

R.I.P. Keith Wilder



Keith Wilder, a member of '70s' disco/funk band Heatwave died Sunday at age 65. Heatwave was one of the premier bands of the '70s because of hits like "Boogie Nights," "Always And Forever" and "The Groove Line." The band was started by Wilder's brother Johnny who was stationed in Germany and formed the band after his discharge from the Army. He called Keith over from their native Dayton, Ohio to finish the lineup. It was during Johnny's relocation to the United Kingdom that he was able to meet the great songwriter Rod Temperton who became the group's organ player. By 1976, their first album, *Too Hot To Handle* was released and the Heatwave legend began. Temperton eventually left the group to focus on songwriting but he wrote all of the songs on their first two albums except "Happiness Togetherness" and "Mind Blowing Decision" which were written by Johnny Wilder Jr. *Too Hot To Handle* was followed by *Central Heating* in 1978 and they were well into their stardom. At the height of their career, they sold out Madison Square Garden. The band's luck changed in 1979 when Johnny was paralyzed in a car accident and could no longer use his falsetto that drew fans and made "Always And Forever" an essential wedding and Quiet Storm classic. They had their last popular success with the single "Gangsters Of The Groove" before disbanding in the '80s'. Rappers like Big Daddy Kane who sampled "Ain't No Half-Steppin'" started to keep their name alive. The Wilder Brothers recorded the gospel album *Sound On Soul* after the breakup of Heatwave. Keith restarted the band in 1991 the same year that a remix of "Mind Blowing Decision" reignited their popularity in the UK. Johnny Wilder Jr. died in 2006 and Rod Temperton passed last year.

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Throwback: Heatwave - The Grooveline

Heatwave was one of many top caliber funk bands of the '70's. Brothers Johnnie Wilder Jr. and Keith Wilder were from the fertile funk nest of Dayton, Ohio also home to Zapp, The Ohio Players, Slave and Cincinnati neighbor Bootsy Collins. The brothers were in Germany serving time in the Army branch of the military and when their term ended they gigged at clubs and bars around the base. They relocated to England to work with the legendary Rod Temperton before he became legendary. Temperton wrote all their hit songs like ["Boogie Nights,"](#) ["Always And Forever,"](#) ["Mind Blowing Decisions"](#) and the famously sampled ["Ain't No Half Steppin."](#) Changes in the band personnel, Temperton leaving the group and Johnnie Wilder Jr.'s car accident that paralyzed him were major setbacks for the band. The band stayed together until 1982 and they had their last hit song with ["Lettin It Loose"](#) also written by Temperton. They were never able to have the same success as they did with their first three albums. The Wilder brothers released a gospel album in '89 and Keith Wilder reformed the band in the '90s. Temperton became famous for writing three songs including the title track for Michael Jackson's *Thriller* as well as his work on *Off The Wall* and many other great R&B tunes. Johnnie Wilder Jr. passed in '06 making his brother Keith the only original member in the group. "Boogie Nights" was remixed in '02 and Temperton still writes songs and made a contribution to Mariah Carey's *E=MC 2*.