

# R.I.P. Maurice White

[youtube id="Lrle0x\_DHBM"] Â [youtube id="0Qz\_bldi3i8"] Maurice White who was the co-founder of Earth, Wind & Fire died in his sleep yesterday after battling Parkinson's disease for years. White started his career in the '60's as a session drummer for Chess Records and he later joined Ramsey Lewis's Trio. By 1969, White had founded Earth, Wind & Fire and relocated from Chicago to Los Angeles. They released their first album in 1971 and also provided the soundtrack to Melvin Van Peeble's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. After making some personnel changes including the addition of vocalist Phillip Bailey and a switch from Warner Brothers to Columbia, they started having hits with the 1973 album *Head To The Sky*. They became known for their elaborate concerts that featured dynamic stagewear, magic tricks and Egyptian-themed stage sets. In the course of their of almost 50-year career, they penned several songs that became the backbone of '70's R&B/funk and beyond. Their section of soaring jazz-influenced horns, African-laced percussion, funk infusions and Bailey's inimitable falsetto made them immediately recognizable. The band scored several awards, arena-sized sold-out tours and became a household name. "Shining Star," "Can't Hide Love," "Keep Your Head To The Sky" and "Boogie Wonderland" are some of the songs that made them rise in the industry and became implanted in the public consciousness through music and technology. In addition to the being Earth, Wind & Fire's bandleader and producer, White also worked with Minnie Riperton, Deniece Williams, Weather Report, Barbara Streisand, James Ingram, Atlantic Star, Neil Diamond and Jennifer Holiday. He released a solo album in 1985 and composed music for the movies *Coming To America* and *Undercover Brother*. A diagnosis of Parkinson's disease in the late '80's stopped him from touring with the band in 1994. In 2007, he executive produced the Earth, Wind & Fire tribute album, *Interpretations: Celebrating The Music Of Earth, Wind & Fire*. The album had covers of their music from

people like Dwele and Meshell Ndegeocello and earned a Grammy nomination.