

# THE BLACKBYRDS

**THE BLACKBYRDS** were formed in 1973 as part of the legendary jazz trumpeter Dr. Donald Byrd's brainchild to expose college students to the real world of music. In his own words to "*bridge the gap between academia and the real world.*" Byrd envisioned taking active students at Howard University in Washington, DC on a real world field trip which would expose them to ins and outs of the music business.

The name *The Blackbyrds* was derived from Byrd's most successful record **Blackbyrd**, which appeared on Blue Note Records and was produced by the duo of Fonce and Larry Mizell. Both Larry and Fonce, who were also Howard University alumni, produced the group's 2 recordings for Fantasy Records. Created in the back seat of Joe Porter's (attorney) car outside of Fantasy studios in Berkeley, California, The Blackbyrds were hatched. The creative minds behind this birthing were record producer Orrin Keepnews, label executive Ralph Kafeel, Donald Byrd and the band members Keith Killgo, Kevin Toney, Joe Hall, Allan Barnes, Barney Perry and Perk Jacobs. From that union, The Blackbyrds went on to create an everlasting musical style that combined Classical, Jazz, R&B, and Gospel which introduced musical terms such as crossover, urban contemporary and easy-listening to the music dictionary and at the same time introduced these young musicians as composers and singers. Furthermore, The Blackbyrds coined the phrase "Pedestrian Vocals", created by band member Keith Killgo's father Harry Killgo who had mentored Byrd when he frequented the D.C. jazz scene on weekends from his studies at Columbia University in New York City.

As the Blackbyrds progressed they began to refine their craft, creating hits like *Do It Fluid*, *Walking In Rhythm*, *Happy Music* and the iconic *Rock Creek Park*.

The Blackbyrds were reformed in 1999 by Keith Killgo and later recorded *Gotta Fly* in 2012 on K-Wes Indi Records. This was somewhat of a reunion gathering that included founding member Allan Barnes. Unfortunately, this was the last time they would have a chance to see and perform with Allan who transitioned on July 25, 2016. Currently, the band has toured Europe and headlined many festivals in the US. They recently filmed a live stream for the Prince George's County Parks and Recreation Center in Prince George's County Maryland, which aired worldwide on May 29, 2021.

The Blackbyrds current lineups of musicians are original members **Keith Killgo** and **Joe Hall**. Dave Robbins on keys who has also played and recorded with Roy Ayers and Rick James. Aspiring student Paul Spires on vocals, Thad Wilson on trumpet, Tom O'Grady from the UK on keys and trombone, and Charles Wright on guitar. Charles replaces original guitarists Barney Perry and Orville Saunders.

ALL SINGLES RELEASED ON THE FANTASY LABEL: Except \*

- Do It Fluid (1974) - R&B # 23, Pop #69
- Walking In Rhythm (1975) – R&B #4, Pop #6, Easy Listening # 5 UK #23
- Flyin’ High (1975) – R&B #22, Pop #70, Easy Listening #25
- Happy Music (1976) – R&B 3, Pop #19
- Rock Creek Park (1976) – R&B #37, Pop #93
- Time Is Movin (1977) – R&B #15, Pop #95
- Partyland (1977) – R&B 30
- Soft and Easy (1977) – R&B #30
- Supernatural Feeling (1978) – R&B #19
- What We Have Is Right – (1980) R&B #38
- Love Don’t Strike Twice – R&B #52
- Dancin’ Dancin (1981) – Dance #59
- \*Mysterious Vibes – (2003) UK #97 Zed Records
- \*Gotta Fly – (2012) Tower Japan #1 K-Wes Indi Records