

AMERICAN MASTERS



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***American Masters* Heralds the Holiday Season with New Documentary Exploring the Dynamic Life of Legendary Singer Brenda Lee December 16 on PBS**

Brenda Lee: Rockin' Around explores Lee's illustrious, genre-spanning career, including her holiday hit "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"

Prolific singer **Brenda Lee**'s iconic 1958 Christmas classic song "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" is a staple during the holiday season and has garnered international recognition and quintuple-platinum sales over the decades. But she is also known for hits spanning the rock, pop, country, and rockabilly music genres. Discover the story behind Lee's iconic songs and explore how her early life in poverty and childhood stardom shaped her artistry and rise to be one of the biggest female music acts in history in the new documentary ***American Masters – Brenda Lee: Rockin' Around***, premiering nationwide Monday, December 16 at 10 p.m. ET on PBS (check local listings), pbs.org/americanmasters and the PBS App.

Featuring archival footage and stills, performance clips, and interviews with Lee herself, ***Brenda Lee: Rockin' Around*** details how the "I'm Sorry" singer helped pull her family out of poverty in rural Georgia with her knockout vocal talents, ultimately becoming one of the leading female headlining acts in music. The star-studded film also features interviews with country artists **Keith Urban**, **Tanya Tucker**, and **Trisha Yearwood**, as well as singer-songwriter **Pat**

Benatar, music producer **Neil Giraldo**, and beloved radio personality **Shotgun Tom Kelly**, co-host of SiriusXM's 60s Gold radio show.

Born in the charity ward of Atlanta's Emory University Hospital, by the age of 10 Lee was belting out country songs in a voice that belied her age and tiny stature and she quickly became a musical sensation. Her determination and shining talents led her to career highlights including popular radio hits "Sweet Nothin's" and "Break It to Me Gently," memorable friendships with fellow music titans Patsy Cline and Elvis Presley, and even working with the Beatles as her opening act in Hamburg, Germany in 1962.

Lee's prolific artistry has been celebrated in the music world over the past six decades. She holds the distinction as the first woman to be inducted into both the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame and the Country Music Hall of Fame and is also an esteemed member of the Pop Music Hall of Fame and Rockabilly Hall of Fame.

Her lasting impact is especially evident to contemporary audiences every holiday season with the iconic song "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree," which rose to popularity when it was featured in the 1990 Christmas classic *Home Alone* starring Macaulay Culkin. The song is a mainstay on the Billboard Hot 100 chart during the month of December, and in 2023 it topped the Hot 100 for the first time, making Lee, at 79 years old, the oldest artist to reach number one in the chart's history and one of the "Queens of Christmas" along with Mariah Carey. Most recently, an A.I.-generated Spanish-language version of the track, "Noche Buena y Navidad," has expanded the song's reach to even more audiences.

Her impact on musicians across several genres, including pop, hip-hop, soul, and R&B, is reflected in the works of many artists like Prince, Kanye West, Elton John, and Taylor Swift – with the latter previously stating that Lee is "the singer who mastered the sound of heartbreak."

Brenda Lee: Rockin' Around is produced and directed by Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker Barbara Hall, who is also the creative force behind ***American Masters*** films *Charley Pride: I'm Just Me* and *Patsy Cline: American Masters*, as well as the upcoming PBS *Great Performances* tribute [*Patsy Cline: Walkin' After Midnight*](#).

"I've celebrated many legendary artists throughout my career, and I'm thrilled to continue this love for our music greats with ***Brenda Lee: Rockin' Around***," said Hall. "**Brenda Lee** has been shaking up the music industry for decades. And with the holidays coming up, it's such a wonderful time to shine a light on her accomplishments, especially her iconic song 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree.'"

“**Brenda Lee** is one of the most versatile artists in music history and her influence on today’s biggest acts is undeniable,” said Michael Kantor, Executive Producer of ***American Masters***. “Hearing about Brenda’s life from Brenda herself is really special.”

Now in its 38th season on PBS, ***American Masters*** illuminates the lives and creative journeys of our nation’s most enduring artistic giants — those who have left an indelible impression on our cultural landscape — through compelling, unvarnished stories. Setting the standard for documentary film profiles, the series has earned widespread critical acclaim: 28 Emmy Awards — including 10 for Outstanding Non-Fiction Series and five for Outstanding Non-Fiction Special— two News & Documentary Emmys, 14 Peabodys, three Grammys, two Producers Guild Awards, an Oscar, and many other honors. To further explore the lives and works of more than 250 masters past and present, the [American Masters website](#) offers full episodes, film outtakes, filmmaker interviews, the podcast “American Masters: Creative Spark,” educational resources, digital original series and more. The series is a production of The WNET Group.

Brenda Lee: Rockin’ Around is a production of Nashville PBS in association with TH Entertainment LLC and American Masters Pictures. Barbara Hall is producer and director. For ***American Masters***, Michael Kantor is executive producer, Julie Sacks is series producer, and Joe Skinner is digital lead.

American Masters will be available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](#) and the [PBS app](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. PBS station members can view many series, documentaries and specials via [PBS Passport](#). For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](#) website.

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