

## Podtalk: Yvonne Elliman, Mary Magdalene in Rock Opera & Film ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 20, 2019 - 10:41am

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CHICAGO – To begin with, Yvonne Elliman's vocal stylings have appeared on albums that have sold 50 million units. The singer was discovered by Andrew Lloyd Webber for his seminal “Jesus Christ Superstar” rock opera (approximately 10 million albums sold), portraying Mary Magdalene, and also had a monster hit – “If I Can't Have You” – on the legendary “Saturday Night Fever” soundtrack (40 million sold).

The effusive Ms. Elliman was 17 years old, and singing in a London club in the late 1960s, when composer Andrew Lloyd Webber heard her ethereal voice, and signed her to portray Mary Magdalene in his new rock opera. The album of “Jesus Christ Superstar” was released in 1969, and took off like a rocket. Later, she joined the original Broadway cast of Superstar in 1971 in the same role, and finally completed the cycle as Mary M. with the 1973 film version, directed by Norman Jewison.



Yvonne Elliman at 'The Hollywood Show' in 2013

*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

The second half of the 1970s yielded more fruit for her career. She joined the Eric Clapton tour as a back-up singer, and her distinctive vocals are heard on Clapton's hit, "I Shot the Sheriff." Robert Stigwood was the President of Clapton's record label (RSO), and signed Elliman to record her own albums. This yielded the hit "Love Me" in 1976, and got Elliman a spot in the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack, which shot "If I Can't Have You" to Number One.

The bounty from the soundtrack allowed Elliman allowed her some flexibility, and she re-emerged after a couple decades in 2004 to record an album and tour again. She has participated in several Superstar reunion events, including performing a 2014 duet with Ted Neeley, her "Movie Jesus." She lives in her native Hawaii.

**In this published-for-the-first-time 2013 Podtalk with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com (the interviewer having a touch of laryngitis) singer Yvonne Elliman talks about her roots in "Jesus Christ Superstar," Eric Clapton and the amount of her first check from the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack.**

*"The Hollywood Show" in Chicagoland presents celebrities meet-and-greets and memorabilia vendors every spring. For more information [click here](#). [23]*

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**Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 2:42pm*):**  
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