike and Tina sound deeply in love. The song is difficult to listen to in light of their breakup's messy aftermath.

Their explosive live act, The Ike & Tina Revue, scorched audiences' shorts throughout the sixties and early seventies. With Ike as the musical director and Tina as the star performer, they managed to make white songs blacker ("Proud Mary," "Come Together") and black songs whiter ("I Want to Take You Higher").

Then they broke up.

TINA TURNER IS A MONSTROUSLY TALENTED live performer. She was James Brown With a Clit. But Ike Turner, her hubby of eighteen years, added something to her music that vanished after the couple split the sheets. Their turbulent domestic life apparently lent a thunderstorm-level electricity to their music which evaporated after Tina fled the raging coke monster Ike with mere coins in her pocket. As we all know, she went on to find astronomical solo success through chanting *na myoho renge kyo*. Her massively successful solo career recalled what happened to Dolly Parton after she stopped recording with mentor Porter Wagoner. Dolly and Tina dumped their vaguely creepy male partners and went on to become cultural icons, while Ike 'n' Porter languish on the fringes of elderly obscurity.

Although it might be distasteful to allege that Tina's music was better when Ike was beating her, it's inarguable that her music suffered once he stopped.

Strolling along her post-Ike hi-yella brick road, Tina rejected the greater glory of black soul and went for easy-listening, middle-of-the-road white pop tarts. Tina's post-Ike music has sold millions and



millions, but it's washed-out electronic Caucasian-tainted Pop Lite. And what's with the fake British accent? The girl was born in Nutbush, Tennessee!

Alright, so he beat her. But it was the best thing that ever happened to her career! Public sympathy for Tina's wretched story, rather than the quality of her post-Ike music, sent the Screechy Lady to the top of the charts. Fuck, I'd trade bein' whupped with a coat hanger for a few million dollars! Why all the fuss?

HE PUT TINA ON THE COVER OF THEIR RECORD WITH A BLACK EYE!

protests the woman—a black woman—when I excitedly tell her I'm going down to Portland's



THE IKE & TINA REVUE: Domestic turbulence translated to onstage electricity.

Waterfront Blues Festival to watch Ike Turner and His Kings of Rhythm perform for an audience of mostly white, mostly middle-aged, mostly flabby blues aficionados.

The Kings of Rhythm, mostly black but clad entirely in white, pounded out an instrumental before Ike made his grand splash onstage. We were far enough away from the stage that Ike still looked big as he made a



WHAT'S MONEY GOT TO DO WITH IT?: Tina Turner's career skyrocketed (and her music started to suck) after she alleged that ex-hubby Ike beat her.

from time to time during his spoken interludes, and it was always the same laugh—demented, evil, demonic. At another point, when Ike started to get excited and began pounding on his guitar, I blurted out, "BEAT HER, IKE!" to the delight of my friends and the dismay of everyone else around me. Then, later, I turned to my girl and said, "Watching him is like looking into the face of pure evil."

Then he introduced a chick who, despite her bombshell looks and able singing talents, immediately registered in everyone's mind as Tina's Replacement. She appeared to be wearing a blonde wig, and we couldn't tell if she was black or white. Together she and Ike plowed through "Proud Mary" and another duet, I believe which was called "Sex," in which Ike simulated cunnilingus on his microphone in a very bawdy and disturbing manner.

A few nights later, I told somebody that I thought Ike put on a great show.

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"Man, he hit Tina in the FACE!" was all he could say.

Because he hit the bitch, this musical genius will be forever branded as a wifebeater...not the father of rock 'n' roll, but a wifebeater. Not a man who feels pain, but a wifebeater. Not a human being who, at least at this point in his life, is having a harder time of it than Tina, but a wifebeater. Tina could own half of England and Ike could be boiling French fries in the kitchen at some McDonald's in Compton, and he'd still be the master abuser and she'd still be the victim.

grand entrance in a ridiculously loud blue-rhinestone-sparkled suit.

"What, did MC Hammer have a yard sale?" asked my Jewish female escort, and we both chuckled at her playful witticism.

And you know everyone in the audience was thinking, "That's the man who hit Tina Turner..."

Ike seemed happy and eager to please...almost in an obsequious, shuffling way...as he led the band through rock chestnuts such as "Tequila" and "Johnny B. Goode" and suchlike. He also grabbed the boys by the scruff of their necks and shoved

them through "Rocket 88," and for a flash there, I heard something ancient and pure and original. Ike would laugh through rock chestnuts such as "Tequila" and "Johnny B. Goode" and suchlike. He also grabbed the boys by the scruff of their necks and shoved

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Doesn't matter that she admits to hitting him, too. Nobody calls her a "husbandbeater."

Funny how that works.

"She would get these attitudes," Ike explained to a reporter, "and give me grief, so we would get into fights and I maybe had to hit her some."

That sounds good enough for me.

HOW TINY HE LOOKED as he stood there signing his new CD at the merchandise table after the show...what a small, small man! What a shock...and what a relief...to see that Ike Turner, evil monster abuser, couldn't be taller than 5'4" or 5'5." He sports the Carl Lewis hi-top fade and satanic goatee he's had for years. He's 70 years old, and I swear to Christ, he doesn't look a day over 40. Apparently, eleven million dollars of cocaine served as the Fountain of Youth for Ike Turner. And he has one of the warmest, sweetest smiles I've ever seen on anyone.

Ike is now into his thirteenth marriage, this time to a white lady who—gulp—works at a battered-women's shelter. He has published an autobiography, *Takin' Back My Name*, in which he seeks to repair some of the damage...and emotional pain...caused by Tina's allegations.

"Before you start talking about my laundry, clean yours," Ike once told an interviewer. "That's how I feel about it, man."

That's how I feel about it, too, Ike.

I recall the interview with Ike when he was in prison where Ike demonstrated for the reporter the magnitude of his cocaine habit by shoving a pen through the hole he'd burned through his septum. I think of how he brags of losing his virginity at age six to a fifty-year-old woman. I think of his hardscrabble Southern upbringing and how he watched the Klan murder his father when little Ike was only four.

And then I decide that I like Ike Turner. I like him a lot.

FEEL YOUR PAIN, IKE TURNER. I know a bit of what you've been through—not the being-born-a-poor-black-man-in-Mississippi part, but what it means to bear the "wifebeater" tag.

I realize, like you probably do, Ike Turner, that The Man brought you down...while he elevated Tina...as part of his sinister plan to destroy the black family. It must have been hell for you to watch her dance shamelessly with a skinny-ass white boy in that video, wagging her finger and saying, "You better be good to me!" Yes, be good to her, white boy...unlike Ike, the Evil Black Devil Man.

You and I, Ike, we know how women can push you to the brink.

Tina was a fireball. I'm sure it got stressful on tour. I can't imagine stuffing the car trunk with suitcases while she's all PMSing and shrieking at you like she screams on stage.

I forgive you, Ike Turner, even if no one else does.

And if I added to your pain merely by mentioning the domestic abuse and bringing up all those bad memories again, I'm sorry.

I've accomplished things, too, Ike. But just today, someone said I'll be branded a wifebeater for the rest of my life.

Just like Ike.

