

I owe marilyn monroe a real debt

Sociology, Identity



I Owe Marilyn Monroe a Real Debt, Ella Fitzgerald on How the Actress Helped Her Career Take Off

Marilyn Monroe helped Ella Fitzgerald career take off in a way that speaks the person she was behind the camera. Those who lived and worked in Hollywood in the '30s to the '50s knew that racism and discrimination against people of colour was at its peak, and one Jazz singer knew it better than most, Ella Fitzgerald. Despite having so much talent and getting recognition at an early age, Ella, a woman of colour, was not allowed to play in the famous nightclubs at the Sunset Strip. Back then, clubs like Macambo and Tocadero were famous among the rich, powerbrokers, and A-list movie legends, but the former didn't let African-American artists perform. Ella wanted to leave the small nightclubs she performed at to the Macambo, but the management would not give her a chance because she was black, and the situation remained the same until Marilyn Monroe, stepped in.

Recounting how things turned around for her in a 1973 interview, the Jazz legend said all it took was one phone call from from Monroe to secure a gig for her at the Macambo. Ella also revealed that the iconic actress promised the manager of the nightclub that she'll have a front row seat every night the singer performed, which she did, and the press "Went wild." Expressing her gratitude at the time, the award-winning Jazz artist said "I owe Marilyn Monroe a real debt," adding that a after she got the Macambo gig, she didn't have to play in small nightclubs anymore.

The singer equally described the woman she stayed friends with until the actress's death in 62 as "An unusual woman who was a little ahead of her time and didn't know it. The singer also had help from her manager, Norman

Granz, who was a well-known as a human rights activist, but it was Marilyn that gave her the push that defined the rest of her career.

Ella went on to record a lot of success in her career, and made history when she became the first African-American female to win a Grammy Award. The singer made famous a style of singing called "Scant," and for over six decades, she thrilled her audience with her mastery of various instrument sounds, which also became the hallmark of her performances. Ella performed for the last time in '93 and passed away in '96, at a time when racism was not as bad as when she started out.