

# Celia Cruz

## THE QUEEN OF SALSA



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE CELIA CRUZ FOUNDATION

### BACKGROUND

Born on October 21, 1925, in Cuba, Celia Cruz grew up in a working class family where music was a part of daily life. She studied music at the National Conservatory of Havana, initially pursuing teaching before fully committing to performance. Cruz rose to prominence in Cuba as the lead singer of the orchestra, La Sonora Matancera. Following the Cuban Revolution, she went into exile in the United States, where she would build an international career while remaining connected to her roots.

### CAREER

Celia Cruz became one of the most celebrated voices in Latin music, earning the title “Queen of Salsa.” Cruz collaborated with legendary artists like Tito Puente and helped popularize salsa music globally, particularly through her work with the Fania All-Stars. Known for her powerful voice, vibrant stage presence, and signature phrase “¡Azúcar!”, she recorded dozens of albums and won multiple Grammy and Latin Grammy Awards over a career spanning more than five decades. Her legacy continues through the Celia Cruz Foundation.

### IMPACT

Celia Cruz’s influence extended far beyond music, as she became a cultural icon representing resilience, identity, and pride within the Hispanic and Latino community in America. As an Afro-Cuban woman, she broke barriers and expanded opportunities for future generations of Latina artists. Her global success helped bring salsa music into the mainstream and strengthened the visibility of Latino culture worldwide.

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