



Chaka! Through the Fire

Chaka Khan, Tonya Bolden

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Rolling Stone compared it to melted caramel, and Miles Davis compared it to his horn.

Chaka Khan's scorchingly soulful voice first dazzled most of us back in 1974 with Rufus and "Tell Me Something Good," and most recently in her Grammy Award-winning performance in *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, singing "What's Going On?" with the Funk Brothers. Over the years, she's had twelve number-one hits and nine number-one albums. Over one hundred appearances on the Billboard charts. Nineteen Grammy nominations and eight Grammy wins. Her achievements in the music industry are legendary, and like her twenty albums, they're well-known to the public.

But the private side of Chaka, the story of what fame and fortune have cost her-- and taught her-- hasn't been told before. In *Chaka! Through the Fire*, Chaka Khan gives us the whole story of the woman behind the diva and reveals her high and low points. A happy early childhood in a loving, creative home was shattered by escalating fights between her parents. When they finally split, Chaka's father disappeared without even a goodbye, leaving Chaka bewildered, bereft, and blaming her mother. She reconnected with her dad in her teens, finding that he was as liberal and permissive a parent as her mother was strict. Chaka started experimenting with drugs and joined the Black Panthers. Soon after, she fronted for a band called Rufus.

They hit it big with "Tell Me Something Good," and Chaka's stardom was launched. But life on the road was grueling, and as the years went by, the pressures grew. Chaka turned to alcohol and drugs to numb the pain of failed relationships, the guilt of leaving her kids to be raised by Grandma, the resentment she felt about the exhausting demands of her career. It wasn't until things got very bad that she started to see the patterns. All the things she had suffered through in her childhood and swore never to do to her kids-- well, she was doing them.

That's when she began the work of turning it all around. These days, she's still a musical powerhouse, but she's making sure there's time for family, too. She's drug-free. She's started her own record label and has also started a foundation to help women and children in need. Remarkably, Chaka has remained a true wild child despite all the changes: a fiercely independent woman who never compromised her spirit.

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