

Le Freak | Chic (1978)

Writer | Nile Rodgers, Bernard Edwards
Producer | Nile Rodgers, Bernard Edwards
Label | Atlantic
Album | *C'est Chic* (1978)



"The Led Zeppelin of dance music."

David Lee Roth, 1997

"Le Freak" was the biggest hit of the greatest group that the disco phenomenon ever produced: Chic. Although the band's core members—Bernard Edwards on bass, Nile Rodgers on guitar, and Tony Thompson on drums—had previously played in a variety of New York club outfits, they seemed to appear out of nowhere in 1977, fully equipped with their debut single, "Dance, Dance, Dance (Yowsah, Yowsah, Yowsah)."

Rodgers and Edwards quickly proved to be prodigious writers and producers and, on New Year's Eve, 1977, they were invited to meet Grace Jones at Manhattan's infamous Studio 54 with a view to producing her. Unfortunately, they fell foul of the venue's notorious door policy and were cast out into the snowy night. Retreating to Rodgers's nearby apartment, and fueled by champagne, marijuana, and cocaine, the duo began to jam. After repeatedly singing the phrase "Ah, fuck off!"—inspired by their ill treatment earlier—they gradually metamorphosed the line into "freak out." One of the most popular songs of the disco era was born, a record that conflates America's golden age of dance, in the shape of the Savoy ballroom, with Studio 54 itself, while celebrating an underground dance.

Everything here is in correct, infectious measure. The gnawing guitar and syncopated hand claps, the chorus vocal, and then that breakdown, its six-note bass riff and the drama of the Chic choir (at this point, David Lasley, Luther Vandross, Luci Martin, Diva Gray, and Alfa Anderson) piping up with the simple, repeated refrain: "I say freak."

"Le Freak" sold a million copies in the United States alone. It became one of the best-selling singles in Atlantic's history. **DE**

◀ **Influenced by:** Get Down Tonight • KC & The Sunshine Band (1975)
▶ **Influence on:** A Lover's Holiday • Change (1980)
● **Covered by:** The Corn Dollies (1990) • The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain (2006) • Millionaires (2010)
★ **Other key track:** I Want Your Love (1978)

Milk and Alcohol | Dr. Feelgood (1978)

Writer | John Mayo, Nick Lowe
Producer | Richard Gottetrrer
Label | United Artists
Album | *Private Practice* (1978)



"You don't have to be a musician to play rock and roll. You've just got to love it and want to play it."

Lee Brilleaux, 1976

◀ **Influenced by:** One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer John Lee Hooker (1974)
▶ **Influence on:** Three Times Enough • Nine Below Zero (1981)
● **Covered by:** Jimmy Keith & His Shocky Horrors (1995)
★ **Other key track:** She Does It Right (1975)

Dr. Feelgood were key precursors to punk in the United Kingdom. Hailing from Canvey Island, an unloved lump of land in the Thames estuary, they created a fierce R&B sound in the mid-Seventies, a time when others were content to sail around their *Topographic Oceans*.

"Milk and Alcohol" is from the band's second album, *Private Practice*, with guitarist John "Gypie" Mayo. The riff had been written by Mayo and then played to friend and sometime Feelgood producer Nick Lowe, who recalled a night in 1976 when he and the band had witnessed a desultory John Lee Hooker gig at the Starwood Hotel in Los Angeles. Disgruntled at their hero's lackluster performance and fueled by White Russian cocktails (vodka, Kahlua, and milk), the band set off for their accommodation and drove through a red light. Pulled over by the LAPD, manager Chris Fenwick took the rap for the quantity of hash found in the car's glove compartment; in the song, this is altered to "They got me on milk and alcohol."

"Milk and Alcohol" was produced by Richard Gottetrrer, who in the Sixties had been in the U.S. garage band The Strangeloves; he had recently produced Richard Hell and Blondie. His all-faders-blazing approach gives the song's military beat a zing, but it is the vocal performance of Lee Brilleaux, a man whose 1994 *New York Times* obituary praised his "sweat-spattered, eye-bulging, finger-wagging performances" that clinches it, the malevolent growl of a weary commentator.

The single—the band's tenth—was released in a choice of brown- or white-colored vinyl and reached the U.K. Top Ten in early 1979. Dr. Feelgood may have cut better songs, but this is the one that remains burned in the memory. **DE**

Everyday Is Like Sunday | Morrissey (1988)

Writer | Morrissey, Stephen Street
Producer | Stephen Street
Label | His Master's Voice
Album | *Viva Hate* (1988)



"There are very few aspects of Englishness I actually hate."

Morrissey, 1988

When The Smiths' singer and lyricist Stephen Morrissey embarked on a solo career, few of his fans could predict the direction he would take. His debut album, *Viva Hate*, surprised many with its unashamedly poppy songs. But while "Suedehead" was catchy and "Angel, Angel Down We Go Together" was dramatic, the standout for Morrissey-watchers was "Everyday Is Like Sunday"—a strident yet wistful evocation of winter life in a deserted seaside town.

The song began with a melody by producer Stephen Street. He had submitted demos to Morrissey, intending them for B-sides to singles from The Smiths' final album, *Strangeways, Here We Come*, released in 1987. Instead, Street told *NME*, "I got a letter back from him saying, 'I don't see any point in continuing The Smiths, would you like to make a record with me?'" With The Durutti Column's Vini Reilly replacing Johnny Marr as Morrissey's guitar foil, they forged ahead.

"Every day is silent and gray," sang Morrissey in a more forceful voice than the pleading croon he had employed on many of The Smiths' best-known songs. His depiction of the silent streets and tedium of the song's unnamed location was perfect; a lyrical slew of very English images.

As was often the case with The Smiths, the music—almost jubilant at times—contrasted with the lyrics, which his detractors regarded as simple miserablism. Yet, in his own way, Morrissey seemed to be celebrating the hushed, depressed nature of this aspect of England. What's wrong with Sundays anyway? As with so many of this misunderstood maverick's songs, there's more than one meaning. "Everyday Is Like Sunday" remains one of Morrissey's best-known songs. **JMc**

▲ **Influenced by:** Sketch for Dawn • The Durutti Column (1985)

▼ **Influence on:** Everybody's Changing • Keane (2003)

● **Covered by:** 10,000 Maniacs (1992) • The Pretenders (1995) • Colin Meloy (2003) • KT Tunstall (2008)

★ **Other key track:** Suedehead (1988)

Orinoco Flow | Enya (1988)

Writer | Enya, Roma Ryan, Nicky Ryan
Producer | Nicky Ryan
Label | WEA
Album | *Watermark* (1988)



"I was hoping someone would enjoy it, but I didn't realize how many listeners there would be."

Enya, 2008

Many label Irish singer and composer Enya is unhip. Others worship her as a mystical Celtic priestess—one who knows magic, converses with forest creatures, and keeps the Emerald Isle safe from evil wizards. (The latter group may well be right—she does, after all, live in a castle.)

That people would still be talking about Enya today seemed highly unlikely at the start of her solo career. After appearing with her family band Clannad—best known for "Theme from Harry's Game"—in the early Eighties, the singer drew little attention with her eponymous 1987 debut; but things changed once Enya delivered her sophomore set, thanks to "Orinoco Flow."

If the title doesn't ring a bell, you're not alone—most know the tune as "Sail Away." ("Sail away" is the chorus, and the song's only two easily decipherable words.) It was actually named after London's Orinoco Studios, where longtime Enya collaborator Nicky Ryan, a devoted follower of The Beach Boys and Phil Spector, fashioned a new "Wall of Sound" for his protégée.

The mix included synthesized folk melodies and heavily layered vocals, the latter forming a simple travelogue through such exotic ports of call as Fiji, Bali, and Babylon. "I like to curate different ideas and put them all in one song," Enya explained to the *Daily Telegraph*, "and see the journey of what it will become."

The result was the catchiest new age song ever heard—one that turned out to be bigger than its genre. "Orinoco Flow" pushed *Watermark* past the eight million sales mark and reached No. 1 in several countries. It became the singer's signature tune, and set the stage for Enya to metamorphose into one of the world's most popular artists. **JiH**

▲ **Influenced by:** Night Scented Stock • Kate Bush (1980)

▶ **Influence on:** Now We Are Free • Lisa Kelly (2003)

● **Covered by:** The Section Quartet (2001) • Celtic Woman (2005) • Bit by Bats (2008) • Libera (2008)

★ **Other key tracks:** Storms in Africa (1988) • Watermark (1988) • Book of Days (1991) • Caribbean Blue (1991)