

## Honoring World AIDS Day Playlist, with notes by KEXP DJ Marco Collins

### 1. Neneh Cherry, Blacksmith - "I've Got You Under My Skin (Blacksmith Bass Mix)"

It's been 30 years since the Red Hot organization released Red Hot + Blue, an HIV/AIDS benefit compilation. To commemorate the anniversary, the nonprofit has announced several reissues dedicated to fighting HIV/AIDS through popular culture. Red Hot released six vintage remixes of Neneh Cherry's "I've Got You Under My Skin," the opening track to Red Hot + Blue.

### 2. Queen, David Bowie - "Under Pressure"

Freddie Mercury (1946–1991) died in 1991 at age 45 due to complications from AIDS. He confirmed the day before his death that he had contracted the disease, having been diagnosed in 1987. Mercury had continued to record with Queen following his diagnosis, and he was posthumously featured on the band's final album, Made in Heaven (1995).

### 3. Queen - "Don't Stop Me Now"

### 4. Erasure - "Chains Of Love"

In 2004, Erasure singer Andy Bell publicly announced that he has been HIV-positive since 1998.

### 5. Mykki Blanco, Jean Deaux - "Loner"

Mykki Blanco is an American rapper, performing artist and poet known for being outspoken about his HIV+ status & defense of LGBT rights.

### 6. Gil Scott-Heron - "The Revolution Will Be Not Televised"

Scott-Heron (1949–2011) died in 2011, after becoming ill upon returning from a European trip. Scott-Heron had confirmed previous press speculation about his health, when he disclosed in a 2008 New York Magazine interview that he had been HIV-positive for several years, and that he had been previously hospitalized for pneumonia.

### 7. Fela Kuti, Afrika 70 - "Zombie"

Fela Kuti (1938–1997) In 1997, Olikoye Ransome-Kuti, announced his younger brother's death a day earlier from complications related to AIDS. More than one million people attended Fela's funeral at the site of the old Shrine compound. supervision of his son Femi. His youngest son Seun took the role of leading Fela's former band Egypt 80. As of 2020, the band is still active releasing music under the moniker Seun Kuti & Egypt 80.

### 8. Sylvester - "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)"

Sylvester James Jr. (1947 – 1988), known mononymously as Sylvester, was known for his flamboyant and androgynous appearance, falsetto singing voice, and hit disco singles in the late 1970s and 1980s. An activist who campaigned against the spread of HIV/AIDS, Sylvester died from complications arising from the virus in 1988, leaving all future royalties from his work to San Francisco-based HIV/AIDS charities.

### 9. The B-52s - "Love Shack"

Ricky Wilson (1953–1985) was the original guitarist and founding member of rock band the B-52's. In 1983, during recording sessions for the band's third studio album *Whammy!*, Wilson discovered he had contracted HIV. In 1985, during recording for their album *Bouncing Off the Satellites*, Wilson's illness became more severe; both Keith Strickland and Kate Pierson have stated that despite this, he kept his illness secret from the other members of the band. In an interview, Pierson stated that Wilson did so because he "did not want anyone to worry about him or fuss about him." In 1985, Wilson died of AIDS, at the age of 32.

#### **10. Arthur Russell - "That's Us/Wild Combination"**

Arthur Russell (1951–1992) was an American cellist, composer, singer, and musician from Iowa, whose work spanned a disparate range of styles. Trained in contemporary experimental composition and Indian classical music, Russell became associated with Lower Manhattan's avant-garde community as well as the city's disco scene. Russell died of AIDS-related illnesses in 1992, at the age of 40. Kyle Gann of *The Village Voice* wrote: "His recent performances had been so infrequent due to illness, his songs were so personal, that it seems as though he simply vanished into his music.

#### **11. John Grant - "Ernest Borgnine"**

Grant was diagnosed as HIV positive in 2011 which is reflected in the lyrics to his song "Ernest Borgnine". He has since spoken candidly of his diagnosis and explained "I was messing around with my life and indulging in destructive behaviours and ended up getting a disease that could have totally been avoided. When I look at the fact that there are millions of children in Africa with HIV, who never got to choose, it makes me need to figure out why I let that happen to myself. That song is saying all those things.

#### **12. Ricky Merino, Conchita Wurst - "Smalltown Boy"**

Thomas Neuwirth is an Austrian singer, recording artist, and drag queen who is known for his stage persona Conchita Wurst (also known mononymously as Conchita). In 2018, Neuwirth disclosed that he is HIV-positive and has been undetectable (and thus not infectious) for several years. He wrote through an Instagram post that he felt compelled to come out as HIV-positive due to persistent threats from a former boyfriend that he would publicly reveal Neuwirth's status.

#### **13. Ofra Haza - "I'm Nin'Alu"**

Ofra Haza (1957 – 2000) was an Israeli singer, actress and Grammy Award-nominee recording artist, commonly known in the Western world as "The Israeli Madonna", or "Madonna of the East". Her voice has been described as a "tender" mezzo-soprano. Ofra Haza died at the age of 42, of AIDS-related pneumonia. While the fact that she was HIV-positive is now generally known, the decision by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* to report it shortly after her death was controversial in Israel. The revelation of Haza's illness caused much surprise among fans, along with debate about whether the media invaded her privacy by reporting it. There was also speculation about how she had acquired the virus. Immediately after her death, the media placed blame on her husband, Tel Aviv businessman Doron Ashkenazi, for infecting her.

#### **14. ANOHNI - "Drone Bomb Me"**

ANOHNI, is an English-born singer, composer, visual artist and AIDS activist. She was formerly the lead singer of the band Antony and the Johnsons and her debut record, *HOPELESSNESS*, recuperates the political atmosphere of the electronica strategies from the dance floors of the 1980s, where activism and relief merged in social gatherings at clubs and dance halls when HIV/AIDS was sweeping through many queer communities. Anohni explains this model as the kind

of music that people were dancing to in the late '80s, during the height of AIDS. Rage is a really fun place to dance from—expressions of anger sublimated into something beautiful are invigorating, especially if you feel like you're telling the truth.... Yes, I want the songs to be dance songs, because I think there was something in the rest of my catalog that almost seemed too passive and morose, especially in a conversation about global realities today. I wanted to do something that was gonna go down fighting. Something more vigorous. Something that would compel people who are already in that mindset to take action.

#### **15. Frankie Goes To Hollywood - "Relax"**

William "Holly" Johnson was the lead vocalist of Frankie Goes to Hollywood, who achieved huge commercial success in the mid-1980s. In 1991, Johnson learned that he was HIV positive. This triggered a temporary withdrawal from the music business and public life in general.

#### **16. C&C Music Factory - "Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)"**

David Cole (1963–1995) was one half of the dance-music duo C+C Music Factory, which he founded with his musical partner Robert Clivillés. Cole died in 1995, after a long illness. The official cause was announced as complications from spinal meningitis brought on by AIDS.

#### **17. Cameo - "Word Up"**

Wayne Cooper was the lead singer of the funk band Cameo. The group hit it big with their first Top-40 hit "Word Up." Although it was widely reported that he died in a plane crash, Cooper died from AIDS in 1984.

#### **18. N.W.A. - "Straight Outta Compton"**

Eric Lynn Wright (1964 – 1995), known professionally as Eazy-E, was an American rapper and entrepreneur who propelled West Coast rap and gangsta rap by leading the group N.W.A and its label, Ruthless Records, pushing the boundaries of lyrical content. In 1995, Wright was admitted to the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles with a violent cough and was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. It is believed Wright contracted the infection from a sexual partner. In 1995, Eazy-E died from AIDS-induced pneumonia, one month after his diagnosis.

#### **19. Free - "Alright Now"**

Andy Fraser (1952–2015) was an English songwriter and bass guitarist of the rock band Free. Having been diagnosed with HIV, he was later diagnosed with Kaposi's sarcoma, a form of cancer that had been very rare until the onset of the AIDS epidemic. This time-line was called into question by Fraser's subsequent revelation that he was homosexual.

#### **20. Klaus Nomi - "Valentine's Day"**

Klaus Sperber (1944 – 1983), known professionally as Klaus Nomi, was a German singer and performer noted for his wide vocal range and an unusual, otherworldly stage persona. Nomi was known for his bizarrely visionary theatrical live performances, heavy make-up, unusual costumes, and a highly stylized signature hairdo that flaunted a receding hairline. He is remembered in the United States as one of David Bowie's backup singers for a 1979 performance on Saturday Night Live. Nomi died in 1983 at the age of 39 as a result of complications from AIDS. He was one of the earliest known figures from the arts community to die from the disease.

#### **21. Bruce Springsteen - "Streets Of Philadelphia"**

"Streets of Philadelphia" is a song by Bruce Springsteen for the film Philadelphia (1993), an early mainstream film dealing with HIV/AIDS. Director Jonathan Demme used the song to open the movie, starring Tom Hanks as a lawyer dying of AIDS. Demme wanted people not familiar with AIDS issues to see his film. He felt Springsteen would bring an audience that would not ordinarily see a movie about a gay man dying of AIDS. The movie and the song did a great deal to increase AIDS awareness and take some of the stigma off the disease.

## **22. Liberace - "I'll Be Seeing You"**

Liberace (1919 – 1987) was a child prodigy born in Wisconsin to parents of Italian and Polish origin, Liberace enjoyed a career spanning four decades of concerts, recordings, television, motion pictures, and endorsements. At the height of his fame, from the 1950s to the 1970s, Liberace was the highest-paid entertainer in the world, with established concert residencies in Las Vegas, and an international touring schedule. Liberace embraced a lifestyle of flamboyant excess both on and off stage, acquiring the nickname "Mr. Showmanship". Liberace was secretly diagnosed HIV positive in 1985 18 months before his death. Cary James Wyman, his alleged lover of seven years, was also infected and died in 1997. Liberace kept his terminal illness a secret until the day he died and did not seek any medical treatment and he was hospitalized for pneumonia as a result of AIDS and died in 1987, at his retreat home in Palm Springs, at the age of 67.