

ESTEFAN, GLORIA (1957–)

Born Gloria Fajardo in Havana, Cuba, Estefan came to live in Miami at the age of two following the Castro takeover. Fascinated by music from an early age, Estefan wrote songs and played the guitar. She recalls, “music was the one bright spot in my life.” In 1975 she heard Emilio Estefan’s band, the Miami Latin Boys, at a wedding where she was invited to sing. Impressed by Gloria’s talent, she joined the group which renamed itself the Miami Sound Machine and she became its lead singer. Following a string of hits, including the showstopper, “Conga” the band renamed itself again in 1987 and Gloria Estefan and the Miami Sound Machine went on to make history in the crossover Latin music world. Along with husband Emilio, Estefan has exerted leadership in several humanitarian efforts, among them, hurricane relief, substance abuse education, AIDS research and the environment. In 2000 *Vista* magazine declared Gloria Estefan the Hispanic Woman of the Century.