

## NILE RODGERS

Among music legends, Nile Rodgers is truly exceptional. He amplifies his legacy as a Grammy-winning composer, producer, arranger, and guitarist by constantly traversing new musical terrain and successfully expanding the boundaries of popular music. As the co-founder of CHIC, Rodgers pioneered a musical language that generated chart-topping pop hits like "Le Freak," sparked the advent of hip-hop with "Good Times," and won CHIC nine Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nominations. His work in the CHIC Organization and his productions for artists like David Bowie and Madonna have sold over 200 million albums and 50 million singles worldwide while his innovative, trendsetting collaborations with Daft Punk, Avicii, Disclosure, and Sam Smith reflect the vanguard of contemporary music. Fueling four decades of pop anthems with more than 200 production credits to his name, the scope of Rodgers' peerless influence is undeniable.

If 2015 is any indication, Nile Rodgers is about to set more precedents in his own illustrious career. While "Le Freak" was inducted into the 2015 Grammy Hall of Fame, Rodgers received the President's Merit Award during the Recording Academy's 8th Annual Grammy Week Celebration for the Producers & Engineers Wing of NARAS. He also received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Goldene Kamera Awards in Hamburg and revisited his career in a 60-minute interview with Valerie Simpson on the new PBS series *Speakeasy*. Signed to Warner Bros., Rodgers will release *It's About Time* in June 2015. It's the first new CHIC album in nearly 25 years, an historic undertaking that bridges two generations of CHIC, including late co-founder Bernard Edwards, drummer Tony Thompson, and Luther Vandross. The album's first single "I'll Be There" will drop on March 20, 2015. One of the world's most dazzling headliners, Rodgers will take CHIC on the road throughout the year and offer the keynote address at LEAF (London Electronic Arts Festival) in March 2015.

Long before Rodgers brought the "CHIC Mystique" to audiences across the globe, he cultivated his talent amidst the manifold music scenes that shaped New York. From a very early age, Nile was immersed in the city's thriving bohemian subculture by his mother Beverly Goodman, a hip, stylish woman who delivered him at 14 years-old, and his stepfather Bobby Glanzrock, a white Jewish "beatnik Ph.D." Towering avant-garde figures like Andy Warhol and Thelonious Monk populated his childhood in Greenwich Village, Alphabet City, and the South Bronx. Between his culturally rich home life and his proficiency on clarinet in the school orchestra, Nile was equally versed in the stylings of Bach, James Brown, and Billie Holiday while his father Nile Rodgers, Sr. was a skilled percussionist who exposed him to Afro-Cuban rhythms. A couple of stints in Los Angeles further exposed Nile to the burgeoning counterculture of the 1960s. He joined the Harlem branch of the Black Panthers, volunteering his time for the organization's "Breakfast Program," and capped the decade by attending Woodstock where he'd first conceive the melody for one of his most enduring compositions — "We Are Family."

However, picking up the guitar at 15 years-old forever changed the course of Nile's life. He studied with Ted Dunbar and Billy Taylor at New York's prestigious Jazzmobile program and even jammed with Jimi Hendrix after forming his first band, the jazz-blues-rock outfit New World Rising. Rodgers landed his first professional gig in the road show for *Sesame Street* and subsequently joined the Apollo Theater's house band where he backed R&B powerhouses like Aretha Franklin, Ben E. King, Parliament-Funkadelic, and Screamin' Jay Hawkins. During his tenure with the Big Apple Band, which accompanied R&B vocal quartet New York City in concert appearances, Rodgers struck a partnership with music director and bassist Bernard Edwards. The Big Apple Band's blend of jazz, funk, and disco evolved into a unique style that formed the heart of CHIC, a name that Rodgers and Edwards adopted when Walter Murphy and a completely *different* Big Apple Band scored a number one hit with "A Fifth of Beethoven" in October 1976.

Rodgers and Edwards' concept of CHIC took cues from Roxy Music's hybrid of high fashion and eclectic musicality, the anonymity of KISS *sans* makeup, and the notion that imagery was just as important as music. They infused each song with the principle of DHM (Deep Hidden Meaning), or understanding a song's DNA and relaying it through different levels, yet still preserving its fundamental truth. The burgeoning disco movement catapulted CHIC's soulful, sophisticated sound to the pop charts with "Everybody Dance" and the Grammy-nominated Top 10 hit "Dance, Dance, Dance (Yowsah, Yowsah, Yowsah)." Released in 1977, the group's gold-selling eponymous debut began a seven-year association with Atlantic Records.

Streamlined yet sumptuous grooves became synonymous with CHIC Organization Ltd., the company that Rodgers and Edwards established for their productions within CHIC and with outside artists. *C'est CHIC* (1978), which *Billboard* selected as "#1 R&B Album of 1979," featured another Top 10 gold single with "I Want Your Love" while "Le Freak" topped the pop, R&B, and disco charts, earning the distinction of the biggest-selling single in the history of Atlantic Records. Rodgers and Edwards received their second Grammy nomination for "Best R&B Song" with the title track to *We Are Family* (1979) by Sister Sledge. "We Are Family" became a massive worldwide anthem as the album topped the R&B chart and spawned dance floor favorites like "Lost In Music" and "He's the Greatest Dancer." A wall of gold singles and platinum albums grew with CHIC's third release, *Risqué* (1979). "Good Times" not only scored another crossover number one hit for the group, and would influence hits by rock acts like Queen, Blondie, INXS, and the Clash, it kindled the hip hop movement when Sugar Hill Gang memorably sampled the track on "Rapper's Delight."

The 1980s commenced with Rodgers and Edwards writing and producing their first album for a bonafide legend, Diana Ross. Their work on *diana* (1980) powered the best-selling album of Miss Ross' career. It soared to the summit of the R&B albums chart for eight weeks on the strength of "I'm Coming Out" and the chart-topping "Upside Down," which also gave the star producers another Grammy nomination for "Best R&B Song."

Throughout the early-'80s, CHIC released four more albums as Rodgers and Edwards helmed Debbie Harry's gold-certified solo debut *KooKoo* (1981), scored the soundtrack to *Soup for One* (1982), and produced sides for Carly Simon, Johnny Mathis, and Teddy Pendergrass before dissolving their partnership in 1983.

Nile Rodgers achieved no shortage of commercial and critical triumphs between 1983 and 1985. *Smash Hits* rated his first solo album *Adventures in the Land of the Good Groove* (1983) a "10 out of 10" while his production for David Bowie on *Let's Dance* (1983) was a worldwide sensation. From the number one title track to infectious cuts like "Modern Love" and "China Girl," *Let's Dance* further positioned Rodgers as a galvanizing force in pop, dance, and rock. Later that year, INXS enlisted him to produce "Original Sin," which then prompted Duran Duran's invitation for Rodgers to retool "The Reflex." Released in 1984, Rodgers' remix of "The Reflex" topped the Hot 100 and became Duran Duran's biggest-selling single, preceding other hits that Rodgers produced for the group like "The Wild Boys" and "Notorious." Rodgers hastened the rapid ascent of Madonna to pop royalty when he produced the singer's second album, *Like A Virgin* (1984), winning Madonna her very first number one album and single ("Like a Virgin"), plus the career-defining "Material Girl." Following Rodgers' string of smashes with Mick Jagger, the Thompson Twins, Jeff Beck, and Sheena Easton, *Billboard* duly selected him "Top Pop Singles Producer of 1985."

After releasing his second solo album *B-Movie Matinee* (1985), Rodgers remained on the cutting edge of pop music as the '80s and '90s progressed. He produced, recorded, and/or performed with countless icons like Michael Jackson, Bob Dylan, Steve Winwood, Robert Plant (the Honeydrippers), Grace Jones, Bryan Ferry, Peter Gabriel, Slash, the B-52's, Eric Clapton, the Vaughan Brothers and even formed the experimental band Outloud with Felicia Collins (*Late Show with David Letterman*) and Philippe Saisse. In 1992, he and Bernard Edwards reformed CHIC, releasing *CHIC-ism* (1992) on Warner Bros. and the Japan-only *CHIC Freak and More Treats* (1996). The band's resurgence foretold a crop of hip hop artists introducing classic CHIC tracks to a new generation. MC Lyte and Salt-N-Pepa each sampled "Upside Down" in 1996. The Notorious B.I.G. incorporated "I'm Coming Out" into the chart-topping "Mo Money Mo Problems" (1997). A year later, Will Smith took the irresistible hook of "He's the Greatest Dancer" to number one on "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It." Sadly, Rodgers and Edwards performed together for the very last time in April 1996. Just hours after CHIC's concert at Budokan in Tokyo, Edwards passed away from pneumonia at 43 years-old.

Complementing his endeavors on stage and in the studio, Rodgers has boldly conquered many other mediums. He scored the soundtrack to the Eddie Murphy blockbuster *Coming to America* (1988) and followed up with original music for *White Hot* (1989), *Earth Girls Are Easy* (1988), *Thelma and Louise* (1991), *Blue Chips* (1994), *Beverly Hills Cop III* (1994), *Rush Hour 2* (2001), *Snow Dogs* (2002), and *Semi-Pro* (2008), to name a few. In 1998, Rodgers launched Sumthing Distribution and Sumthing Else Music Works, a boutique national distribution company and record label that's

found considerable success in soundtracks for popular AAA video games such as *Gears of War*, *Borderlands*, and the franchises to *Halo* and *Resident Evil*.

Rodgers has often united the global community through his music and humanitarian work, whether participating in the session for "We Are the World" (1985), performing at *Live Aid* (1985), guesting on the Red Hot Organization's *Red Hot and Riot* (2002), or re-recording "We Are Family" (2001) with more than 200 musicians and celebrities in response to the tragedies of 9/11. Spike Lee directed a music video for "We Are Family" while Danny Schechter documented the recording session in *The Making and Meaning of We Are Family*, an official selection of the 2002 Sundance Film Festival.

That same year, Rodgers founded the We Are Family Foundation (WAFF), a non-profit organization that's dedicated to the vision of a global family by creating and supporting programs that promote cultural diversity while nurturing the vision, talents, and ideas of young people who are changing the world. Through initiatives like Three Dot Dash and TEDxTeen, WAFF has mentored and empowered extraordinary teens from more than 50 countries by giving them a platform to share their messages, tell their stories, inspire others, and foster respect and understanding across cultures. As Founder and Chairman of WAFF, Rodgers was honored with the "2011 We Are Family Foundation Humanitarian Award" for his exemplary leadership and groundbreaking work in expanding the mission and reach of WAFF. Most recently, he released "Do What You Wanna Do (IMS Anthem)" (2014), a track he recorded at the International Music Summit in Ibiza that benefits WAFF with each download purchase.

Nile Rodgers reflected on his extraordinary life and career in his completely self-penned autobiography *Le Freak: An Upside Down Story of Family, Disco and Destiny* (2011). *Rolling Stone* slotted the best-selling book in the Top 10 of the magazine's "23 Greatest Rock Memoirs of All Time." He published the book shortly after being diagnosed with an aggressive form of prostate cancer in 2010. Rodgers documented the journey of treatment and recovery on his blog *Walking on Planet C* and was declared cancer-free in 2011. After successfully surviving cancer, he was subsequently the subject of two documentaries, BBC Radio 4's *Nile Rodgers: The Hitmaker* (2013) and TV One's *Unsung: Nile Rodgers & CHIC* (2014). Coming full circle from CHIC's appearances on classic shows like *Soul Train*, *American Bandstand*, and *Top of the Pops*, Rodgers continues to be a frequent guest star on television shows in the U.S. (*CBS This Morning*, *Tavis Smiley*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*) and the U.K. (*The X Factor*, *Sunday Brunch*, *The One Show*).

More than 35 years since Nile Rodgers and his prized '59 Fender Stratocaster (aka "the Hitmaker") helped create a new vernacular for rhythm guitarists, his signature sound is flourishing in progressive dance music. His work with Daft Punk on the duo's *Random Access Memories* (2013) won a Grammy for "Album of the Year." The album's lead single "Get Lucky" marked a watershed victory for Rodgers, Daft Punk, and co-writer Pharrell Williams. It topped the charts in no less than 35 countries and earned Rodgers

two more Grammy Awards for "Record of the Year" and "Best Pop Duo/Group Performance." Evidenced by his astounding success with Daft Punk, Rodgers has long been a respected figure among artists in the EDM community. Years earlier, French house duo Modjo won a chart-topping U.K. single when they sampled Nile's guitar riff from "Soup for One" on "Lady (Hear Me Tonight)" (2000), further distinguishing CHIC as the "most sampled band in history" (*The Guardian*, 2011). Rodgers' recent collaborations with acts like Avicii, Sam Smith and Disclosure, Tensnake, and David Guetta underscore his passion in exploring and mastering new EDM technology. "The full scope of Nile Rodgers' career is still hard to fathom, and it's not just ongoing, it's in overdrive," remarked *Rolling Stone*, who named Rodgers one of "the 50 Most Important People in EDM" (2014).

Nile Rodgers has also burnished his renown as one of the industry's most prolific band leaders and music directors on the touring and music festival circuit. Over the last two decades, he's revamped CHIC's stage show to become a thrilling, hit-filled event for audiences of every musical persuasion. Their performance at Glastonbury 2013 was heralded by critics and fellow musicians alike, spurring Oasis front man Noel Gallagher to exclaim, "My favorite act at this year's Glastonbury was not the Rolling Stones, as good as they were; was not the Arctic Monkeys, as good as they were; was not Disclosure, as good as they were; but it was CHIC. They were fucking mega. Absolutely out of this world." Rodgers has also received plaudits for staging unforgettable concerts at Montreux Jazz Festival, including 2006's star-studded tribute to Ahmet Ertegun, the legendary founder and chairman of Atlantic Records. Six years later, Rodgers conceived and presented *Freak Out! Montreux*, an eight-hour concert that traced the history of dance music through performances by artists and DJ's like Grace Jones, Cerrone, Martha Wash, La Roux, Mark Ronson, and Dimitri from Paris.

Around the world, Rodgers is regularly invited to give keynote speeches at noted media and music industry conferences. Through sharing his expertise and musical accomplishments, he helps impart salient life lessons as well as his philosophies about the creative process. In 2014, he was the featured speaker at events sponsored by FremantleMedia and Advertising Week, including an interview with Pandora founder Tim Westergren. For two consecutive years, Rodgers was the keynote speaker at the 2012 and 2013 International Music Summit (IMS) in Ibiza. He also helped launch Nokia MixRadio (2013) during a Q&A with *Billboard's* editorial director Bill Werde, presented at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (2012), and lectured at Red Bull Music Academy in Madrid (2011).

There's no shortage of superlatives or accolades to convey the impact Nile Rodgers has made in popular music. He's been honored the world over by some of the industry's most respected institutions. In addition to his multiple Grammy Awards and RRHOF nominations, he's received the Ivor Novello Awards' "Special International Award" (2014), the IMS (International Music Summit) Legends Award (2014), Canadian Music Week Festival's inaugural "Nile Rodgers Global Creator's Award" (2014), a nomination

for the Songwriters Hall of Fame (2013), an induction into the Dance Music Hall of Fame (2005), and the Lifetime Achievement Award and Heroes Award from the New York Chapter of NARAS (2003). As a cultural icon and music innovator, Nile Rodgers transcends all styles of music across every generation. From "Good Times" to "Get Lucky," Rodgers' unrivaled track record is a mere glimpse of what's yet to come.