

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 35 years, longer than any R&B group in history. Their bulletproof funk and tough, jazzy arrangements have also made them the most sampled band of all time.

In 1964 Khalis Bayyan (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, they went through various names – The New Dimensions, The Soul Town Band, Kool & The Flames – before settling on their moniker. Over the next several years, they solidified their musical chemistry on the rough-and-tumble East Coast music scene, supporting acts like Bill Cosby, Ritchie Havens and Richard Pryor. 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 and 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 the fierce horn arrangements created by Khalis, Dee Tee, and Spike. Their debut album spawned their first Billboard R&B charted single *Kool and 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 '80s 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 the 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 superstardom. 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 '90s, Kool & the Gang's incredible catalog of grooves made them DJ favorites, and 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 such acolytes as Lil' Kim, Sean Paul, Ashanti, and Blackstreet, among others. Kool & The Gang continues to perform to packed audiences of new and old fans around the world. The band re-entered the Billboard R&B chart with 2006's *Steppin' Into Love*.