

## **Graceland, Paul Simon.**

Paul Simon began as half of the legendary folk rock group Simon and Garfunkel, and later then released his groundbreaking album *Graceland* almost sixteen years later. Simon and his family moved to Queens, New York, where Paul would later befriend his soon to be musical partner Art Garfunkel. Paul and Art met they both met in sixth grade when they were casted in *Alice in Wonderland* together, from there on they both formed a friendship over the love of music. In 1957 the duo signed a record



contract and released their first single at age fifteen called, "*Hey Schoolgirl*." thus landed them a spot on *American Bandstand*, right after Jerry Lee Lewis! After their first record didn't get much success they decided to split separate ways, Simon went to Queens College, while Garfunkel studied art history at Columbia. While Simon was at college he'd record demos of songs that he had written and offered services to producers. When John Lennon asked Simon how he had known so much about the industry, Simon said, "I grew up in New York."

## **First hit.**

After a few years, Paul and Art got back together, they'd release their first album *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.* only five of the songs on the album were originally Simons, which turned out not to be huge hits. However, this album did feature the acoustic version of *The Sound Of Silence*. After this album had become a flop, Simon headed off to Europe where he'd busk in England, France, and Spain. During the later years in England, Simon would soon meet Kathy, who'd soon become the muse of many of his songs. Back in the U.S. producer Tom Wilson, had totally reworked Simon and Garfunkel's *The Sound of Silence* and then had the record label

release it as a single. The song became an instant hit, this caused Simon to move back to the U.S. and get back with Garfunkel.

Throughout the sixties they would come to produce a few more albums, *The Sound Of Silence* (1966) *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, And Thyme*. (1966) *Bookends* (1968) And last but not least, *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (1970) thus would be the duo's last album made together.



## **Going solo.**

1972, almost right after the duo's split, Paul Simon would drop his first solo album called, "*Paul Simon*." which would feature a few of

his big hits like "*Mother And Child Reunion*." and "*Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard*."

Throughout the 70's Simon would release two more studio albums, "*There Goes Rhymin' Simon*, *Live Rhymin'*." As well as, "*Still Crazy After All These Years*." which would win him album of the

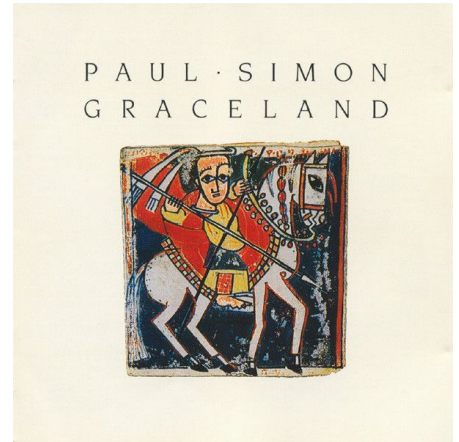


year Grammys. More or less singles off the albums would become better hits than the actual albums themselves. Simon would appear in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, which would soon inspire him to make a film himself, with a soundtrack called *One-Trick Pony*, the soundtrack would flop and only one single off the album would become a success, "*Late In The Evening*." would be Simon's last hit before his career would fall. In 1981 Garfunkel and himself would reunite and do a free concert in Central Park, with an attending 500,000 people (that was a record for the time) the album for the concert wouldn't be released until 1982, the success with the album was so good that the duo decided to do a tour together.



## **Graceland.**

1986 wouldn't be the year until Simon's musical career would relaunch, his debut album *Graceland* would become one of the most revolutionary pop albums made. In the early 1980's Simon became fascinated with African and Brazilian music, due to his interest increasing he made his way to South Africa to began recording his album in 1985. He combined rock, zydeco, Tex-Mex, Zulu choral, mbaqanga, better known as



"township singing." This album would become a controversial choice given to some of the political situations, and due to the fact that it involved South American music. Simon said that he has no regrets about the album or recording the album, in Africa and just recording it in general. This album would win Simon an American Music Award for Favourite Pop/Rock Album (1987) Artist & Album Producer, Album of the Year (both in 1986) Artist & Producer, and Record of the Year (both in 1987.) The album would help the South African music to be more public and popular around the world.

Link to a video on Graceland: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7G\\_HXlcbGpY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7G_HXlcbGpY)

Link to Paul Simon accepting his 1987 Album of the Year award:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=pqozC61PPng>

### **Track 1; The Boy In The Bubble.**

This is the opening track on Simon's album, and the first track he worked on when in Africa. His main concern was recording the music Africa, when he returned home to the states that's where he ended writing the lyrics. It took simon a long time to write and

finished the lyrics, due to him wanting the lyrics to mesh with the South African rhymes. The words aren't really based on his time spent in Africa, but more or less his observations. Simon explained to Rolling Stone that, "The Boy In The Bubble' devolved down to hope and dread. That's the way I see the world, a balance between the two, but coming down on the side of hope."

**Link to a bit about the song:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bUFqcDOfiw>

**Link to song:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk7MCvCHNQA>



### **Track 2: Graceland.**

Graceland is the second track in the album. Graceland is an mansion in Memphis, Tennessee, where Elvis Presley had lived in the previous years before; and is where he is currently buried. He called the track "*Graceland*" after he came with the instrumental, he said the song reminded him of Sun Records where Elvis had recorded years before. Simon had came up with a particular drum beat that he really liked, in the 2012 remastered version of Graceland Simon had said that: "The drums were kind of a traveling rhythm in country music - I'm a big Sun Records fan, and early-'50s, mid-'50s Sun Records you hear that beat a lot, like a fast, Johnny Cash type of rhythm." The rhythm section consisted of three African musicians: Ray Phiri on guitar, Baghiti Khumalo on bass, and Issac Mtshali on drums.



Simon had played the drums for Phiri, and asked him to play something over it. Phiri started playing own version of american country on his electric guitar, which was almost never used in African music. Simon was trying to figure out why he was playing that way, when simon asked, Phiri simply responded with: "I'm just imitating the way you write." Simon later had brought in Don and Phil Everly (better known as The Everly Brothers.) to sing backup on the track. Simon and his previous musical partner Art Garfunkel both idolized the duo, and recorded



some of their tracks. Simon said that he heard "Graceland" as the perfect Everly Brothers song.

**Link to the track:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FEBDNJtNWk>

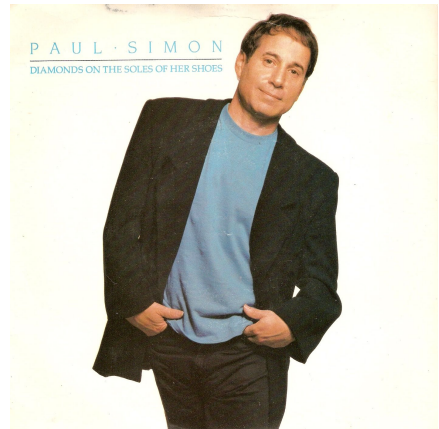
**Track 5: Diamonds On The Souls Of Her Shoes.**

This song would become the fifth track on the album, and was originally originally put together as a last minute addition to the album. The album was originally due in June of 1986, but Warner Brothers pushed it back to the end August. Simon reconnected with everyone for an appearance on *Saturday Night Live* during May of that year, Simon thought it was a great excuse to get back together in the studio. He worked on the song with

Ladysmith leader Joseph Shabalala and was recorded

on in the Hit Factory in New

York City. this would turn out to be the first time Ladysmith would sing with other musicians, due to the fact that they all sang capella. They were all comfortable with Simon having a good time and letting loose, that showed when they all sang with Simon on SNL, it'd soon become one of the most memorable performances during the history of the show. They were introduced by Robin Williams, the backup vocals with Simon had their own choreographed dances with their unique sound, would bring the house down.



**Link to *Saturday Night Live* performance:**

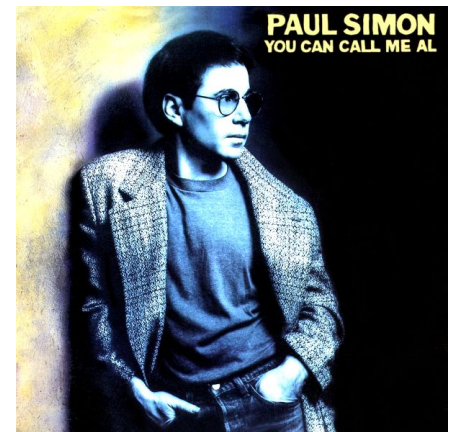
<https://vimeo.com/214899807>

**And Link to just the song:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-I\\_T3XvzPaM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-I_T3XvzPaM)

**Track 6: You Can Call Me Al.**

This song is about a self-obsessed person who's becoming aware of their surroundings, the song originally starts off with a simple joke, "Why am I soft in the middle when the rest of my life is so hard?" Very easy words. Then it has a chorus that you can't understand. What is he talking about, you can call me Betty, and Betty, you can call me Al? You don't know what I'm talking about. But I don't think it's bothersome. You don't know what I'm talking about but neither do I. At that point. The second verse is really a recapitulation: A man walks down the street, he says... another thing. And by the



time you get to the third verse, and people have been into the song long enough, now you can start to throw abstract images. Because there's been a structure, and those abstract images, they will come down and fall into one of the slots that the mind has already made up about the structure of the song.



So now you have this guy who's no longer thinking about the mundane thoughts, about whether he's getting too fat, whether he needs a photo opportunity, or whether he's afraid of the dogs in the moonlight and the graveyard." Simon had explained this in an interview with *SongTalk* magazine. The names "Al" and

"Betty" came from a composer named Pierre Boulez, who had been invited to one of Simon's parties in the 70's. Boulez called Simon and his wife "Al" and "Betty" as he made his exit from the party. You Can Call Me Al was the first single off the album, which won a Grammy in 1988 for Album of the Year. It would be Simon's first hit since 1980, when "Late In The Evening" would hit #6 in the US. Simon would arrange for some of the musicians who had played on the track, come to America, and had worked on some tracks as well as backing him up on *Saturday Night Live*, on May 10th 1986. The music video for the song would feature Chevy Chase who would lip-sync the vocals of Simon while Simon pretended to play different instruments.

### **Track 9: Crazy Love, Vol II.**

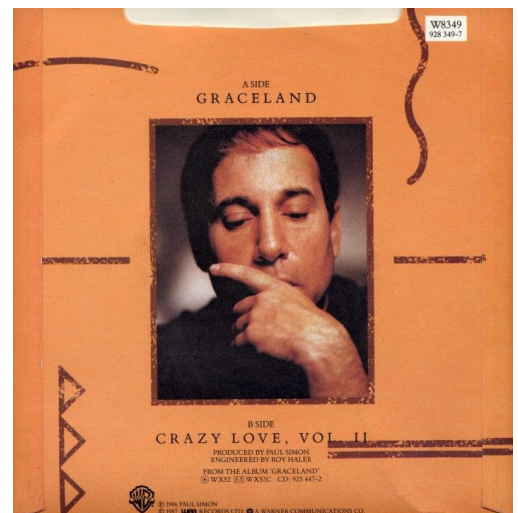
Would definitely have to be one of my favourite tracks on this album, just the tune of the song and the lyrics are magnificent. There are many different theories about the story behind this song, the main one is that in this song there's a man who's dealing with the end of a love. Some say that it's about his divorce from actress, Carrie Fisher. Simon had called it Vol. II to not mix things up with Van Morrison's "Crazy Love." The main theme of the song is about the press's reaction, for example the second verse "It's all over the evening news." There have been a few remarks that Fisher has made about their divorce I'm the papers, a few have been petty remarks which may have inspired this line "She said the joke is on me/ I say the joke is on her" Simon has always kept his personal life very personal and kept away from the spotlight. So maybe this was a way for Simon to get his feeling and emotions out about his former marriage, or it could simply just be a play with words and not mean anything serious at all.

#### **Link to song:**

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QO\\_RgFHOk1s](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QO_RgFHOk1s)

#### **My opinions on the album:**

I personally love this album for many different reasons, this album is definitely on my list of top five. There's a big importance of this album, it has influenced many different artists and bands. It has made African music more popular, bringing it to the surface more



and people started listening to it more. I think the way Simon weaves the music types together just perfectly, gave it a really nice sound and quality. I like this album for many reasons, mainly because it's one of my go to albums to listen to when I get bored of all my other music, this album never gets old for me. I especially love the way Simon made it seem like he poured his heart and souls into this album, and gave it his all. He never cared about all the criticism and controversy he got for the album, he said that he wouldn't have changed anything he had done and had no regrets about his choices. Another reason why I like this album is because it's the perfect road trip album, it's always something I like listening to during long drives up the island or across the country. The beat and tune of the songs are just perfect for it, (especially Graceland.) this album has opened many door ways in the music and recording business in many ways, and has became one of the most influential albums in the history of pop music and is still inspiring many artists to this day. I would give this album 10/10 stars for his greatness.

By: Harmony Mooney.

