

The Blackbyrds are a jazz-funk group with thick R&B streaks running down their backs. Assembled by Donald Byrd in 1973, the group's original members -- percussionist Pericles "Perk" Jacobs, Jr., drummer Keith Killgo, keyboardist Kevin Toney, reeds player Allan Barnes, bassist Joe Hall, guitarist Barney Perry -- were mined from Howard University's music department, where the doctor and jazz legend was an instructor. (Other key players included guitarist Orville Saunders and saxophonist/flautist Steve Johnson.)

During the peak of their success under the direction of Byrd, the group cut a number of Grammy nominated works featured on a series of LPs (1973's *The Blackbyrds*, 1974's *Flying Start*, 1975's *City Life*, 1976's *Unfinished Business*, 1977's *Action*, 1980's *Better Days*); scored films (1975's *Cornbread, Earl and Me*); and supported artists like B.B. King, Mandrill, and Roberta Flack. **"Walking in Rhythm," "Rock Creek Park," and "Happy Music"** are their three best-known cuts, winning them Grammy nominations and gold records. They re-emerged in 2012 under the leadership of Keith Killgo, and have been touring and performing globally since.