

## **KOOL & THE GANG BIOGRAPHY**

Kool & the Gang has sold over 70 million albums worldwide and influenced the music of three generations. Thanks to songs like ***Celebration, Cherish, Jungle Boogie, Summer Madness*** and ***Open Sesame***, they've earned two Grammy Awards, seven American Music Awards, 25 Top Ten R&B hits, nine Top Ten Pop hits and 31 gold and platinum albums. Kool & the Gang has performed continuously for the past 43 years, longer than any R&B group in history. Their bulletproof funk and jazzy arrangements have also made them the most sampled band of all time.

In 1964, Khalis Byyan (AKA Ronald Bell) and his brother, Robert "Kool" Bell, joined Jersey City neighborhood friends Robert "Spike" Mickens, Dennis "Dee Tee" Thomas, Ricky Westfield, George Brown, and Charles Smith to create a unique musical blend of jazz, soul and funk. At first calling themselves the Jazziacs, the band went through various names – The New Dimensions, The Soul Town Band, Kool & the Flames – before settling on their moniker. Their self-titled 1969 debut album introduced their signature instrumental sound and fierce horn arrangements and spawned their first Billboard R&B charted single, ***Kool & the Gang***.

In 1969, Kool & the Gang released their self-titled debut album. It was the introduction to a theme, music is the message, that Kool & the Gang stands by today. The instrumental album was an expression of their deep love of music. It was also an introduction to their signature sound and fierce horn arrangements created by Khalis, Dee Tee, and Spike. Their debut album spawned their first Billboard R&B charted single ***Kool & the Gang*** and later ***Let the Music Take Your Mind***.

In 1970, their audacious sophomore set ***Live at the Sex Machine*** peaked at #6 on Billboard's R&B chart and yielded three hit singles: ***Funky Man, Who's Gonna Take the Weight***, and ***I Want to Take You Higher***. Next came ***The Best of Kool & the Gang Featuring The Penguin, Kool & the Gang Live at PJ's, Music Is The Message***, and ***Good Times***, all of which helped solidify a sound that wowed not only fans but such contemporaries as James Brown and Nina Simone.

The band's stellar reputation grew with each album, but 1973's gold disc ***Wild & Peaceful*** took Kool & the Gang to another level (#6 R&B, #33 Pop), spurred by the immortal party anthems ***Funky Stuff, Hollywood Swinging*** and the platinum smash ***Jungle Boogie***. Hits like ***Higher Plane*** (#1 R&B), the classic ***Summer Madness*** (featured on the Grammy-winning movie soundtrack ***Rocky***) and LPs ***Spirit of the Boogie, Love & Understanding*** and ***Open Sesame*** followed. The latter's title track was featured on the top-selling movie soundtrack of all time, ***Saturday Night Fever***, earning the group their second Grammy.

In 1979, Kool & the Gang unveiled a smooth new sound with ***Ladies Night***. Produced by the legendary Pop/Jazz musician Eumir Deodato, it became their first platinum album. The #1 R&B title track also reached #8 at Pop. It was followed by ***Too Hot*** (#3 R&B, #5 Pop). The 80's would see them dominate the mainstream, starting with the double platinum-selling album ***Celebrate*** (driven by the international monster hit ***Celebration***, which spent six weeks atop the R&B chart and became a #1 Pop single). ***Celebration***, which played as American hostages returned from Iran, remains de rigueur at joyous occasions worldwide. The smashes ***Get Down On It, Take My Heart, Let's Go Dancing, Joanna, Tonight,***

**Misled**, the #1 R&B, #2 Pop giant **Cherish** and the #1 R&B anthem **Fresh** (these last three from the multi-platinum LP **Emergency**) solidified the group's international stardom. Kool & the Gang landed global commercial endorsements, supported countless charitable causes and were the only American group to participate in Band Aid's 1984 **Do They Know It's Christmas** project for famine victims in Africa.

With the explosion of hip-hop in the 90's, Kool & the Gang's incredible catalog of grooves made them DJ favorites. They were second only to R&B icon James Brown as sources of rap music samples.

2004's **The Hits Reloaded** found the band collaborating with Lil' Kim, Sean Paul, Ashanti, and Blackstreet, among others.

The band re-entered the Billboard R&B chart with 2006's **Steppin' Into Love**. In the same year, Kool & the Gang received the NARM (National Association of Recording Merchandise) Chairman Award for lifetime achievement in record sales.

Kool & the Gang released a new studio album titled **Still Kool** in July 2007 on New Door Records/UME.

In 2009, Kool & the Gang made history when they became one of only a handful of American acts to perform in Cuba in recent years. The group broke down cultural boundaries staging a free outdoor concert in Havana.

In 2012, Kool & the Gang embarked on a very successful 52 city tour with Van Halen.

In February 2014, Kool & the Gang received the Lifetime Achievement Award in music at the Golden Camera Awards in Berlin, Germany. In October 2015, the group will receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Kool & the Gang continue to perform to packed audiences of new and old fans around the world.