



## 2015 Induction Class



The **Moonglows**, a Rhythm and Blues vocal group formed in the early 1950's, performed and traveled the country with legendary musicians including Fats Domino, B.B. King, Ray Charles, Bo Diddley, Buddy Holly, The Everley Brothers and Chuck Berry. The Moonglows' signature singing style known as "blow note" harmony was imitated by many groups of the era and proved to be influential in the development and rise of rock-n-roll music.

In 1949, Harvey Fuqua and Bobby Lester attended high school together in Louisville, Kentucky; the two boys formed a singing duo during this time and played at various high schools and small area nightclubs around town. A year later, in 1950, they joined Ed Wiley's band and traveled throughout the South playing a wide range of blues tunes and broadening their musical skills from the experience. After the tour, Bobby stayed in Louisville and Harvey moved to Cleveland in search of a new musical experience.

While in Cleveland, Harvey formed the group "Crazy Sounds." The right mix for the group, however, would not be complete, until friend Bobby Lester arrived from Louisville to round out the perfect harmonizing sound

Harvey was looking for. Prentiss Barnes, bass; Alexander "Pete" Graves, second tenor; Bobby Lester, lead vocals and Harvey Fuqua, whose smooth vocals and propensity for writing romantic ballads, made up the fantastic foursome.

While performing in a Cleveland nightclub, popular disc jockey Alan Freed of radio station WJW, heard the group's unique R&B sound and immediately asked the group to take part in a recording session at the studio. Alan became the group's manager and suggested the band change its name to The Moonglows, which reflected "his" on air name, "Moondog." The first single release for The Moonglow's was on The Champagne Label, titled "I Just Can't Tell No Lie." Moving to the Chance Label, the Moonglow's released two original songs that would become Christmas standards: the rockin' "Hey Santa Claus," and the soulful blues ballad, "Just a Lonely Christmas."

The Moonglow's enjoyed regional success with a cover of Doris Day's, "Secret Love," and signed with Chess Records in 1955. The first single release on the Chess Label, "Sincerely," with Bobby Lester on lead vocals, sold 300,000 copies and claimed the number 1 spot on the Billboards R&B chart and reached the top 20 on the pop chart. Later, The McGuire Sisters covered "Sincerely" and took the song to number 1 on the pop charts and sold over 1 million copies of the record.

"Most of All", the follow-up to "Sincerely," written by Harvey Fuqua, with Bobby Lester on lead, was arguably the group's most beautiful masterpiece. Utilizing the four part "blow note" harmony made famous by the Moonglow's, this hit song remained on the R & B charts for 11 weeks and peaked at number 5.

In 1956, the band's popularity would lead to an appearance in the low budget movie, "Rock, Rock, Rock" with Chuck Berry and other leading acts promoting the new Rock-n-Roll sound.

The Moonglow's performed at the top venues across the country, including The Brooklyn Paramount, The Municipal Auditorium in Buffalo, the famed Apollo Theatre in Harlem and also made a guest appearance on Dick Clark's American Bandstand. Other hits for the group followed. "We go Together," "See Saw," "Please Send Me Someone to Love" and "Ten Commandments" all reached the Billboard top 10.

In 1958, the original Moonglow's disbanded. Fuqua formed a new group, Harvey and the The Moonglow's and added a young singer from the D.C. area named Marvin Gaye. The group enjoyed moderate success but their interest strayed to the burgeoning music industry being built in Michigan. Harvey Fuqua met and married Gwen Gordy, and Harvey introduced Marvin Gaye to Gwen's brother, Motown legend Berry Gordy.

Fuqua became a very successful producer and record executive and was hired at Motown to lead the label's Artist Development Department in the early 60's. In 1972, Bobby Lester, Harvey Fuqua and "Pete" Graves of the original "Moonglows" reunited and recorded again. They charted with a "funky" remake of "Sincerely" but the group did not last. The group came back together one last time for a live performance in Boston in January of 1979. Bobby Lester passed away from cancer the following year, in October of 1980.

The Moonglows were inducted into the UGHA Hall of Fame in 1992 and The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in March of 2000. Henry Fuqua, the last remaining member of the original Moonglows, passed away in July of 2010.

The Band's success as a 1950's R & B chart-topping group, their pioneering "blow note" harmony technique imitated by other bands for decades to follow and their early influence on the development of Rock & Roll music have truly made The Moonglows, American vocal legends!