

Simply The Best at 77

THE POP DIVA FINDS THE JOY IN LIFE AFTER OVERCOMING ABUSE EN ROUTE TO THE TOP

Eddy Hampton Armani thought he was in for an afternoon of campy fun with Tina Turner when they went to see *Mommie Dearest* in 1981. “Then I looked over at Tina and she was crying,” her long-time friend and former personal assistant tells *Closer*. Tina’s abuse-scarred marriage to Ike Turner had ended five years earlier, but seeing the story of Joan Crawford’s abusive relationship with daughter Christina, says Armani, “reminded her of Ike.”

Since then, Tina has let go of her anger about her past, but she hasn’t forgotten the pain she endured on her road to the top. Now her life is being turned into *Tina — The Musical*, set to be

staged next year by director Phyllida Lloyd (*Mamma Mia!*). “To have my story nurtured by such an amazing creative team is thrilling,” says Tina, 77. Adds a friend, “This has been an emotional journey for Tina.”

That journey began with Anna Mae Bullock, the child of a broken home who sang in the church choir in Nutbush, Tenn. She met Ike at an East St. Louis nightclub and began recording with him at 19. The Ike and Tina Turner Review produced hits like “River Deep, Mountain High.” But it was a grueling existence, touring 300 days a year. “Ike called the shots,” Robbie Montgomery, a backup singer who was “close as sisters” to Tina, tells *Closer*.

After suffering from beatings, Tina left Ike in 1976. “He can have everything except my name,” she said during their bitter divorce. (Ike died of a cocaine overdose in 2007.) A friend says the tough period after their split, when

she was in debt and considered a has-been, is actually Tina’s source of greatest pride: “She found things within herself she didn’t know existed.”

As a solo artist, Tina became a superstar with 1984’s *Private Dancer* and won 11 Grammys. After her last tour in 2009, she’s laid low in Zurich, often riding bikes with Erwin Bach, 61, a German record executive she met in 1985 and married in 2013. Says a friend, “After all the chaos, she’s made the life she’s always dreamed of.”

One of Tina’s only regrets is she “never had a daughter she could dress up and take shopping,” says Armani. Of her two sons with Ike, Tina is close to Craig, 58, but less so with Ronald, 56, who has a history of drug arrests. But she doesn’t dwell on the past. “She’s worked hard enough to look forward,” Armani says. “She can take time and enjoy the beauty of life.”

— Nancy Bilyeau, with reporting by Katie Bruno and Melissa Roberto

High and Low Notes

“Ike’s problem was he was a musician who wanted to be a star,” says Tina (in 1964) of her ex-husband, who was jealous of the attention she got.

“I regret not having had more time with my kids,” says Tina with (clockwise from bottom left) stepsons Michael & Ike Jr. and sons Craig and Ronnie in ’72.



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“People think my life has been tough, but it’s been a wonderful journey.”

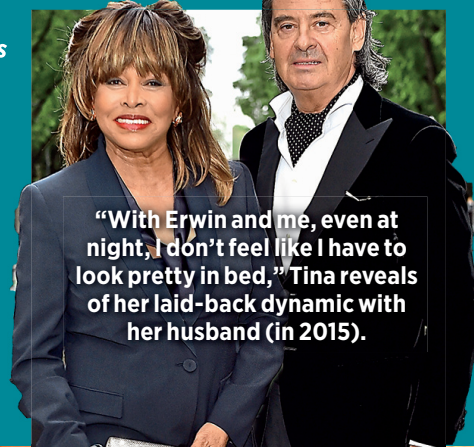
— Tina Turner



◀ Tina’s 1984 album, *Private Dancer*, sold 20 million copies worldwide and won four Grammys, including Song and Record of the Year.



◀ The 1993 biopic *What’s Love Got to Do With It?* earned Oscar nods for Angela Bassett (as Tina) and Laurence Fishburne’s turn as Ike.



“With Erwin and me, even at night, I don’t feel like I have to look pretty in bed,” Tina reveals of her laid-back dynamic with her husband (in 2015).