

Sylwester

**MIGHTY REAL**  
**GREATEST DANCE HITS**



- 1 \* YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL) (RALPHI'S MIGHTY DUB MIX) 7:40
  - 2 DANCE (DISCO HEAT) 8:21
  - 3 STARS 10:27
  - 4 CAN'T STOP DANCING 7:43
  - 5 CHANGES 3:09
  - 6 OVER AND OVER 9:31
  - 7 I NEED SOMEBODY TO LOVE TONIGHT 6:51
  - 8 SELL MY SOUL 5:55
  - 9 I NEED YOU 4:34
  - 10 BODY STRONG 8:40
  - 11 YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL) 6:20
- \* PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED

Original recordings produced by **HARVEY FUQUA** and **SYLVESTER** for Honey Records Productions

This compilation produced by **TOM CARTWRIGHT** and **CHRIS CLOUGH**

Mastered by **PAUL BLAKEMORE**, CMG Mastering, Cleveland OH

Track #1 remixed by **RALPHI ROSARIO**

Contains previously released material recorded from 1977 to 1980.



[www.concordmusicgroup.com](http://www.concordmusicgroup.com)

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A stylized, handwritten signature of the name 'Sylvester' in white ink.



# Billboard's Disco

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## ATLANTA

- 1. FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)/DANCE (DISCO HEAT) - Sylvester - Fantasy (12 inch)
- 2. ... - all cuts - Musique - Prelude (LP)
- 3. DANCE - Bohannon - Mercury (LP)
- 4. ... - A Taste

## DALLAS/HOUSTON

- This Week**
- ★ 1. YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)/DANCE (DISCO HEAT) - Sylvester - Fantasy (12 inch)
  - 2. ... - Prelude (LP)

## NEW ORLEANS

- This Week**
- 1. KEEP ON JUMPIN' - all cuts - Musique - Prelude
  - ★ 2. YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)/DANCE (DISCO HEAT) - Sylvester - Fantasy (12 inch)
  - 3. BEAUTIFUL BEND - all cuts - Boris Midney - Marlin (TK) (LP)
  - 4. ... - Karen Young - West End (12 inch)
  - 5. ... DENIED - Len Boone - Chrysalis
  - 6. ... - Paul Jabara - Casablanca



**S**ylvester James was an unlikely star: an androgynous, cross-dressing, openly gay, African American, falsetto-singing, unapologetically flaming man-diva influenced primarily by church women, black blues singers, drag queens, hippies, and homos. Like very few before him, and quite a few after, Sylvester rode his marginality right into the mainstream: a star not despite the boundaries of race, gender, and sexuality he eagerly crossed but because of them. What society saw as flaws and failings, he turned into flawlessness and success—fabulous! What society used to deny rights and freedoms, he used as the basis for international superstardom—fabulous!

He was, of course, an icon of gay liberation, providing its most recognizable soundtrack, with hits like “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real),” and “Dance (Disco Heat).” But his diva persona also symbolized, more broadly, the 1970s and 1980s subcultures where gender was something you could try on and race an exploding costume, where your body’s sex and desires and color would not matter if you wore

them imaginatively, where flaming wasn’t a stigma or a joke but an art form. Indeed, he rode to stardom on the wave of those liberation movements.

He began his rise performing with the San Francisco hippie-glitter-drag troupe the Cockettes, singing blues standards in the midst of demented, acid-inspired musicals. When producer Harvey Fuqua signed him to Fantasy Records in 1976, Sylvester had hired Martha Wash and Izora Rhodes—the Two Tons of Fun, who later became the Weather Girls—and was serving up gospel-fied Neil Young and Leonard Cohen covers and party music to sweaty crowds in the newly super-gay Castro. He met the synthesizer whiz Patrick Cowley at the Cabaret, a San Francisco disco where Sylvester

sometimes performed and often went to dance. The sound that became his signature—the raw, gospel falsetto riding a bouncing synthesizer, the sound of “Mighty Real,” “Changes,” and the like—was developed and tested in the vibrant subcultural scenes of San Francisco. As those scenes were being demolished by AIDS, Sylvester’s music took on a sort of weary determination, becoming a call to live, to keep dancing and loving.

Although Sylvester was known for being, as mainstream journalists consistently put it, “flamboyant” and “outrageous,” he was more interested in transcendence than transgression: in the social transcendence of norms and categories, in the spiritual and physical transcendence found in church, on the dance floor, and in good sex, and, of course, in his own transcendence as a diva. He embodied and demonstrated a simple set of diva-driven inspirational imperatives; be free; be strange; be real; be fabulous; get up and dance. Sylvester’s legacy is the call to live by those principles, and some music to live them by. Plus, he could really sing.

In 1979, when Sylvester was an international disco star and still nine years away from his own death from AIDS, the legendary DJ Frankie Crocker asked him how he would want to be remembered. “For being fabulous,” Sylvester said without hesitation. He died on December 16, 1988 at the age of 41. Decades later, even as strides have been made in the fight against the disease that has taken so many lives, Sylvester’s music lives on, a call to be fabulous against the odds.

—**Joshua Gamson**  
March 2013

Joshua Gamson is the author of *The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, The Music, The Seventies in San Francisco*, a Guggenheim Fellow, and Professor of Sociology at the University of San Francisco.



**1 \* YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)** 7:40

(Ralph's Mighty Dub Mix)  
(Sylvester-Wirrick) Sequins at Noon Music/Wirrick Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—lead vocals, acoustic piano; **Michael Finden**—organ, electric piano, clavinet; **Patrick Cowley**—sequencer, synthesizer, special effects; **Tip Wirrick**—guitar; **Bob Kingson**—bass; **Randy Merritt**—drums; **David Frazier**—percussion; **Izora Rhodes, Martha Wash** (Two Tons of Fun)—background vocals; **Eric Robinson**—rhythm arrangement. Plus horns and strings arranged by **Leslie Drayton**.

**2 DANCE (DISCO HEAT)** 8:21

(Robinson-Orsborn) Jobete Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—lead vocals, acoustic piano; **Michael Finden**—organ, electric piano, clavinet; **Patrick Cowley**—sequencer, synthesizer, special effects; **Tip Wirrick**—guitar; **Bob Kingson**—bass; **Randy Merritt**—drums; **David Frazier**—percussion; **Izora Rhodes, Martha Wash** (Two Tons of Fun)—background vocals; **Eric Robinson**—rhythm arrangement. Plus horns and strings arranged by **Leslie Drayton**. From *Step II* (Fantasy 9556) [1978].

**3 STARS** 10:27

(Patrick Cowley) Franmar Music-BMI  
**Sylvester**—vocals; **Denita James, Jessica Smith, Pat Hodges** (Hodges, James & Smith)—background vocals. From *The Original Hits* (Fantasy FCD-7710)/Originally released on *Stars* (Fantasy 9579) [1979].

**4 CAN'T STOP DANCING** 7:43

(Sylvester) Sequins at Noon Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—lead vocals; **Fred Berry, Allen Smith**—trumpets; **Julian Priester, Wayne Wallace**—trombones; **David Sprunk**—French horns; **Mel Martin**—baritone saxophone; **Eric Robinson**—keyboards, synthesizers; **Ralph Wash**—guitar; **Gregg Crockett**—bass; **Kelvin Dixon**—drums; **David Frazier**—percussion; **Izora Rhodes, Martha Wash** (Two Tons of Fun)—background vocals. From *The Original Hits* (Fantasy FCD-7710)/Originally released on *Living Proof* (Fantasy 79010) [1979].

**5 CHANGES** 3:09

(Sylvester) Sequins at Noon Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—vocals; **Tip Wirrick**—guitar; **Dan Reich**—keyboards; **John Dunstan**—bass; **Sandyjack Reiner**—drums; **David Frazier**—percussion; **Izora Rhodes, Martha Wash** (Two Tons of Fun)—background vocals. From *Sylvester* (Fantasy 9531) [1977].

**6 OVER AND OVER** 9:31

(Ashford-Simpson) Nik O Val Music Co.-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—vocals; **Tip Wirrick**—guitar; **Dan Reich**—keyboards; **John Dunstan**—bass; **Sandyjack Reiner**—drums; **David Frazier**—percussion; **Izora Rhodes, Martha Wash** (Two Tons of Fun)—background vocals. From *Sylvester* (Fantasy 9531) [1977].

**7 I NEED SOMEBODY TO LOVE TONIGHT** 6:51

(Patrick Cowley) Sequins at Noon Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—vocals; **Denita James, Jessica Smith, Pat Hodges** (Hodges, James & Smith)—background vocals. Originally released on *Stars* (Fantasy 9579) [1979].

**8 SELL MY SOUL** 5:55

(Lionel Azulay) Carbert Music Corp.-BMI  
**Sylvester**—lead and background vocals, synthesizer; **Kenny Warden**—flugelhorn solo; **Mauricio Smith**—alto saxophone solo; **Mauricio Smith, Danny Chan, John Echert, John Gatchel, Kenny Warden, Louis Barbarin**—horns; **Louis Small**—piano, synthesizer, rhythm, horn arrangement; **George Victory**—guitar; **Eluriel "Tinker" Barfield**—bass; **Woody Cunningham**—drums; **Delores Hall, Carl Hall**—background vocals; **Leslie Drayton**—string arrangement; **Allen Wentz**—synthesizer programming. From *The Original Hits* (Fantasy FCD-7710)/Originally released on *Sell My Soul* (Fantasy 9601) [1980].

**9 I NEED YOU** 4:34

(Robinson-Orsborn) Jobete Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—lead and background vocals; **Eric Robinson**—piano; **Louis Small**—electric piano; **Norman Durham**—bass; **Woody Cunningham**—drums; **Ella Mitchell, Cookie Holt, Jeanie Tracy**—background vocals; **Alfredo de la Fe**—strings (concertmaster); **Louis Small, Eric Robinson**—arrangement. From *The Original Hits* (Fantasy FCD-7710)/Originally released on *Sell My Soul* (Fantasy 9601) [1980].

**10 BODY STRONG** 8:40

(Finden-James) Sequins at Noon Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—vocals; **Denita James, Jessica Smith, Pat Hodges** (Hodges, James & Smith)—background vocals. From *The Original Hits* (Fantasy FCD-7710)/Originally released on *Stars* (Fantasy 9579) [1979].

**11 YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)** 6:20

(Sylvester-Wirrick) Sequins at Noon Music/Wirrick Music-ASCAP  
**Sylvester**—lead vocals, acoustic piano; **Michael Finden**—organ, electric piano, clavinet; **Patrick Cowley**—sequencer, synthesizer, special effects; **Tip Wirrick**—guitar; **Bob Kingson**—bass; **Randy Merritt**—drums; **David Frazier**—percussion; **Izora Rhodes, Martha Wash** (Two Tons of Fun)—background vocals; **Eric Robinson**—rhythm arrangement. Plus horns and strings arranged by **Leslie Drayton**. From *Step II* (Fantasy 9556) [1978].

\* PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED

Original recordings produced by **Harvey Fuqua** and **Sylvester** for Honey Records Productions.



- 3 YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)/DANCE (DISCO HEAT)—Sylvester—Fantasy (12 inch)
- 4 VICTIM—Candi Staton—Warner Bros.
- 5 KEEP ON JUMPIN'—all cuts—Musique
- 6 INSTANT REPLAY—Dan Hartman—A&M
- 7 HOT SHOT—Karen Young—West End (12 inch)
- 8 SUPERSTAR/GO FOR THE MONEY—Bob Butterly (12 inch)
- 9 DO OR DIE/PRIDE/FAME—Grace Jones (12 inch)
- 10 STAR CRUISER—all cuts—Gregg Diamond

**NY SINGLE:**  
 You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real), Was It Something That I Said  
 Best.nr: 006-61678

**STEP II**  
 You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real), Dance (Disco Heat), You  
 Me Feel (Mighty Real)/Epilogue, Grateful, I Took My  
 You, Was It Something That I Said, Just You

- 15 KEEPING TIME—all cuts—Paul Jabara—Casablanca (LP)

**SEATTLE/WASHINGTON**

- This Week
- 1 YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)/DANCE (DISCO HEAT)—Sylvester—Fantasy (12 inch)
  - 2 HOT SHOT—Karen Young—West End (12 inch)
  - 3 KEEP ON JUMPIN'—all cuts—Musique—Prelude (LP)
  - 4 DO OR DIE/PRIDE/FAME—Grace Jones—Island (LP)

**S Y L V E S T E R**  
 DOWN, DOWN, DOWN (6:50)  
 B/W OVER AND OVER (9:27)  
 45 RPM DISCO VERSION—NOT TO BE SOLD  
 F-797-D





Upon his death, Sylvester bequeathed royalties from the sale of his music to benefit two charitable organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area:

The AIDS Emergency Fund (AEF), founded in 1982, was one of the nation's first responders to the AIDS epidemic, helping AIDS patients live with dignity in their final days. Thirty years later, AEF is still providing annual housing and utility payment assistance to more than 2,000 people battling HIV/AIDS. Sylvester's bequest remains one of the few examples of a major artist donating their royalties to charity in perpetuity. To this day, Sylvester's thoughtful gesture provides tens of thousands of dollars each year to help low-income people with HIV/AIDS who have nowhere else to turn for help.

For more information, visit [www.aef-sf.org](http://www.aef-sf.org)

Project Open Hand is a nonprofit organization that provides meals with love to seniors and the critically ill. Every day, it prepares 2,500 nutritious meals and donates 400 bags of healthy groceries to help sustain its clients as they face serious illnesses, isolation, or the health challenges of old age. The organization serves San Francisco and Alameda Counties, engaging more than 125 volunteers a day to nourish our community.

For more information, visit [www.openhand.org](http://www.openhand.org)



This compilation produced by **TOM CARTWRIGHT** and **CHRIS CLOUGH**  
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Track #1 remixed by **RALPHI ROSARIO**

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All images courtesy of Fantasy Archives

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Visit the official Sylvester website and sign up for the mailing list at [officialsyvester.com](http://officialsyvester.com)  
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**SYLVESTER**