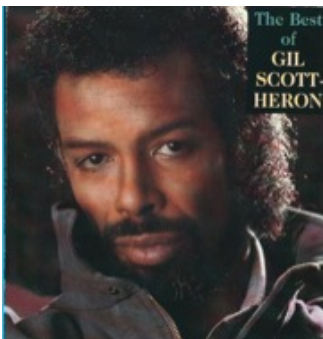




## *Gil Scott Heron*

(April 1, 1949 – May 27, 2011)

**Gil** was to many theirs and my hero. I later learn he was the hero of many whom just did not have the single poetic voice he had to see it as it was. With the backing of [Brian Jackson](#), [Bob Adams](#), [Jerry Jemmott](#), [David Spinozza](#) and Jazz itself, Gil was able to produce serious musical poems and jazz pieces that when you listen to it, seems just as prevalent today as it did then. Many still see a connection of the 1976 Bicentennial issue of [H2O Water Gate Blues](#) with present day scandals.



During my teenage years Gil was the man. There was being hip and then there was being deep hip. When you were deep hip, you knew Gil Scott and his works. His music and poems were so vocal and truthful that I use to wonder how he was not arrested on those poems alone. Gill said what many felt and he knew it. Many said that his work ([Winter in America](#)) may be a pessimistic view of the country, but the under line message was that it is not to late for a change. It is regarded as one of Gil's best works

If anyone song about the addictions he faced, it was Gil Scott. [The Bottle](#) was widely epic famous as he sung the effects of alcohol. "Angel Dust" another great worked peaked at No.15 on the [R&B](#) charts in 1978. Many feel the system got to him through drugs. They always seemed to be arresting him for one abuse or the other. With this revolving door effect, eventually affected his production of music and poems.



Looking at the history, it explained the many times I had wondered about him. His silence did not sit well with me and looking back on this now, I thought he was smarter than that. I saw the same thing heading my way and I gave up that life because I did not want to deal with the alcohol and drugs. I wish he had chosen the same path. It would have been a great pleasure to know he was still doing his thing, just on a quieter scale. I wonder if he has more time, what poems he would have created. I guess I already know as some of his pieces seem truthful now.

*The First Minute of a New Day*



Studio album by Gil Scott-Heron & Brian Jackson

I remember checking on-line for Gil and discovered he had just been released from jail about a month prior. Later in April 2009 on the BBC, poet [Lemn Sissay](#) presented a half-hour documentary on Gil Scott-Heron entitled *Pieces of a Man*. Later he was back on the circuit, but it was not the same. His body and words carried the look and sound of beat down. I believe he summed it all up with his album [Me And The Devil](#). There was no doubt a toll was taken, but in the spirit of survival, Gil kept going as best as he knew how.



Scott-Heron performing at the Regency Ballroom in San Francisco, 2009

*Bill Sommerville*