



“The Godfather of Rap,” Who Had HIV, Is a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductee

1971’s “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” is among Gil Scott-Heron’s hits. He was HIV positive when he died in 2011.

May 14, 2021 By [Trent Straube](#)

Music pioneer and poet Gil Scott-Heron, known for hits such as 1971’s “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” and who was [HIV positive](#) when he [died at age 62 in 2011](#), will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, [reports Billboard](#).

Artists become eligible 25 years after their first commercial recordings; the induction ceremony will take place October 30. Also in the 2021 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame class are Foo Fighters, The Go-Go’s, Jay-Z, Carole King, Todd Rundgren, Tina Turner, LL Cool J and others.

Scott-Heron was inducted under the “early influence award” category. His style melded spoken-word poetry, jazz and soul with urban sounds. He influenced rap and hip hop to such a degree that he became known as “the Godfather of Rap,” a nickname he disavowed, preferring instead to refer to his musical style as “bluesology.”

He was open about his drug use—often writing and singing about the topic—and in [2008, Scott-Heron told New York magazine](#) that he had been living with HIV for years. In a [2010 profile in Entertainment Weekly](#), he elaborated, saying that in between two prison terms he served, he received a call from an ex-girlfriend who informed him she was HIV positive and he needed to get tested. He did, and the results were positive.

After a long absence from the music scene, he released an album in 2009. The BBC caught up with him at the time; you can watch the two-part interview, including a summary of his career, in the videos above and below.

To read about other artists and celebrities living with HIV—including Magic Johnson, Freddie Mercury and Elton John—click [#Celebrities](#).

Did you know that HIV is transmitted through six different bodily fluids? They are:

- Blood
- Semen
- Pre-cum
- Rectal fluids
- Vaginal fluids
- Breast milk.

There are several ways this can happen:

- From condomless vaginal/frontal or anal sex with someone who has HIV, while not using a condom or not using medicines to prevent (pre-exposure prophylaxis, [[PrEP](#)] or [post-exposure prophylaxis \[PEP\]](#)) or treat HIV (treatment as prevention [[TasP](#)]).
- From sharing needles, syringes or other injection equipment with someone who has HIV, while not using PrEP.
- From mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. However, if the mother is in regular care and on HIV treatment, this risk is reduced to nearly zero.
- From being stuck with a needle or cut with a sharp object that contains HIV-positive blood. This is mostly a risk for health care workers.
- From getting a blood transfusion. However, this risk is rare in the United States.

To learn more, see the section on [HIV Transmission and Risks](#) in the [POZ Basics of HIV/AIDS](#).