

## **CHI-LITES BIOGRAPHY**

While groups such as the Delfonics and The Stylistics molded the popular Philly Sound in the early 70 s, there was exciting new talent in the Midwest ready to explode onto the R&B scene. At the forefront of that movement was The Chi-Lites, a group who broke away from the gritty blues music associated with the Windy City, to create their own smooth, distinct sound that would truly put Chicago on the R&B map.

The Chi-Lites achieved massive popularity in the 70 s as they released 11 top ten R&B singles during the decade. From their smooth ballads to their socially conscious protest songs, The Chi-Lites proved to be consistent with their popular style, but they ranged in substance.

The origin of the Chi-Lites was quite similar to that of the Stylistics, in that they formed from the merger of two local bands and evolved from local notoriety to national success. In the early 60 s, Marshall Thompson and Creadel Jones of The Desideros joined forces with Eugene Record, Robert Lester and Clarence Johnson of The Chantones to form the quintet known as the Hi-Lites. The group gained local recognition with their six singles on the Daka and Ja-Wes labels.

In 1964, the group changed their name to The Chi-Lites with the added C paying homage to their hometown. It proved to be a smart move as it gave them a name to associate themselves with the Chicago area for years to come.

With Record emerging as the new lead vocalist, The Chi-Lites popularity began to increase with the steady release of independent singles over the next four years. In 1968, they were poised to break out when they signed with the large Chicago based label, Brunswick Records. By 1969, they had released their first national hit, Give It Away , which climbed to No. 10 on the R& B charts. It had been a long, arduous process, The Chi-Lites finally hit the national scene.

Their prosperity continued in 1971, with the release of Are You My Woman , the song started a four-year string of top 10 hits. Their politically motivated song, Give More Power to the People would prove to be their first true pop hit, but it was only a taste of better sounds to come. The 1972 releases, Have You Seen Her and Oh Girl , were slow, soulful ballads that were embraced by the nation. Both reached No. 1 on the R&B charts and Oh Girl skyrocketed to the top spot on the pop charts.

In 1973, Jones left the group and was eventually replaced by Willie Kelsey. The new team went on to release 3 more top 10 singles, Homely Girl , There Will Never Be Peace and Toby . From 1969-1974, The Chi-Lites recorded five gold LP s, five gold singles and an astounding 18 top 20 singles. The world fell in love with the sound of their Chicago Soul and they grew into an international sensation.

The late 70 s became transitional phase for the Chi-Lites. Doc Robertson replaced Kelsey, Record left to pursue a solo career and David Scott and Danny Mercury joined the group. The group also left the struggling Brunswick label for Mercury Records.

In 1980, the original group reassembled under Record s new label, Chi-Sound. By 1982, they had regained their old form with the top 15 single, Hot on a Thing . By the next year they moved to Larc Records, where they released yet another top 10 single, Bottom s Up .

Jones would retire by the end of 1983, but the group continued to tour as a trio to the delight of their thousands of loyal fans. Record left yet again to pursue a solo career in 1990, and was replaced by Anthony Wilson.

The Chi-Lites were pioneers for the sound of Chicago Soul. The Chi-Lites were associated with many names, faces and record labels throughout the years, but their magic never died out. They will be recognized as perhaps the premier soul band ever to hail from the Windy City. The group that graced the city with their music went on to impact R&B music throughout the world.