



THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE IT

THE HARRY WAYNE CASEY STORY

BY CRAIG MACINNIS

KC had started hanging out at the new T.K. studios—a combination record warehouse and attic recording facility owned by R & B music legend Henry Stone. It was here, in the fullness of time, that he would rendezvous with his destiny—and his new musical collaborator, Rick Finch.

“My biggest break was finding this little record company, this little recording studio,” he recalls. “I mean, there was Criteria in Miami, but you had to have money to get into Criteria to record a record.

“T.K. was not like Criteria. Criteria was a recording studio where everybody from the Who’s Who list paid big money to record there. T.K. was this private thing. They were making their own records and distributing them.”

Steve Alaimo, T.K. Productions’ vice president and head of A&R, years ago reflected on the origins of the south Florida recording industry in a newspaper interview. “Around 1970, Henry Stone and I decided we were going to start a record company in Florida,” Alaimo said. “And we just worked real hard and it worked. For one thing, the weather’s so good down here. L.A., New York... it’s more comfortable here. We built a little studio. We just added on and got bigger.”



AT LEAST YOU'RE DOING WHAT YOU LOVE

The original name of the group, in fact, was KC And The Sunshine Junkanoo Band, which suggests that the band's original charter, beyond its affiliations with R & B, tended toward a raucous, Caribbean sensibility. "In a way it was Early Disco, if you want to call it that," says KC. "Then somebody decided, because it was played in discotheques, to call it disco music. But I don't think our music ever was disco music, I think it's always been on the edge of R & B, if anything.

KC AND MARIA PERFORMING IN NEW YORK CITY, NOVEMBER, 2001



‘WOW!’ IT WAS JUST SO UPLIFTING

"Because most of the time, when you dance to music, it's rhythm and blues music that you're dancing to. Not rock music. Not country music—at least not back then. Today, country music's doing the hustle and all of that stuff," he laughs. "So we not only infiltrated those other genres, we eventually infiltrated country music as well."

Most obviously, KC and The Sunshine Band foreshadowed the trend toward global pop or "world beat", which wouldn't rise to the fore until Paul Simon and David Byrne began mining Third World polyrhythms for their albums *Graceland* and *Rei Momo*, respectively, in the mid-to-late '80s. While the world was busy dancing to Simon and Byrne, few bothered to trace the lines of their musical experimentation back to their source, but it's clear in hindsight. KC—along with such hybrid-happy forerunners as Tito Puente and Harry Belafonte—stands near the front edge of an evolving sound that continues to delight millions of listeners around the world. KC didn't need any Salute To Disco Night to know that.



‘YOU’RE THERE’ KIND OF MOMENTS

In August 2002, there is also the little matter of his induction into the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, a commemoration which marks KC’s 30th year in the business. “I think it just substantiates the career,” he says. “It legitimizes everything I did. You know, all the stuff that the critics put me down for. Having a star on the Walk Of Fame kind of says, ‘You’re there.’ It’s another one of those ‘you’re there’ kind of moments.”

In life, they say that living well is the best revenge. If that is so, then KC has outlasted his critics and shown his few remaining doubters that the music he pioneered in the ‘70s has fresh relevance for the new millennium. The evidence is everywhere. KC, the creator of such Zeitgeist hits as **Get Down Tonight**, **That’s The Way (I Like It)**, **(Shake, Shake, Shake) Shake Your Booty**, **Keep It Comin’ Love**, **Boogie Shoes** and **Please Don’t Go**, has, to quote writer Jim Ruth in Pennsylvania’s *Lancaster Sunday News*, “re-entered the mainstream in the slipstream of pop music’s passion for what is now called ‘dance music.’”

KC’s music has become a kind of cultural shorthand, earning mentions on *Friends*, *ER*, *The Simpsons*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Chicago Hope*, even David Letterman’s opening monologues. Where any popular groundswell is felt, commercial interests are never far behind. The Sunshine Band’s hits can be heard in commercials for General Motors, Burger King, Amoco and Denny’s. The songs have also appeared in movies, including *Forrest Gump*, *Boogie Nights*, *Space Jam* and *The Nutty Professor*.



“We’re bringing KC and The Sunshine Band into the new millenium,” says Lou Pearlman, who knows a thing or two about arranging chart supremacy for his recording acts.

Pearlman is the Orlando-based impresario who groomed two of the late-20th century’s global monsters – The Backstreet Boys and ‘N Sync, a one-two marketing punch that redefined contemporary pop music through its intensive work ethic, close vocal harmonies and sleek, hypercaffeinated choreography.

While Pearlman’s boy-bands might seem far removed from the old-school stylings of KC, Pearlman saw in KC’s songs the very foundations of what he had conjured with The Boys and ‘N Sync. In fact, it’s hard to imagine bands like ‘N Sync existing without the pioneering influence of KC, who brought insistent dance beats, kinetic stage moves and certifiably infectious pop music to the American public 25 years earlier.

“KC is a legend,” says Pearlman. “Everybody knows his music. You’ll see it in commercials, you’ll hear it everywhere. The bottom line is it’s time for him to rekindle the flame.”

TOP TO BOTTOM

- Lou Pearlman with KC at his 50th birthday party
- KC signing with Lou Pearlman of Trans Continental Records



KC
AND THE
SUNSHINE BAND

From his days as an intern at tiny T.K. Records to his chart-topping heyday as the leader of KC and The Sunshine Band, **THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE IT: THE HARRY WAYNE CASEY STORY** offers a backstage pass and a ringside seat to one of the most compelling chapters in American music history.

Riding the crest of his infectious dancefloor anthems - Get Down Tonight, Shake Your Booty and of course, That's The Way (I Like It) - Harry Wayne Casey, a.k.a. "KC", became the most beloved figure of the disco era, setting the tempo for an upbeat cultural revolution that extinguished the gloom of the Vietnam War and put a smile back on America's face as hundreds of thousands of young fans boogied to KC and The Sunshine Band's hook-laden sounds.

Charting the ups and downs of KC's 30-year career, this photo-packed portrait of Miami's first and greatest pop musical export invites the reader on a tour through the glitterball past and into the future, as KC continues his journey into the 21st century with his dance-happy muse intact.

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