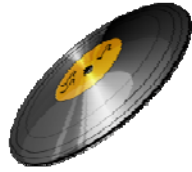


Rock Icons Roll On



Longevity, baby. *That* was the subtext of the 52nd Grammy Awards in January. Whether it was a raspy **Stevie Nicks** outsinging Taylor Swift in their spunky off-key duet, or the fact that all five Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance nominees—**Bob Dylan, John Fogerty, Prince, Neil Young**, and winner **Bruce Springsteen**—were over 50, the night's most vibrant artists were also its most revered. And that's true any night. Ask yourself-who's sexier: **Tina Turner** or Lady Gaga? Exactly.

So it's no surprise that when Turner strutted through Paris in January for fashion week, the paparazzi mobbed her, quizzing her about tour plans (she's pondering it, she said). Or that **Carole King** and **James Taylor's** upcoming tour will take them not just across North America but to Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. The highest-grossing North American tours in 2009 were U2 (**Bono** turns 50 in May), Springsteen, and **Elton John** and **Billy Joel's** Face 2 Face shows. Number five on the list: **AC/DC**, which has been rupturing eardrums since 1973. Number four is Britney Spears. It only *seems* like she's been around for 50 years.

These older artists thrive by refusing to rest on their greatest-hits laurels. An angry and energized **Neil Young**, who survived a brain aneurysm in 2005, ranted on 2009's *Fork in the Road*: "There's a bailout coming but it's not for you /It's for all those creeps hiding what they do." **David Bowie** is recording his 42nd album, six years after heart surgery. *Newsweek* recently ranked *Love and Theft*, **Bob Dylan's** 2001 triumph, number two on its list of the decade's best albums. Dylan released a Christmas album in 2009 that *The Washington Post* called both awesome and menacing.

In the run-up to **Pete Townshend** and **Roger Daltrey's** Super Bowl gig, commentators snarked that The Who is better known now for *CSI* themes than its guitar-smashing past. Maybe so. More intriguing, however, is that these 1970s power-chord classics fit so seamlessly on ultraslick 21st-century TV. The music endures because it remains timelessly fresh. As do the artists. Long live rock.