

R.I.P. James Mtume

James Mtume has died at age 76. The songwriter and musician from Philadelphia had a career as a percussionist, leader, songwriter and producer. In 1969 he recorded his first albums as a leader and those endeavors included players like his uncle Albert Heath, Herbie Hancock and Don Cherry. He spent most of the '70s working in bands with jazz luminaries Miles Davis, Art Farmer, Sonny Rollins, Eddie Henderson and McCoy Tyner. By the end of the decade, he and Reggie Lucas would collaborate on writing and producing songs for R&B stars. The two met in Davis's band and toured with Roberta Flack for a number of years. Their partnership crafted classic songs for Phyllis Hyman, Stephanie Mills, Lou Rawls, The Spinners and Flack.

Mtume was busy working with Lucas during this time in the '80s but he still managed to put together his own group. Tawatha Agee, also a Philadelphia native, was the main voice of Mtume and would record on all five of their albums. The title track from their 1983 album *Juicy Fruit* was a number one hit and signature song that had some controversy. Epic Records told James Mtume that radio would not play the song because of the line "You can lick me everywhere" which was replaced in the video with "Candy kisses everywhere." The song became even more famous in 1994 when it was sampled for "Juicy" by rapper The Notorious B.I.G. The song is now an essential sample continually used in pop music.

Mtume would eventually have 11 singles to chart including "You, Me & He," "Breathless" and "Give It On Up (If You Want To.)" They recorded five albums before disbanding in the late '80s. In the middle of the decade, he produced the album *You Might Be Surprised* for Roy Ayers. Mtume was musically active in the '90s writing and producing for Mary J. Blige and R. Kelly. He also composed the theme song to the television show *New York Undercover*. After retiring from the music industry he

hosted the Open Line radio show on WBLS for two decades until 2013 and continued his activist work.Â

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James Mtume Talks About Working With Miles Davis

[youtube id="ZBzhocngFE"] James Mtume talks to Nelson George about working with Miles Davis during the *On The Corner* sessions. He shares the things that Davis taught him about changing bands, his changing technique and how the jazz world responded to the electronic sound of *On The Corner*.Â Hip-Hop fans know Mtume because Biggie Smalls famously sampled "Juicy Fruit" for "Juicy."

Throwback: New York

Undercover Theme



[youtube id="E0pRXxANbRk"] *New York Undercover* was a police drama that aired on Fox from 1994-1998. Malik Yoba and Michael DeLorenzo starred on the show that was executive-produced by Uptown Records founder and CEO Andre Harrell. In the early development stages of the show, it's working title was *Uptown Undercover*. James Mtume was the musical director and wrote the theme song. Gladys Knight portrayed a cafe owner and some of the artists who appeared on the show at her venue included Mary J. Blige, Teena Marie, Johnny Gill, Chaka Khan, The Temptations, Erykah Badu and Montell Jordan. *New York Undercover* ran for four seasons after becoming one of the hottest TV shows of the '90s. The combination of Mtume's musical direction and Harrell's input made *New York Undercover* one of the few places on television to honestly reflect urban music and culture.

Red Bull Revisits Juicy Fruit With Mtume

[youtube id="QWQQ8Hh_9HM"]

James Mtume talks to Red Bull Music Academy about the way he created the song "Juicy Fruit" with the Linn drum machine. He also explains how he learned the connection between a boxer's jabs and rhythm while working for Miles Davis. DJ Evil Dee shares his experiences of hearing and playing "Juicy Fruit" at parties and he demonstrates the making of his own version of the song. They both acknowledge how Biggie's "Juicy" gave the

song a renewed life.