

EARTH, WIND & FIRE

Earth, Wind & Fire is an American band that has spanned the musical genres of soul, disco, R&B, funk, jazz and rock. They are one of the most successful and critically acclaimed bands of the twentieth century. Rolling Stone has described them as "innovative, precise yet sensual, calculated yet galvanizing" and has also declared that the band "changed the sound of black pop". Also known as EWF, the band was founded in Chicago by Maurice White in 1969. Other members have included Philip Bailey, Verdine White, Ralph Johnson, Larry Dunn, and Al McKay. The band has received 20 Grammy nominations; they won six as a group and two of its members, Maurice White and Bailey, won separate individual awards. Earth, Wind & Fire have 12 American Music Awards nominations and four awards. They have been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Vocal Group Hall of Fame, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and sold over 90 million albums worldwide. Five members of Earth, Wind & Fire were also inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame: Maurice White, Philip Bailey, Verdine White, Larry Dunn and Al McKay. The music industry and fans have bestowed Lifetime Achievement honors from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (Rhythm & Soul Heritage Award – 2002), NAACP (Hall of Fame – 1994) and the BET Awards (Lifetime Achievement Award – 2002).

Earth, Wind & Fire is known for the dynamic sound of their horn section, their energetic and elaborate stage shows, and the interplay between the contrasting vocals of Philip Bailey's falsetto and Maurice White's tenor. The kalimba (African thumb piano) is played on all of the band's albums. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the band had many hits, including "Shining Star", "That's the Way of the World", "Devotion", "Reasons", "Sing a Song", "Can't Hide Love", "Getaway", "Fantasy", "Love's Holiday", "September", "Boogie Wonderland", "After the Love Has Gone", and "Let's Groove". Two Earth, Wind & Fire classic songs have been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame: "That's the Way of the World" (2004) and "Shining Star" (2007). The band is also known as having been the first African-American act to sell out Madison Square Garden and to receive the MSG Gold Ticket Award. President Barack Obama invited Earth, Wind & Fire to perform at the White House for the first social event of the new administration.

Beginnings (1969–1971)

In 1969, Maurice White, a former session drummer for Chess Records and former member of the Ramsey Lewis Trio, joined two friends in Chicago, Wade Flemons and Don Whitehead, as a songwriting team composing songs and commercials in the Chicago area. The three friends got a recording contract with Capitol; they called themselves the "Salty Peppers" and had a marginal hit in the Midwestern area called "La La Time".

The Salty Peppers' second single, "Uh Huh Yeah", did not fare as well, and Maurice moved from Chicago to Los Angeles. He then added to the band singer Sherry Scott and percussionist Yackov Ben Israel, both from Chicago, and then asked his younger brother Verdine how he would feel about heading out to the West Coast. On June 6, 1970, Verdine left Chicago to join the band as their new bassist. Maurice began shopping demo tapes of the band, featuring Donny Hathaway, around to different record labels and the band was thus signed to Warner Bros. Records.

Formation and early years (1971–1973)

Maurice's astrological sign, Sagittarius, has a primary elemental quality of Fire and seasonal qualities of Earth and Air q.v. (Sagittarius in the northern hemisphere occurs in the fall, whose element is earth, and in the southern hemisphere, it is spring, whose element is air., the omission of Water, the fourth classical element). Based on this, he changed the band's name, to "Earth, Wind & Fire". Maurice (mbira) held further auditions in L.A. adding Michael Beale on guitar, Chester Washington on reeds, and Leslie Drayton on trumpet; Drayton also served as the group's musical arranger. Trombonist Alex Thomas and electric pianist/vocalist Wade Flemons completed the then ten-man EWF lineup.

The band's self-titled debut album, *Earth, Wind, Fire*, was released in February 1971 to critical acclaim, as was November 1971's *The Need of Love*. Both albums were produced by Joe Wissert and a single, from *The Need of Love* called "I Think About Lovin' You", with Sherry Scott on lead vocals, provided EWF with their first Top 40 R&B hit. In 1971, the group also recorded the soundtrack of the Melvin Van Peebles film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*.

The soundtrack was recorded at Paramount Recording Studios on Santa Monica Boulevard and released on Stax Records. The band developed a growing popularity on college campuses but in spite of this, some members of EWF started to become restless and the band broke up after having been together less than six months. With only Verdine left, Maurice decided to re-form the group.

In 1972, Maurice added vocalist Jessica Cleaves, a former member of the R&B group *The Friends of Distinction*, Ronnie Laws on the flute and saxophone, rhythm guitarist Roland Bautista, keyboardist Larry Dunn, percussionist Ralph Johnson, and vocalist and Denver native Philip Bailey to the group. Warner Brothers didn't know how to promote this new combo as the only other funk band on their label was Charles Wright & the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band.

The band successfully auditioned for managers Bob Cavallo and Joe Ruffalo. Cavallo's management of John Sebastian led to a series of gigs as the opening act for the pop/folk singer and *The Lovin' Spoonful* founder. A performance at New York's Rockefeller

Center introduced EWF to Clive Davis, then the President of Columbia Records. Davis was very impressed with the band's performance and bought their contract from Warner Bros. Their debut album on CBS/Columbia Records, *Last Days and Time*, featured mostly original material, but Bailey had recommended that the band cover the Pete Seeger song "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?", and the elements also remade the Bread hit "Make It with You". The album also includes the original (Maurice-penned) composition "Power", an uptempo eight-minute instrumental.

Classic period (1973–1980)

The album *Head to the Sky* was released in the spring of 1973 and gave the group their first two legitimate hit singles, "Evil", co-written by Maurice and Philip, and "Keep Your Head to the Sky", both of which reached the top 30 and the top 60 on the R&B and pop charts, respectively. After this album's release some personnel changes took place as Ronnie Laws, Roland Bautista, and Jessica Cleaves left the band to pursue new musical opportunities; the album was also their last to be produced by Joe Wissert. Philip Bailey had recommended his former Denver East High School classmate, saxophonist Andrew Woolfolk, to the band. Woolfolk had been busy in New York studying sax with sax maestro Joe Henderson and was about to start a career in banking when Bailey called. To fill the void created by Bautista's departure, rhythm guitarists Al McKay (who had performed with the Ike and Tina Turner Revue and The Watts 103rd St. Rhythm Band) and Johnny Graham from R&B group New Birth were added to round out the new lineup. As some of the band's songs required lower register vocals than Bailey's, and due to the success of "Evil", Maurice altered his role in the group to incorporate that of lead vocalist.

Recorded at Colorado's Caribou Ranch Studio and released in 1974, *Open Our Eyes* was a commercially successful LP, selling over a million copies in the US and thus was certified Platinum. At Maurice's request, *Open Our Eyes* was co-produced by Charles Stepney with White. Stepney had previously worked with The Dells, The Rotary Connection, Terry Callier, Minnie Riperton, and the Ramsey Lewis Trio, to name a few. Released in May 1974, the single "Mighty Mighty" became Earth, Wind & Fire's first top 30 hit on the pop charts, peaking at No. 29. Another single, "Devotion", was a song with a strong spiritual message. This album also saw the inclusion of Maurice's younger brother, Fred White, into the band. Fred had played in Chicago clubs as a drummer with Donny Hathaway and Little Feat.

On April 6, 1974, Earth, Wind & Fire performed at the California Jam, a West Coast rock festival that attracted an audience of 200,000. Also in 1974, the band collaborated with Ramsey Lewis on his album *Sun Goddess*, which reached number one on the Billboard Jazz and Black Album charts and was certified Gold in the US by the RIAA.

In 1975, Earth, Wind & Fire was approached by Sig Shore, producer of the motion picture *Super Fly*, to record the soundtrack to new film about the dark side of the recording industry called *That's The Way Of The World*. The film also starred EWF as a new recording act known as "The Group"; they performed songs in the film and Maurice had a small speaking part, as leader of "The Group". In the film Harvey Keitel's character hears "The Group" performing and produces their first album. The film's title is repeated throughout the film as a shrug of the shoulders to the music world.

When the band saw the film, they were convinced that the motion picture would be a bomb, which it eventually was. To avoid being connected with the movie they released the album's soundtrack, also entitled *That's the Way of the World*, before its premiere. Recorded at the Caribou Ranch Studio and co-produced by Maurice White and Charles Stepney *That's the Way of the World* became Earth, Wind & Fire's breakthrough album, spending three weeks at number one on the Billboard Pop Albums Charts, five nonconsecutive weeks atop the Soul Albums chart. *That's the Way of the World* was also warmly received critically. For instance, Allmusic's Alex Henderson described the album as "one of the strongest albums of the 70's" and "EWF's crowning achievement", and Billboard Magazine called it "a very tightly produced and performed package". The album made EWF the first black act to top both the Billboard album and singles charts and was certified triple platinum in the US by the RIAA.

Included on the album were the hit singles "Shining Star" – which rose to number one on the R&B Singles and Billboard Hot 100 and won the band a Grammy Award for Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals – and "That's the Way of the World", which went to number five and number 12 on the R&B Singles and Billboard Hot 100, respectively. Because of the album's tremendous commercial success, the band was able to hire a full horn section, which was dubbed the Phenix Horns. The Phenix Horns, who became an integral part of the band's sound, were composed of saxophonist Don Myrick, trombonist Louis Satterfield, and trumpeters Rahmlee Davis and Michael Harris. Myrick and Satterfield both worked with Maurice during his days as a session drummer at Chess Records.

Subsequent to EWF's first tour of Europe, where they opened for the rock band Santana, Columbia Records wanted another album released as soon as possible. As a result EWF returned to the studio in June 1975 and from these recording sessions two singles - "Sing a Song" and "Can't Hide Love", the latter written by Clarence "Skip" Scarborough - were spawned. These and other studio recordings were included, along with mostly live concert material from their 1974 and 1975 tours, on the double album *Gratitude*, released in late 1975. *Gratitude* rose to and stayed at number one on the pop and R&B charts for three weeks and six weeks respectively; it was also the second bestselling R&B album of 1976 and is certified triple Platinum for sales of over 3,000,000 copies in the US by the RIAA.

The band was Grammy-nominated for Best R&B Vocal Performance By A Duo, Group or Chorus for the title track, "Gratitude"; "Can't Hide Love" was also Grammy-nominated for Best Arrangement For Voices. Earth, Wind & Fire also won a Rock Music Award in the category of Best Soul Album for Gratitude and Down Beat magazine's Readers Poll for favorite Rock/Blues Group in 1975.

Additionally, in 1975 Maurice established a production company called Kalimba Productions to which he signed artists such as his former bandleader Ramsey Lewis, singer Deniece Williams (a former member of Stevie Wonder's Wonderlove backup group) and girl group The Emotions, who had a run of hits with Stax Records from 1969 to 1974. Maurice loaned the band's signature Phenix Horns and most of the other band members and put on tour with Earth, Wind & Fire these artists and others who were signed to Kalimba Productions.

After helping co-produce and arrange Earth, Wind & Fire's new album, Deniece Williams's debut album, *This Is Niecy*, and The Emotions's first Columbia Records album *Flowers*, Charles Stepney died of a heart attack on May 17, 1976 in Chicago at the age of 43. He was survived by his wife Rubie, his three daughters, Eibur, Charlene and Chante, his parents and his brother. With Stepney's passing Maurice took over and completed the production of the band's new album, *Spirit*, which was released October 1976. EWF paid tribute to Stepney in the form of the album's title and that of its title track. The album reached number 2 on the Billboard Pop and R&B Albums Chart and was certified double Platinum in the US by the RIAA; additionally, *Spirit* spawned the hit singles "Getaway" and "Saturday Nite".

During this period EWF concerts started to become loaded with pyrotechnics, magic, laser lights, flying pyramids, levitating guitarists and elaborate production tricks, that included the entire group ascending in a pyramid and a disappearing act, which saw EWF literally vanishing from sight. Magician Doug Henning directed many of their tours throughout the 1970s with his young assistant, David Copperfield. The band also began to be choreographed by George Faison.

In November 1977, the group released another studio LP, *All 'N All*. With an Egyptian/post modernistic themed album cover, *All 'N All* featured the hit singles "Serpentine Fire" and "Fantasy", and achieved triple Platinum status. Starting with this album, the Japanese artist Shusei Nagaoka began doing the artwork and illustrations for several of Earth, Wind & Fire's album covers.

In 1978, EWF picked up three Grammy Awards, the third for their rendition of The Beatles' "Got to Get You into My Life". EWF's performance of the song was included on the self-titled soundtrack of the movie, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band*. The film was a commercial failure; however, "Got to Get You into My Life" was the biggest hit

from the movie's soundtrack, reaching numbers one and nine on the R&B and Pop singles charts, respectively.

1978 was also the year that Maurice and EWF's managers Cavallo and Ruffalo worked out a deal for the launch of a new record label called The American Recording Company (ARC), to be distributed through CBS, and the creation of a recording studio, George Massenburg/ARC, also called "The Complex", in West Los Angeles. The year ended with the release of another hit single, entitled "September", which was added to the quintuple Platinum compilation album, *The Best of Earth, Wind & Fire, Vol. 1*, which came out on November 23, 1978, four days before Thanksgiving. At this time, Bobby Harris of the Dazz Band requested and got Philip Bailey to produce the group's first album, *Kinsman Dazz*. Bailey had a major input into the group's vocal arrangements and would also co-produce the band's second album, *Dazz*.

January 1979 saw the band performing "September" and "That's The Way Of The World" at the Music for UNICEF Concert, which was broadcast worldwide from the United Nations General Assembly by NBC. Other artists performing at the event were ABBA, The Bee Gees, Olivia Newton-John, Donna Summer and Rod Stewart. Subsequent to this performance the band donated the royalties from one of their songs to UNICEF and began a tour of Europe and Japan.

The group's ninth album overall, seventh for Columbia Records, and second released on the ARC label was *I Am*. It was another smash hit, going double Platinum and reaching numbers 3 and 1 on the R&B and Pop charts, respectively. Singles spawned from this album included "In The Stone", "Can't Let Go", and the sad David Foster-written ballad "After the Love Has Gone", which rose to the number 2 spot on the Billboard Pop and R&B charts and won a Grammy for the Best R&B Vocal Performance by a Duo or Group at the Grammy Awards of 1980. Though the band had previously overlooked disco, the summer of 1979 saw EWF topping the dance music charts with their most disco-inspired single "Boogie Wonderland", which was produced by Maurice and Al McKay and featured The Emotions. Even with the song's success, Verdine White claims that the band is not a disco band, saying: "I guess you could say we were at the party but didn't get on the dance floor."

In October 1980, the double-album *Faces* was released, and rose to number 2 and number 10 on the R&B and Pop charts respectively; it earned Gold status in the US. In a 2007 interview, when asked which EWF album was his favorite, Maurice White replied: "Probably *Faces* because we were really in tune, playing together and it gave us the opportunity to explore new areas." After the release of this album, longtime rhythm guitarist Al McKay left the band for personal as well as professional reasons. He was replaced by returning rhythm guitarist Roland Bautista, who gave the band a bit of a hard rock sound with his style of playing.

Electronic period (1981–1990)

Maurice decided that, given the changing musical landscape, the band needed to incorporate into their work more of the digital sound which was popular at the time. As a result, EWF's eleventh album titled *Raise!* - was infused with this new electronic sound and released in the fall of 1981 - sold over a million copies in the US and was certified Platinum by the RIAA. *Raise!* featured the hit single "Let's Groove", which also went Platinum, and another single "Wanna Be With You", which won EWF a Grammy for Best R&B Vocal Performance By A Duo Or Group. Earth, Wind & Fire appeared at American Bandstand's 30th Anniversary Special, where they performed "Let's Groove" on October 30, 1981.

Two years after the release of *Raise!* came *Powerlight*, which included the singles "Fall In Love With Me", a number 17 pop hit, and "Side By Side". "Powerlight" went Gold. Also in 1983, the song "Dance, Dance, Dance" was contributed to the soundtrack of the animated film *Rock & Rule*. After the fully synthesized album *Electric Universe* was released in late 1983 to a poor critical and commercial reception, Maurice believed the band needed a break so he put EWF on hiatus.

During their hiatus, Philip Bailey released his second and most commercially successful solo project, the Gold album *Chinese Wall*, featuring the Phoenix Horns and produced by Phil Collins. The first single from that album, a duet with Collins called "Easy Lover", sold over a million copies, rose to number 2 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and number 1 on the UK Singles Chart respectively, and was Grammy-nominated for Best Pop Vocal Performance By A Duo or Group. The music video of Bailey and Collins rehearsing their collaboration went to the top of MTV's video playlist and won an MTV Video Music Award for Best Overall Performance in 1985. Bailey released four gospel albums in this period, and one of them, titled *Triumph*, won him a Grammy Award for Best Gospel Vocal Performance, Male.

Maurice White, during this time, produced for Barbra Streisand on her Platinum album *Emotion* and worked with Neil Diamond on his Gold album *Headed for the Future* and Cher on her 1987 Platinum album *Cher*. He also released the self-titled solo album *Maurice White* in 1985, which included a cover of "Stand by Me" that went to number six on the R&B charts and number eleven on the Adult Contemporary charts. The album also featured an appearance by saxophonist Gerald Albright. Also, during the hiatus, Verdine White worked behind the scenes, writing and directing videos. He produced *Standing in the Light*, by the English pop rock and jazz-funk band Level 42, with Larry Dunn, and promoted go-go bands like Trouble Funk and E.U.

The compilation album *The Collection* was released May 1986, stayed at number 5 on the UK singles charts for two weeks, and was certified Gold in the UK by the British Phonographic Industry.

Phil Collins saw EWF on one of their European tours and became a fan of the band. He came in contact with the Phenix Horns and they eventually worked with his band Genesis on songs including "No Reply At All" and "Paperlate", and with him on such solo hits as "I Missed Again" and "Sussudio".

In 1987, CBS Records convinced both Philip Bailey and Maurice White that a reunion of Earth, Wind & Fire would be fruitful. As a result, original members Verdine White, Ralph Johnson and Andrew Woolfolk returned to the band with new members guitarist/vocalist Sheldon Reynolds, lead guitarist Dick Smith, and drummer Sonny Emory. A new horn section dubbed the Earth, Wind & Fire Horns was also created, made up of Gary Bias on the saxophone, Raymond Lee Brown on the trumpet, and Reggie Young on the flugelhorn and trombone.

The band's reformation fostered the 1987 Gold album *Touch the World*, which was nominated for a Soul Train Award in the category of Best R&B/Soul Album of the Year and rose to number three on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart and number 33 on *The Billboard 200*. Featured on the album was a song penned by an unknown songwriter by the name of Skylark, titled "System of Survival". Released as a single, the song became a hit, going to number one on the *Billboard* R&B charts and Dance charts. Another single titled "Thinking Of You" peaked at number one and number three on the R&B and Dance charts as well. In 1988, the band released the compilation album *The Best of Earth, Wind & Fire, Vol. 2*, which went Gold in the US. The group's final album released by Columbia Records was 1990's *Heritage*, which featured a collaboration with Sly Stone of Sly & the Family Stone. In 1992, the band released a 55-track anthology of their career up to that point entitled *The Eternal Dance*.

Neo classic period (1993–present)

EWF signed once again with Warner Brothers and following this came the release in 1993 of their 16th studio album, *Millennium*. Included on this album was the single "Sunday Morning", which earned the band a Grammy nomination for Best R&B Vocal Performance by a Duo or Group, and a track written by Prince called "Super Hero". Tragedy unfortunately befell the band in 1993; on July 30 former band member and Phenix Horns saxophonist Don Myrick was fatally shot by the Los Angeles Police Department in a case of mistaken identity. Then on October 13, former lead vocalist Wade Flemons died from cancer in Battle Creek, Michigan. In 1994, Earth, Wind & Fire were inducted into the NAACP Hall Of Fame.

The band received another tribute in the following year in the form of a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. All the original members of the group attended the inauguration ceremony, and in his speech Maurice White attributed EWF's success to the support of all of their fans. In 1994 Maurice White decided to retire from touring

with the band. At the time, he explained that he wanted to take a rest from the rigors of the road. Philip Bailey was given the role of onstage leader of the band.

The studio album *In the Name of Love* was released on Pyramid Records in 1997 to a favorable critical reception. EWF performed at the 1997 Montreux Jazz Festival and gave an encore performance the following year. In 2004, a DVD of their 1997 performance was released, entitled *Earth, Wind & Fire: Live At Montreux 1997*. In 1999, the group performed on the A&E Network show *Live by Request*, and in that same year Maurice announced that the real reason for his ending his touring days in 1995 was because he had contracted Parkinson's disease in the late 1980s, which made it increasingly difficult for him over the years to handle comfortably the rigors of touring. A website entitled www.Startalk.org was set up in 1999 to offer Maurice support with his health struggles and on it, messages of encouragement from celebrities such as Steven Tyler of Aerosmith, Boyz II Men, Smokey Robinson, Isaac Hayes, Michael Jackson, Eric Clapton and Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine were published. Maurice, however, has the disease under control, so much so that he occasionally makes appearances at Earth, Wind & Fire performances, and continues to write, record, produce and develop new recordings for Earth, Wind & Fire and other artists.

On the March 6, 2000, Earth, Wind & Fire were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to a standing ovation during the 15th annual induction dinner held at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. All of the band's original members from the 1973–80 "classic period", namely Maurice White, Philip Bailey, Verdine White, Ralph Johnson, Al McKay, Larry Dunn, Andrew Woolfolk, Fred White and Johnny Graham, attended the ceremony, at which the nine of them played together for the first time in 20 years, performing "Shining Star" and "That's The Way Of the World". After their induction into the Hall of Fame an effort was made by the original band members to fully reunite, but it ultimately proved unfruitful.

Earth, Wind & Fire were the specially invited music guests at the June 20, 2000 White House state dinner hosted by President Bill Clinton on the South Lawn of the White House, in honor of His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, and Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem. So impressed was the King by the band's performance that he made a successful personal request for EWF to perform in Morocco for his 37th birthday celebration, on August 21, 2000.

In 2001, a biographical documentary of the band entitled *Shining Stars: The Official Story Of Earth, Wind & Fire* was released, directed by Kathryn Arnold. Following the September 11 attacks of that year, the band members donated \$25,000 to the American Red Cross at a September 13 show at Virginia's Verizon Wireless Virginia Beach Amphitheater, the band's first concert since those events took place. February 24, 2002

saw Earth, Wind & Fire performing at the closing ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City, Utah.

A live album from the band's 1980 performance in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, entitled *Live In Rio*, was released on Maurice White's Kalimba Records label in 2002, and that same year EWF was honored with the Rhythm & Soul Heritage Award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. The award was presented to EWF by ASCAP President and Chairman Marilyn Bergman, Stevie Wonder, and Jimmy Jam.[45] In addition, the band was inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame and Hollywood's RockWalk in 2003.[46]

In 2003, Kalimba Records released *The Promise* – the band's first studio album in six years. *The Promise* rose to number 19 on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums charts and received critical acclaim upon its release, with *People Magazine* and *Blender Magazine* describing the album as "musically rich" and "a classy collection", respectively. The track "Hold Me" was Grammy-nominated for Best Traditional R&B Vocal Performance. The album spawned a kalimba-laden track reminiscent of the classic EW&F sound, titled "All in the Way", which reunited EWF with The Emotions. Featured on the album were two previously unreleased songs from the "I Am" recording sessions: "Where Do We Go From Here" and "Dirty".

On February 8, 2004, Earth, Wind & Fire performed in a tribute to funk at the 46th annual Grammy Awards held at the Staples Center, Los Angeles, California. Other artists performing at this tribute were Parliament Funkadelic, OutKast, and Robert Randolph and the Family Band. EWF sang "Shining Star" and then at Outkast's request crooned "The Way You Move" with them. Robert Randolph and the Family Band performed their single "I Need More Love" and then all of the bands teamed up to sing Parliament Funkadelic's classic "Give Up the Funk (Tear the Roof off the Sucker)". Earth, Wind & Fire contributed to the Jimi Hendrix tribute album *Power of Soul: A Tribute to Jimi Hendrix*, released in May 4, 2004, with their cover of "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)".

In the summer of 2004 Earth, Wind & Fire signed a record deal with Sanctuary Urban Records, owned by Mathew Knowles (father and manager of r&b/pop singer Beyoncé). Gary Bias and Bob Burns, Jr. of the Earth, Wind & Fire Horns were featured on Queen Latifah's *The Dana Owens Album*, which was released on September 28, 2004, and reached 16 and 11 on the Billboard 200 and Top R&B/Hip-Hop Album charts, respectively, and was certified Gold.

Kenny G's cover of "The Way You Move", which was released in November 2004 and charted at number 12 on the Adult Contemporary singles chart, featured the band with Maurice and Philip on lead vocals. EWF and Kenny G performed "The Way You Move" on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno in January 2005.

On December 11, 2004, Earth, Wind & Fire were honored at the first annual Grammy Jam held at Los Angeles's Wilton Theater, where several artists such as Stevie Wonder, Yolanda Adams, Sheila E., Miri Ben-Ari, George Duke, Kanye West, and Randy Jackson paid tribute to the band in the form of performances. Other celebrities who attended the event were Pamela Anderson, Tim Allen, Prince, Jimmy Jam, Terry Lewis, Nick Cannon, and Suzanne de Passe. EWF performed on Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve on December 31, 2004.

EWF released a single entitled "Show Me The Way", on which they paired up with neo soul artist Raphael Saadiq on Sanctuary Records in the fall of 2005. The single garnered a Grammy nomination and was featured on *Illumination*, their 19th studio album, which was released on September 20, 2005. For this album EWF collaborated with artists such as will.i.am, Kelly Rowland, Outkast's Big Boi, and Brian McKnight. *Illumination* reached number eight on the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Album Chart and number 32 on the Billboard Hot 100. Another single spawned from the album, dubbed "Pure Gold", reached number 23 on the Adult Contemporary Charts.

The album garnered the admiration of critics, with Allmusic's Rob Theakston referring to the album as an "outstanding record" and Steve Jones of USA Today' remarking that on the album EWF are as "vibrant as ever". *Illumination* received a Grammy nomination for Best R&B Album and a Soul Train Music Award in the category R&B-soul album. EWF also received a NAACP Image Award nomination for Best Duo or Group.

The February 6, 2005 Super Bowl XXXIX pregame show in Jacksonville, Florida saw the band teaming up with The Black Eyed Peas to sing "Where Is the Love?" and "Shining Star". In March 2005 EWF performed in Russia for the first time.

In 2004, Earth, Wind & Fire and Chicago embarked upon a joint national tour, which gave rise to a DVD of a concert that took place at Los Angeles' Greek Theater entitled *Chicago & Earth, Wind & Fire – Live at the Greek Theatre*. This DVD was released on June 28, 2005 and was certified Platinum two months afterward. Chicago and EWF once again toured together in 2005 and collaborated for a new recording of Chicago's ballad "If You Leave Me Now", that was included on Chicago's 2005 compilation album *Love Songs*. As part of an opening act for the 57th Primetime Emmy Awards held on September 18, 2005 at the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles the band once more collaborated up with the The Black Eyed Peas and this was first time a musical artist had opened at the annual awards show. On September 27, 2005, former Earth, Wind & Fire member and the Phenix Horns trombonist Louis Satterfield died. He was 67 years old.

In 2005, EWF released their first Christmas-themed track entitled "Gather Round", produced and arranged by Foster and written by Maurice White, David Foster and Philip Bailey. In 2006, Maurice worked with Maurice Hines (the brother of famed

entertainer Gregory Hines) to release the Broadway play *Hot Feet*, which was a jukebox musical whose theme was the music of Earth, Wind & Fire. Maurice wrote along with Allee Willis – who wrote "September", "Boogie Wonderland", "In the Stone" and "Sunday Morning" for the band – several new songs for the play. EWF performed alongside Mary J. Blige and Ludacris "Runaway Love" at the 49th Grammy Awards held at Los Angeles's Staples Center .

Interpretations: Celebrating the Music of Earth, Wind & Fire, which is a cover album of EWF's material, was released on Stax Records on March 27, 2007. Executively produced by Maurice, the album featured artists such as Chaka Khan, Kirk Franklin, Lalah Hathaway, Mint Condition, Dwele, Meshell Ndegeocello, and Angie Stone. Dwele and Meshell Ndegeocello's renditions of "That's The Way Of The World" and "Fantasy", respectively, were each nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Urban/Alternative Performance.

the band was the opening act at a special edition of *American Idol* entitled "Idol Gives Back" (which aired April 25, 2007), and performed a medley of "Boogie Wonderland", "Shining Star" and "September". At the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo, Norway, on December 11, 2007, Earth, Wind & Fire performed "Fantasy" and "September". Hosted by Kevin Spacey and Uma Thurman, the Nobel Peace Prize Concert was broadcast to over 100 countries. Other artists who performed included Melissa Etheridge, Alicia Keys, Annie Lennox, and Kylie Minogue.

Earth, Wind & Fire performed on the opening night of one of the largest musical events in Latin America, Chile's Viña del Mar Festival. The band so impressed the audience with their performance that the band was bestowed with the Gaviota de Plata (English translation: the Silver Seagull), the highest award that can be presented to an artist performing at the Viña del Mar Festival. Ironically, the intro to EWF's song "In the Stone" has been used for several years as the introductory theme for the event's broadcasts.

Maurice White, Ralph Johnson, Philip Bailey, and Verdine White each received an honorary degree from the Arts and Media College at Columbia College Chicago during the college's 2008 commencement exercises. Verdine White and Bailey both gave brief speeches during the ceremony, followed by all four honorees' giving an impromptu performance of "Shining Star". EWF performed at the opening ceremony of the 2008 US Open, which was hosted by Forrest Whitaker and served to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the founding of tennis's Open Era with a parade of more than 25 former US Open singles champions.

Earth, Wind & Fire performed at the White House on February 22, 2009, for the Governors' Dinner; they were the first musical artists to perform there since Barack Obama took office. The band toured once more with Chicago in 2009 for a tour of thirty

US cities. On April 26, 2009, EWF performed at the 39th New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

In 2010, EWF made a repeat performance at the 40th New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. In that same year bandmembers Philip Bailey, Verdine White and Ralph Johnson participated in the recording of the "We Are the World 25 for Haiti" single. 2010 was also the year that saw Earth, Wind & Fire's original members Maurice White, Phillip Bailey, Verdine White, Al McKay and Larry Dunn all inducted into the Songwriter's Hall of Fame.

In November 2011, the band was given the Legend Award at the Soul Train Awards at Atlanta, Georgia's Fox Theatre. In 2012, EWF were bestowed with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 20th Annual Trumpet Awards, held at Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Atlanta.
