



COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

**BEN E. KING**

BORN: September 28, 1938 ERA/STYLE: Rhythm and Blues/Pop

DIED: April 30, 2015

HOMETOWN: Henderson, North Carolina

Ben E. King was born in Henderson, North Carolina in 1938, and moved to Harlem with his family when he was in elementary school. He started his musical journey by singing in church, and even formed his own singing group when he was only 9 years old. He practiced music in between school and working at his father's luncheonette.

Ben became famous for singing a special genre of music called doo-wop, a type of vocal rhythm and blues popular in the 1950s. His group, The Four B's, was so successful that they won a talent competition at the famous Apollo Theater, and Ben was asked to become the lead singer for an even bigger group called The Drifters.

"Stand By Me" is Ben E. King's most famous song. Other important musicians, like Beatles front man John Lennon, soul singer Spyder Turner, and boxer/poet/entertainer Muhammad Ali, all loved it so much that they recorded their own versions. Another cover appeared in the Final Fantasy video games, and it inspired an entire movie of the same name. It was the fourth most played song of the 20th century! The song became so popular that Ben started a charity dedication to kids' education called the Stand By Me Foundation. With the song being so famous, you would never expect that Ben wrote it on the spot in a single day, after a long day of recording other songs! He had only the melody in his head, and immediately sat down at the piano to figure out a bass line and harmonies.