

The Fabulous Limelitters

Biography

The Limelitters are a folk group that was originally formed in July, 1959, by Louis Gottlieb (bass), Alex Hassilev (baritone), and Glenn Yarbrough (tenor). They played in concerts and at folk houses like San Francisco's *Hungry I* and Hollywood's *Ash Grove* during the height of the folk music boom of the early 60's, and the group is still performing today.

The group cannot honestly be said to have any one single big hit; rather they are loved for a large collection of rousing songs including such audience-pleasers as "There's a Meetin' Here Tonight," "City of New Orleans," "A Dollar Down," "Have Some Madeira M'Dear," "Lonesome Traveler," "Wabash Cannonball," "Whiskey in the Jar," and many others which are performed on their 25+ record albums and in their exciting concerts. The Limelitters' album, **Tonight in Person** reached number 5 in the U.S. charts in 1961. Their second album made the top 40, and their third release, The Slightly Fabulous Limelitters, made the top ten in the same year. But their one album with the longest staying power is undoubtedly their album of folk songs for kids of all ages, Through Children's Eyes.

What The Limelitters are truly famous for is their trademark "Limelitters sound." As Ron Byers says, "On stage they become a crowd, and one catches oneself looking behind curtains and at exit doors, wondering where the other voices are coming from." It all began in 1959. It was springtime in Los Angeles, and "Cosmo Alley" was the nightclub to frequent. Lou Gottlieb, fresh from obtaining his Ph.D in musicology (and who was then working as an arranger for The Kingston Trio), just happened to be in the audience when Alex Hassilev and Glenn Yarbrough appeared on stage to sing a duet together. It was a chance meeting... and a legendary one. Lou originally thought that "these two guys" could help him make some demos for The Kingston Trio. However, when the three started working together, they could not restrain the magic.

Soon, they packed up and headed to Aspen, Colorado, to work at a club called "The Limelite." Glenn and Alex had purchased it the year before, after singing there during the previous ski season. They set off for the "Hungry i" in San Francisco, which at the time, was the West Coast nerve center for the mushrooming contemporary folk movement. When they arrived at the Hungry i in San Francisco, the owner said that he had just had "Lambert, Hendrix, and Ross" there and wasn't about to put "Yarbrough, Hassilev, and Gottlieb" up on the marquee!! But the group hadn't really decided on a name yet. So where had they last been playing? When they answered "The Limelite," he said "that's your name."

Their success was immediate and they launched their career with a bang. "It was amazing," Lou once recalled. "We opened on a Wednesday, July 19, 1959, and by Friday, we had offers from three different record companies." In early 1960, they released their first album on Electra. A string of best-selling LP's for RCA Records followed, as well as frequent appearances on every major TV show, making The Limelitters a household name.

For three years, The Limelitters were the musical representatives for Coca-Cola. Their rendition of the jingle, "Things Go Better with Coke" became a national hit. *Time* magazine summed up their appeal with the memorable quote: "If the button-down, scrubbed-looking Kingston Trio are the undergraduates of big-time U.S. folk-singing, The Limelitters are the faculty." You can now hear some of the best of that era on **The Limelitters 36 All Time Greatest Hits**.

Glenn Yarbrough left the group in 1963. For awhile, Ernie Sheldon filled in for Yarbrough, and the trio did a nice job on the mid-sixties albums **More of Everything**, **Leave it to the Limelitters**, and **Limelitters Look at Love in Depth**. Ernie Sheldon wrote the lyrics for what became Yarbrough's biggest solo hit, "Baby the Rain Must Fall." In 1965, at the pinnacle of their success, the individualistic members of the group decided to call a halt to their career. They did so to reexamine goals they were forced to put aside -- because of their instant celebrity. For the next ten years, they pursued separate interests. Glenn Yarbrough is still well-known for his big hit single 1965, "Baby the Rain Must Fall." Alex took up record producing, and Lou -- well, he played "executive hippie" at Morningstar Ranch and played in some movies!

Several members of The Limelitters have been in motion pictures, including Lou Gottlieb in Peter Sellers' 1968 movie, "I Love You Alice B. Toklas," and in "Blume in Love" with George Segal in 1973. The Limelitters also performed the song "Love in the Country" on the movie soundtrack for the John Wayne movie, *McLintock!* (1963).

During the seventies, in response to an ever-greater demand from their many fans, The Limelitters embarked on a series of yearly reunion tours with Glenn Yarbrough. These were so successful that, in 1981, Lou and Alex decided to get back into the mainstream of entertainment. It was then they introduced an outstanding new tenor, **Red Grammer**, and a fabulous come-back began. Some of the great albums from these years included **Alive! In Concert**, **Harmony**, **Singing for the Fun**, and **A Mighty Day**. During this time, instrumentalist **John David** began performing with the group as, a master of many fretted instruments.

After eight very productive years, during which The Limelitters started their own record company, West Knoll Records, Red Grammer left the group to pursue a solo career as a children's artist. Lou and Alex were then fortunate enough to find the soaring, high tenor of Rick Dougherty to replace Red. As a result, an extra shot of adrenaline was added to The Limelitters. Besides possessing a beautiful voice, Rick was a seasoned entertainer. He played the banjo, guitar, bass and piano superbly; he was also a songwriter and arranger, and possessed a flair for comedy which fit in perfectly with that facet of The Limelitters' appeal. Rick can be heard on the title cut of **A Mighty Day**, and on the album, **Global Carnival**.

In 1996, Bill Zorn joined the group, following the sudden, unfortunate passing of Lou Gottlieb. San Francisco music critic John Wasserman said the Limelitters "attained a stature equalled perhaps only by the Kingston Trio and the Weavers." As the enthusiastic responses indicated on their concert recordings indicate, they were and are resoundingly popular!

In 2003, Bill and Rick left the group and in early 2004, tenor Mack Bailey and comedian baritone Andy Corwin joined the group, bringing new energy, enthusiasm and musical material to the group. Their concerts have been greatly successful all around the country! In 2006, Alex decided to retire from the group, performing only occasional concerts. He is ably replaced by newest member Gaylan Taylor.

Now, as The Limelitters sail into the future, their unique blend of thrilling harmony, whacked-out humor and contemporary satire consistently draws standing ovations from audiences that, today, span three generations. With their energy and enthusiasm undiminished, The Limelitters remain the most exciting folk act that the genre has produced.

Now more than ever, the surging vocals and wonderful sense of humor of this unique trio continue to earn them their title as **The Fabulous Limelitters!**

For booking information,
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