

Savoy Brown

Savoy Brown, originally known as the **Savoy Brown Blues Band**, are an English blues rock band formed in Battersea, south west London in 1965. Part of the late 1960s blues rock movement, Savoy Brown primarily achieved success in the United States, where they promoted their albums with non-stop touring.

Career

The band was formed by guitarist Kim Simmonds and harmonica player John O'Leary, following a chance meeting at Transat Imports record shop in Lisle Street, Soho, in 1965. The initial constant line-up adjustments were attributed to the "creative accountancy" employed by the band's manager, Harry Simmonds, brother of Kim.

The original line-up included singer Bryce Portius, keyboardist Trevor Jeavons, bassist Ray Chappell, drummer Leo Manning and harmonica player John O'Leary (O'Leary appeared on record with the band on its initial recordings for Mike Vernon's Purdah label). Portius was one of the first black blues musicians to be a part of a British rock band- Jeavons was replaced by Bob Hall shortly after the band's formation, and this was followed shortly by O'Leary's departure and the arrival of Martin Stone on guitars. This line-up appeared on the band's 1967 debut album, Shake Down, a collection of blues covers.

Further line-up changes ensued, with founding members Portius, Chappell and Manning departing along with recently recruited guitarist Stone over a short period of time. Chris Youlden and "Lonesome" Dave Peverett would become the band's new vocalist and 2nd guitarist respectively. Initially Bob Brunning and Hughie Flint (from John Mayall's Clapton-version Bluesbreakers) filled the bassist and drummer positions on the single *Taste and Try* (*Before You Buy*), but they were subsequently replaced by Rivers Jobe and Bill Bruford. Within a fortnight of Bruford's arrival in the band, he had been replaced by Roger Earl (Bruford went on to huge success later as Yes's drummer). This line-up recorded two albums in 1968, Getting to the Point, and Blue Matter, which demonstrated Youlden's rise as a songwriter alongside Simmonds. It was this line-up that released the single "Train to Nowhere" in 1969. A Step Further was released later that year, and introduced bassist Tony Stevens replacing Jobe. They developed a loyal core following in the United States, due to songs such as "I'm Tired," a driving, melodic song from the album.

Following the release of Raw Sienna (also released in 1969) both Youlden and Hall departed the band. Raw Sienna had marked the first time that a single line-up of the band had recorded successive albums without any changes in personnel. The band recorded their next album, 1970's Looking In, as a four-piece, and following this album Peverett, Stevens, and Earl left to form Foghat with guitarist Rod Price.

Simmonds continued the band with Dave Walker on vocals, Paul Raymond on keyboards and guitars, Andy Silvester on bass, and Dave Bidwell on drums – almost the complete Chicken Shack line up.

They were one of the bands that UK Decca (US London/Parrot) stuck with through the lean times until they started selling records; it took four or five albums until they started to sell in the US. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the band managed to break into the Billboard Hot 100. The 1971 release "Street Corner Talking" was probably one of their best yet undiscovered

albums. It included the songs "Tell Mama" and "Street Corner Talking", that have inspired many young guitarist^d Superstardom perpetually evaded them, though, perhaps in part because of their frequent line-up changes. Despite that their next album, *Hellbound Train* (1972) was a Top 40 album for them in the US. In January 1974, the British music magazine, *NME* reported that Stan Webb was joining Savoy Brown, following the break-up of Chicken Shack.

In 1978, Simmonds organised a new line up with bassist Don Cook and drummer Richard Carmichael. Cook, who toured as "DC from LA", is currently active in the americana band Gypsy Stew In the early 1980s, Simmonds organised the band with singer Ralph Morman, formerly of the Joe Perry Project, drummer Keith Boyce and guitarist Barry Paul of Heavy Metal Kids fame, and bassist John Humphrey. This line-up recorded the 1981 "Rock 'N' Roll Warriors" album, which gave Savoy Brown more success than the group had seen since the mid-1970s. The single Run To Me, which was a cover of a song originally recorded by Smokie, became Savoy's highest-charting single in the United States, peaking at number 69 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in November 1981. That year found the band performing several major arena shows in the US alongside Judas Priest, and recording a live album at the Rainbow Music Hall in Denver. "Greatest Hits-Live in Concert" was released at the end of the year. Despite the success of this line-up, Simmonds was once again on his own by the Spring of 1982.

Singer Dave Walker returned to the group in the late 1980s and recorded two studio albums and one live album as lead vocalist, but left the group for a second time in 1991. All three of these projects featuring Walker were well received by longtime fans- During the 1990s Simmonds continued working with various line-ups of the band, including a brief stint with future Molly Hatchet lead singer Phil McCormack.

While the band is still active, touring the world and recording regularly, only Simmonds has stayed since the beginning. Original member and harmonica player John O'Leary is still active on the British blues circuit with his band Sugarkane. After leaving Savoy Brown for the first time in the 1970s singer Dave Walker joined Fleetwood Mac for one album, and in 1979 became the temporary lead singer for Black Sabbath.^[5] Bassists have included: Andy Pyle, who played with Mick Abrahams from Jethro Tull in Blodwyn Pig, then later with The Kinks; John Humphrey, who would go on to work with many major artists, including Carole King; Gary Moore; and Andy Silvester, who played with Wha-Koo after Chicken Shack. Savoy Brown also provided an outlet for keyboardist and guitarist Paul Raymond, who later went on to join UFO. Drummer Keith Boyce reformed Heavy Metal Kids and is currently active with that group. Singer Ralph Morman disappeared from the scene in the mid-1980s until emerging in 2011 with plans for a solo project. Guitarist Barry Paul became a successful studio owner in Los Angeles. Singer Jimmy Kunes, who fronted the band during the mid-1980s, is currently the singer for the reformed supergroup Cactus.

Their first album for Blind Pig Records, *Strange Days*, was released in 2003. The band released another record, *Steel*, in 2007.

Their album, *Voodoo Moon*, was released by Ruf Records in 2011.

In 2015, billed as Kim Simmonds and Savoy Brown, their album, *The Devil to Pay*, reached number four on the US *Billboard* Top Blues Albums chart.