

THE ORIGINAL ORLONS

Fun filled dance tunes were the Orlons specialty, making them one of the most popular groups ever to come out of Philadelphia. The group was originally called Little Audrey and the Teenettes in the early 50's and it included Audrey, Jean and Shirley Brickley along with Rosetta Hightower and Marlena Davis. When Mama Brickley refused to let the youngest, Audrey, sing with the others in one of Philadelphia's small clubs, she and sister Jean quit the group.

Shirley, Rosetta and Marlena continued singing at Overbrook High School and where heard by the student Stephen Caldwell, who sang with a local unrecorded group called the Romeos. Stephen brought his baritone lead to the girls attention and soon turned the unnamed trio into a quartet. The girls subsequently followed in the footsteps of their Overbrook rivals the Cashmeres (who later became the famous Dovells) by calling themselves The Orlons.

They practiced at Shirley's house on songs like "Mama Said" (the Shirelles) and "Stormy Weather" (the Spaniels). They were also influenced by acts like the Chanel's, Ray Charles, and the Moonglows.

In the fall of 1961, thanks to an introduction made on their behalf by Len Barry, of the Dovells, the Orlons auditioned for Kal Mann of Cameo Records and were signed almost immediately Mann/Appell started writing songs for the group and decided to feature Rosetta (alto), with Shirley (alto), Marlena (soprano) and Stephen (baritone) supporting her.

Their first single was "I'll be True" which Billboard described as a "sincere piping by the young sounding female lead on a wistful rock-a-ballad about a gal's message to her GI sweetheart. Wax has a chance." It elicited little interest, dittos their early 1962 follow-up "Happy Birthday Mr. 21."

In the spring the Orlons moved in their own dance direction with "The Wah Watusi." On May 26th Billboard cited it as "a solid item for teen buyers. The group sells the rhythmic swinger with enthusiasm and drive, while the combo provides effective backing. Watch it! In July it danced to number two, with only Bobby Vinton's "Roses are Red" above it.

They followed with the Mann/Appell-penned "Don't Hang Up" which climbed the charts in the fall and winter of 1962 to number four POP, number three R&B, and number 39 in the United Kingdom.

The quartet kept up their chart barrage into 1963 with "South Street" (#3 POP, #4 R&B), "Not Me" (#12 POP, #8 R&B), and "Crossfire" (#19 POP, #25 R&B)

By 1964 their style was being swept aside by the British invasion, and three of their four releases that year only rose to the 60s on POP listings: ("Shimmy Shimmy" #66, "Rules of Love" #66 and "Knock Knock" #64). They recorded for Cameo through 1965 but couldn't break back into the charts. In 1966 they moved to Calla and in 1967 to ABC, but for a time, the British invasion had taken its toll.

Still, with nine charted records and three top five hits, the group was able to work right into the 70's, until Rosetta decided to move to England. Shirley died that same year.

Shirley passed away in 1977 and Marlena passed away in 1993. Rosetta's still lives in England. Before Marlena passed in 1993, she and Stephen regrouped in 1988 to continue to carry The Orlons into the 1990's. After Marlena passed, Stephen enlisted the help of Jean and Audrey Brickley. So then there were two members of the mother group and to make things even better, he got a first cousin of the Brickley's, Lillian Taylor to finish off the line up. This group completed the 1990's together.

The Orlons have employed many ladies to keep the sound of the group alive. Others in memoriam are Patricia Miller, Audrey Brickley and Alberta Crump, Stephen's cousin. Alberta's passing hit the group pretty hard.

Again, Stephen has had to regroup. This time he has enlisted the help of a lady who had worked with the Orlons in the past. So now we have Jean Brickley the return of Coco Muhammad with Stephen at the helm keeping the sound alive. Guitar player, Douglas Payne, also helps with vocals.

Article from the Magazine

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ORLONS

Cherokee High School, Marlton, New Jersey

22/11/03

by Larry Cotton

Abruptly, the re-formed Orlons are getting much media press, performing successful shows across scattered venues. The current line-up features original member, Stephen Caldwell, Jean Brickley - who was an Orlon even earlier, when the group were still at high school but not during their recording days - plus Alberta Crump and Madeline Morris, both first cousins of Caldwell's. Their harmonies sounded as sweet as grandmother's homemade sweet potato pie as they sang 'I'll Be True' and 'Happy Birthday Mr. 21'. They made you want to get up and dance with their hit recordings and polished performances of 'The Wah-Watusi', 'Spinning Top', 'Not Me' and 'Don't Hang Up'. Steve did an eminent job, singing lead on cover ballads, 'For Your Love' and 'Stormy Weather', out-doing himself on 'I'm On The Outside (Looking In)', bringing the audience out of their seats and up on their feet with a well-deserved standing ovation. They closed their headline show with 'South Street'.

THE ORIGINAL ORLONS™

VENUE PERFORMANCES SINCE 2010

2010

Clearlake, Iowa

New York Town Hall

Pittsburgh, PA – PBS Show

Mohagen Sun, Willsboro, PA

Hawaii

Lyons Park, Bristol, PA

Tropicana Casino, Atlantic City

Romada Inn, Plantation City, Florida

2011

Pittsburgh, PA

Kimmel Center, Philadelphia, PA

Rose Tree Park, Media, PA

Wildwood, New Jersey

Mohagen Sun, Casville, Connecticut

St. Petersburg, Florida

Holiday Inn, Pittsburgh, PA

Keswick Theater, Glenside, PA

2012 **Lowell, Mass.**
Brookville, New York
Hershey Park, Pennsylvania
South Hampton, New York
Pennsbury School, PA
Wildwood, New Jersey
Wheeling, WV

2013 **Louisiana Casino**
Rahway, New Jersey
East Rutherford, New Jersey
Keswick theater, Philadelphia, PA

UPCOMING VENUES:

8/17/13 **Rose Tree Park**

9/7 & 8/13 **Detroit**

10/26/13 **Boston, Doo Wop Hall of Fame Induction**

2013
