



Giorgio Moroder

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TIME – February 12, 2015 - Giorgio Moroder is obsessed with the mechanical, magical, and melodic – the man-machine duality that floods his sensual, driving electronic sound. The Italian-born producer, composer and DJ is known lovingly these days as the godfather of modern dance music. It's a well-earned plaudit: between 1974 and 1984, he was arguably the most in-demand name in music production, with trailblazers in both pop music and Hollywood scorching his Rolodex. In the 1970s, he was the key force behind some of the 20th century's most iconic disco songs – particularly those created with Donna Summer, whose hit "Love To Love You Baby" and the synth-laden "I Feel Love" harkened a new future for dance music. He's the maestro behind the legendary soundtracks for Scarface, Flashdance, and the Oscar-winning The Chase, as well as Blondie's incendiary No. 1 hit from American Gigolo, "Call Me." (Fun fact: Moroder beat himself at the 1984 Golden Globes, with his work for Flashdance winning out over his nomination for Scarface.) Moroder's influence is everywhere. His innovations helped kickstart '80s synthpop and its '00s resurgence, as well as the recent disco revival helmed by acts like Daft Punk, on whose 2013 comeback album, Random Access Memories, he contributed the autobiographical tune "Giorgio by Moroder." He's been sampled by Kanye West and Lil Wayne. After a recent run of successful DJ gigs and that well-received Daft Punk



collaboration, Moroder is poised now to release his first album in 30 years. Once again, some of the world's brightest stars have lined up to work with him: Sia, Britney Spears, Mikky Ekko and Charli XCX, to highlight just a few. Still untitled and without a release date, the songs we've heard already sound like new classics, including the lead single with Kylie Minogue, "Right Here, Right Now." Clearly having a moment, Moroder is already planning his next move: a Lady Gaga collaboration for her new album is in the works.

At 74 years old, the gently-spoken Moroder is aware his reputation precedes him, but he wears it humbly, grateful for this second lease on creative life. TIME sat down with the legend to learn that he's taking his new reincarnation in stride. **Why is now an ideal time to release your first album in 30 years?** For the simple fact that a record company, RCA, offered me a deal, and I couldn't say no! Given how well the Daft Punk song had done, it was a logical step. To be honest, to be

given the chance to make a record at my age, that's an opportunity you have to take. You cannot say no.

So before "Giorgio by Moroder" with Daft Punk, you didn't have any plans to make a new record?

No, the last song I did was for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Then I started to do a little bit of DJing. But I didn't have plans with any label.

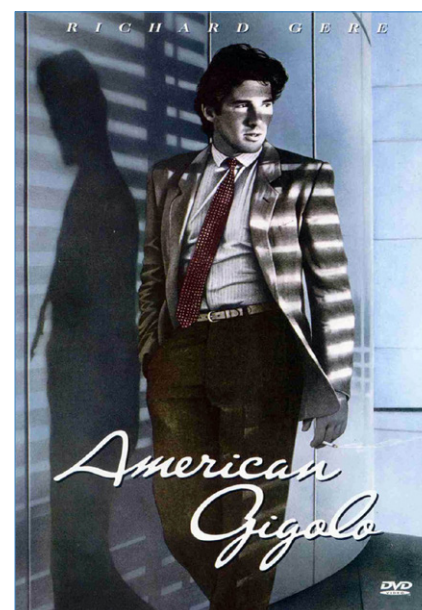
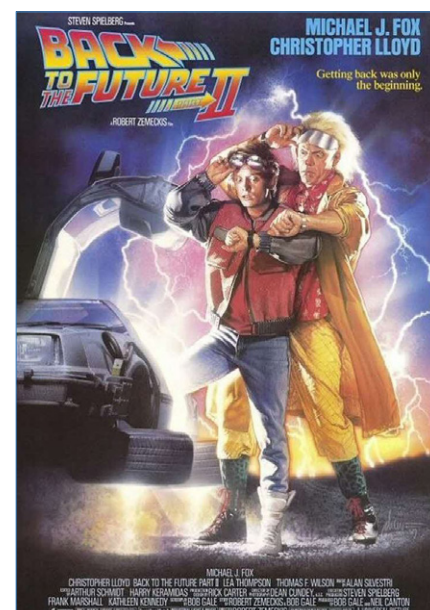
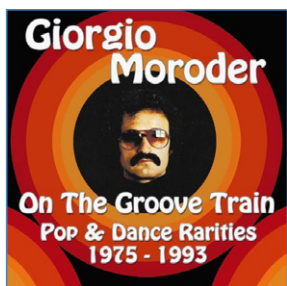
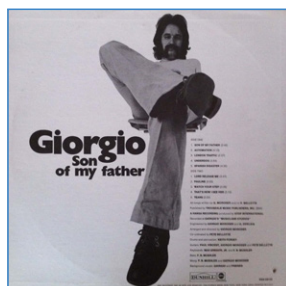
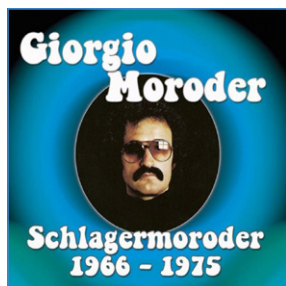
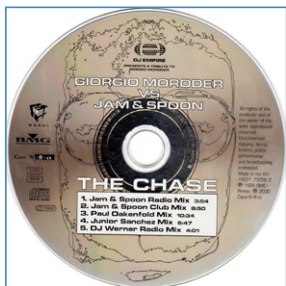
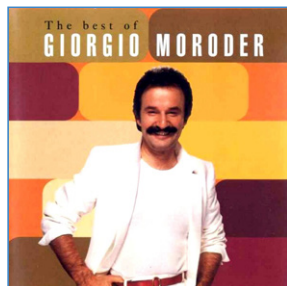
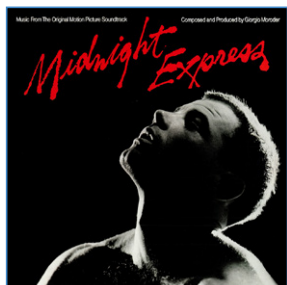
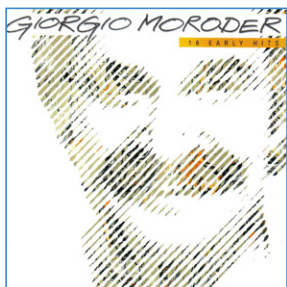
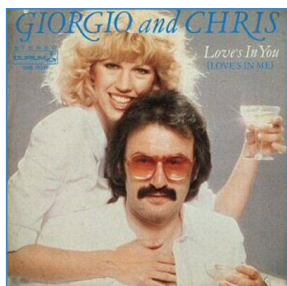
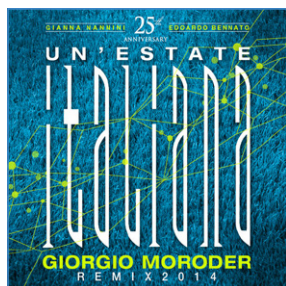
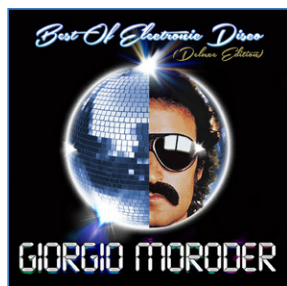
How did Daft Punk approach you to work on Random Access Memories?

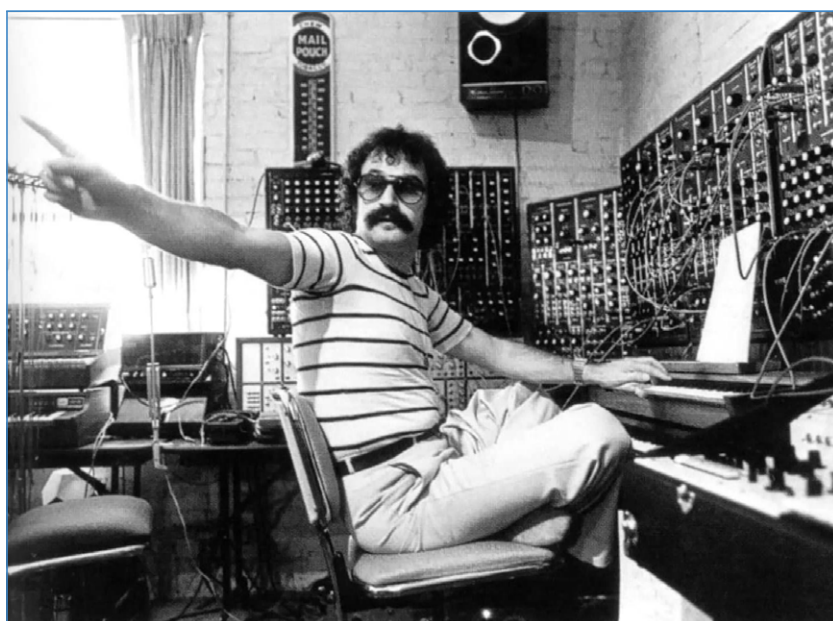
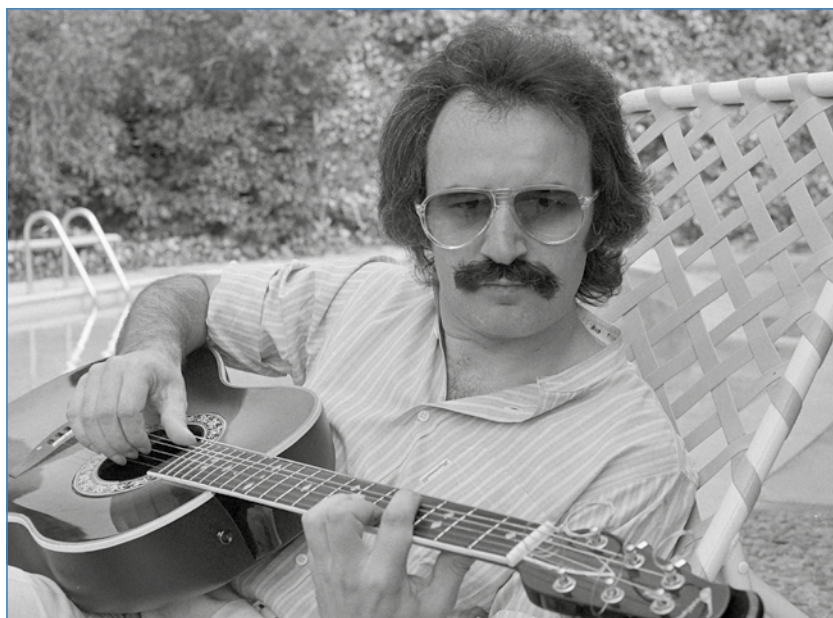
Simply by calling me. They were in Los Angeles, doing the music for Tron. They asked if I wanted to have lunch with them – they wanted to talk to me about a collaboration. So, the second I told my son – who was 18 or 19 – that I was seeing Daft Punk, he was all over me! He's their biggest fan. He said, "You have to do it!" I always liked them, but I hadn't thought about it. So, we had lunch. Then, several months passed; I finally got a call

from Thomas [Bangalter]. He said, "Why don't you come to our studio?" I thought I was going to play guitar or the synthesizer and they said, "No, just talk. Tell us all the secrets of your life." I know they could blackmail me with all the stuff I said, but they are nice. [laughs] Then another 7 or 8 months later, I heard it back again. It was quite emotional, hearing myself talking.

Who were you immediately drawn to working with for this record? Did you have a wish list?







Yes, but the dream is restricted to the record company. Trying to get a singer from a different company is always difficult. Basically, we made a list of acts on RCA, but then, some artists had their own albums out and wouldn't be able to promote the songs. We ended up getting about 13 acts involved. Some tracks are not finished or have to be mixed, some we have legal problems to solve, but overall, I think the album is more or less done. I have to finish the song with Britney Spears. She has to sing a little part I added over the original...

Britney's song is a cover, right?

Yes, it's an a cappella song from one of my favorite singers. It's interesting because Britney liked the song and asked the record company to ask me if I was willing to produce it, and it was absolutely incredible. Her voice fit it so well. It's one of the first times when you hear her voice without any effects. Some delays and stuff, but not mechanical sounding. Very natural.

And you're working with Gaga on her next album. How are you approaching it?

No idea. I know I have some very, very rough rhythm tracks. Maybe I can play her some chords, some sounds. Maybe we'll just play on the piano. She likes to compose on the piano – she's a great pianist. Add a bit of rhythm – it's a good way to work.

What are the necessary elements of a perfect pop song?

The rhythm. The hook has to be great. The lyrics of the hook. The voice. And, of course, the timing. If the timing is wrong, it's almost impossible. It would be nice if one could know the secret behind a song's success!

Is that a focus for you on this new record?

I still like to do – hopefully! – perfect dance-pop songs. If there's next album, maybe there'll be a new sound or direction. But for this one, I definitely want pop.

What's it like to work with the pop stars of today vs. icons like Donna Summer and Debbie Harry decades ago?

It's quite different. Now, it's not only the act of collaboration with an artist, it's with the surrounding team. Every act now has a manager, a producer, a vocal producer – which we never had, one musician who becomes co-producer, another becomes executive producer, so it's a lot of involvement with a lot of people for every song. That's one of the reasons it takes so long to record and finish these days.



Who was the most surprising experience with a collaborator on your new record?

Well, my favorite song is with Sia. She did most of the work by herself in the studio. I gave her the tracks, just a little bit of a melody. And then she changed it, she gave her input and wrote the lyrics. After a few weeks, she sent me the tapes and I loved it! I didn't know what I would have changed, because it was perfect.

How about Kylie Minogue?

Kylie! She's such a professional. She was great. We did some recording in London and finished in Los Angeles and did the video there. She is a dynamic little lady! She's dancing in the video, and is absolutely engaging.

She's covered "I Feel Love" in concert, actually. I wanted to talk about that song – David Bowie said that when Brian Eno heard it, he rushed in and said it was the sound of the future when they heard it on the radio. Did you and Donna know it was special right away?

The idea of that album was, "Let's have the sounds of the '50s and '60s, Motown, then the '70s. Then the challenge was to figure out how a song would sound in 20 years. I thought the only way to do it would be to use a synthesizer and computers to do all the instruments. There's the bass, there's a snare, a kick, a hi-hat, all produced by synthesizers. It created a modern, mechanical feel. Then, you add the voice of Donna Summer and it's melodic and sexy. That's a big part of its success still: you have this metallic machine sound that becomes seductive.

Does it surprise you how long it's held up? What stands out to you now?

At the beginning, I thought, "Yeah, we have a great song." Then Brian Eno gave it the stamp of approval. And then every few months, I'd hear a remake, or a song that had some elements of it. I still hear songs that have the same baseline with one note removed. I think a lot of people got inspired by it.

What was your first connection to disco?

The very first was "Love to Love You Baby." I was listening to disco, yes and no, in '74, when we started to produce Donna, and finally we said, "Okay, we have to have a sexy song."

That was the first disco sound I produced, but I was always interested in the idea of disco songs. In fact, in '71, I had quite a big hit with "Son of my Father," which had a lot of rhythm. Not the typical four-on-the-floor, but still: a lot of rhythm.

Debbie Harry has said she rewrote "Call Me" and her take was very different from its original form. What was its evolution?

Well, it was always meant to be a driving song to match the opening scene of the movie.

I had quite a good demo of it. I did some blah, blah, blah lyrics just to sing it. She took it and came up with the great title: "Call Me." She did it in five or six takes; she knew the song very well, of course, since she wrote it. It's also the way she sings those words that makes it special – it's almost a shout!

Is it true that Stevie Nicks was going to be the original singer of "Call Me?"

You read that? I forget if it was for that song, but we were looking for her to do songs with us.

Is she still someone you'd want to work with?

Yes, yes! Oh, I love her. She's a great singer.

What is your process going into a movie score like The Chase vs. creating a pop song?

Well, The Chase was relatively easy, because Alan Parker was in love with "I Feel Love", so there's a scene at the beginning of the movie where the guy escapes and Parker said, "Give me something in the style of 'I Feel Love'." [mimics bassline] So, I composed the song and he loved it. He said to do whatever I wanted with the rest of the movie, so I did – and he didn't want to change anything. And we mixed it in one Sunday afternoon.

It won an Oscar. Did winning it feel like a new level of success?

Yeah, it did! Immediately after, I did American Gigolo, Flashdance, Cat People, and the big one, Scarface. Some quite interesting movies.

Would you like to get back into scoring movies again?

Yes, we're in talks right now for a major movie. I cannot tell you what it is yet.

Who else would you hope to work with now?

Well, one of my favorite singers is Rihanna. She's sexy. I could really do a sexy song with her – I have an idea already for it. Maybe if she's listening or watching, it can happen.

Colleen Nika