



2013 Induction Class



The Kentucky Headhunters were formed in 1968, and were known as Itchy Brother. The members of the band were Richard Young on rhythm guitar and vocals, Fred Young on drums, Greg Martin on lead guitar and vocals, and Anthony Kenney on Bass guitar and vocals. They performed around the Youngs' and Kenney's hometown of Glasgow, Kentucky. Together they achieved regional success in the 70's which included the single "Shotgun Effie" about the Youngs' grandmother. "Shotgun Effie" was released '73, on the King Fargo label. Itchy Brother disbanded in 1982. Afterward Richard Young started writing songs for Acuff- Rose Music, and Fred was a backing musician for the country singer Syliva. Martin played bass and sang backing vocals for Ronnie McDowell, and Kenney stopped performing.

In 1985, Martin tried to get Itchy Brother back together. While the Young brothers joined, Kenney declined. Martin invited Doug Phelps to replace Kenney and Doug brought his older brother Ricky Lee to sing lead and play harmonica. The band took the name The Headhunters after a term "headchopper" which meant supplanting another band in a gig. When they discovered that other bands had the name, they changed it to "The Kentucky Headhunters". They began performing together the following year on a radio program titled "Chitlin' show on WLOC in Munfordville, Kentucky.

In the late 80's The Kentucky Headhunters recorded a demo album which included seven original songs and three cover songs. This was originally intended to be sold at the bands' live shows and caught the attention of the Nashville music community. In 1989, The bands' manager Mitchell Fox suggested that they sign to a label so Harold Shedd, the head of Mercury Records helped the Kentucky Headhunters get signed.

The Kentucky Headhunters' first demo was released that same year as their debut album Pickin' on Nashville. There were four singles from the album, all of which reached the top 40 on the Billboard Hot Country Singles and Tracks (now Hot Country Songs) chart. The cover of "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine" peaked at number 25 in December of '89, and after that came "Dumas Walker" which peaked at number 15 on the Billboard chart. After "Dumas Walker" came " Oh Lonesome Me" which peaked at number 8 and then came "Rock n' Roll Angel" which released at number 23. The Album Pickin' on Nashville earned a Grammy Award for Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal, Best New Vocal Group award from the Academy of

Country Music (ACM), and Album of the Year and Vocal Group of the Year awards from the Country Music Association (CMA). It also earned a double-platinum certification from the Recording Industry Association of America. Upon the success of their debut album, the Kentucky Headhunters began touring with Hank Williams Jr. and Delbert McClinton.

In '91, the band released their second album, *Electric Barnyard*. The album earned a gold certification from the RIAA and a CMA award for Vocal Group of the Year. The first single was "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" which was released on the anniversary of Davy Crockett's Death and was shipped out with coonskin caps. It reached 49 on the charts. "With Body and Soul" was the second single, and it reached number 30 on the Canadian RPM country charts. Later in that year, The Kentucky Headhunters performed with Roy Rogers on the song "That's How the West Was Swung" from his tribute album and covered Canned Heat's "Let's Work Together" for the soundtrack to the film *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*. Also, Martin played lead guitar for synthpop band Men Without Hats on the album *Sideways* and filled in for southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist Ed King on the band's 1992 tour.

Ricky Lee and Doug Phelps departed in June 1992, due to differences. They then founded Brother Phelps together which had a more country sound than The Kentucky Headhunters slightly rock edge. Kenney rejoined in the same year as the bass guitarist, and Mark S. Orr took over on lead vocals. The first album featuring Orr and Kenney was the more blues-rock oriented *Rave On!!* which was released in 1993. The Kentucky Headhunters then toured with label mate Billy Ray Cyrus. However *Rave On!!*'s new style didn't have quite the impact that for which they had hoped.

The Orr-led lineup also recorded "That'll Work," which was a collaborative album with Chuck Berry's Pianist Johnnie Johnson. It was released later in '93, on Nonesuch Records, and it was written in four days and had twelve songs. In '94 Mercury released a greatest hits package, *The Best of The Kentucky Headhunters: Still Pickin'*. After the release, the band left Mercury.

Orr left The Kentucky Headhunters in 1995, and Doug Phelps was asked to rejoin. The band signed to BNA Records and released *Stompin' Grounds* and subsequently *Songs from the Grass String Ranch* which was released in 2000 with Audium Entertainment. *Soul* was released in 2003, also with Audium, and it featured Johnnie Johnson as well as other guest appearances.

In 2005 the band signed to CBuJ Entertainment and released *Big Boss Man* which consisted completely of cover songs. In '06, they released a compilation *Flying Under the Radar*. In 2008, Kenney left the band, and Doug took over as the band's bass guitar. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the release of *Pickin'* on Nashville, the band released a live album entitled *The Kentucky Headhunters Live/Agora Ballroom-Cleveland, Ohio-May 13, 1990*. It was followed by *Dixie Lullabies* in 2011, on the Red Dirt Label.

The Kentucky Headhunters continue to tour today with their unique brand of country rock fusion that has fueled their career for the last four decades and has brought joy to their fans all over the world.