

"Fifth Beatle" Billy Preston – 1946-2006

U.S. singer and song-writer Billy Preston has died at the age of 59 in Arizona after a long illness. Starting as a child keyboard prodigy playing organ for Ray Charles, he was one of the few musicians to play with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, as well as Bob Dylan and Aretha Franklin



■ **Sept 9, 1946:** Born **William Everett Preston** in Houston, Texas

■ **1958:** Appears in film **St. Louis Blues** which stars **Nat King Cole** as bluesman W.C. Handy. 12-year-old Preston plays Handy as a child

■ **1962:** Travels to Europe playing in **Little Richard's** backing band. Starts playing keyboards with **The Beatles**

■ **1969:** Signs with Beatles' **Apple** label. Performs on **Abbey Road** album and on **Get Back/Don't Let Me Down**. Plays during Beatles' historic rooftop final gig in London

■ **1971-76:** Appears on **Rolling Stones'** albums **Sticky Fingers**, **Exile on Main Street**, **Goats Head Soup**, **It's Only Rock'n Roll** and **Black and Blue**

■ **1972:** Tops charts as solo act with Grammy winner **Outta Space**

■ **1973, 75, 76:** Tours as support act with Rolling Stones

■ **1974:** Writes **Joe Cocker** hit **You Are So Beautiful**

■ **1980s:** Arrested and convicted for insurance fraud. Treated for alcohol and cocaine addictions

■ **1997:** Sentenced to three years in prison for cocaine possession

■ **2005:** Plays Gospel-tinged organ on **Neil Diamond** album **12 Songs**

■ **2006:** Plays keyboards on **Warlocks** for **Red Hot Chili Peppers'** album **Stadium Arcadium**