

I have had a great response and a number of you sent many more stories about back up singers, including Ronnie Spector, of the Ronettes (inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame). I did not mention Ronnie, as she was technically not a back up singer, but the lead singer, and of course, got her due by induction into the Hall of Fame. Her songs with the Ronettes (among them "Be My Baby", "Baby, I Love You", and "Walking in the Rain") are classics, and Eddie Money immortalized her by writing "Take me home tonight," with the great riff, (*just like Ronnie sang, be my little baby*):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrTDa3XTUxw> . The documentary was about U.S. singers.

But I did leave out what is perhaps the greatest back up solo and cameo, that of Clare Torry, who sang the unbelievable wordless backup on "The Great Gig in the Sky" from Pink Floyd's 1973 album "Dark Side of the Moon." She was given a co-writing credit with Richard Wright and was paid a pittance, but later sued Pink Floyd and EMI and won an award in English courts for copyright ownership on the song's performances. To show there were no hard feelings, she later toured both with David Gilmour and with Roger Waters.

Here, she discusses the session and her disaffection with her original pay scheme, and in the second, she sings.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttZoyaYHDOg> (Interview)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jL5SEBdG5RQ> ("The Great Gig in the Sky")

In my view, even the great "Gimme Shelter" versions with first Merry Clayton and then Lisa Fischer (shown in the documentary) pale in contrast to Clare Torry on "The Great Gig in the Sky." Even though there were three other back up singers on the song, hers is a transcendent, splendid vocal performance—and not a single word sung.

Michael