

The Black Crowes

The Black Crowes are an American, blues-oriented hard rock jam band that has sold over 20 million albums. They were hailed by *Melody Maker* as "The Most Rock 'n' Roll Rock 'n' Roll Band in the World". In 1990, the readers of *Rolling Stone* named it the 'Best New American Band'. The band has toured with acts such as Aerosmith, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, The Who, AC/DC, The Grateful Dead, and Neil Young. *The Crowes* - as fans refer to them - are listed at #92 on VH1's "100 Greatest Artists of Hard Rock".

The first incarnation of The Black Crowes began in 1984 as "Mr. Crowes Garden" in Atlanta, Georgia a revivalist band dedicated to celebrating and playing 1970s-era blues-rock. Although the Crowes have had many members over the years, the driving force behind the band has always been the brothers Chris & Rich Robinson. In 1989, the rockers, who have been heavily influenced by Led Zeppelin, Free, Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Rolling Stones, The Faces, The Band, Little Feat, Humble Pie, Creedence Clearwater Revival and Southern rock, made a demo cassette tape that got them signed with American Recordings.

The Crowes released their first studio album, *Shake Your Money Maker*, in 1990. On the strength of singles "Hard to Handle", "She Talks to Angels", "Jealous Again", "Twice as Hard", "Sister Luck", and "Seeing Things", their debut album received multi-platinum certification and eventually sold over three million copies. The band's cover of Otis Redding's "Hard to Handle" and their acoustic ballad "She Talks to Angels" both broke the Top 30 on the pop charts in 1991. The Black Crowes pumped up their sales by opening for ZZ Top on a tour sponsored by Miller Beer, from which they were fired in March 1991 after Chris Robinson sarcastically remarked about commercialism on stage. The Crowes launched their own tour that May and later took part in a *Monsters of Rock* tour in the Soviet Union.

After replacing guitarist Jeff Cease with Marc Ford from retro-rock power trio Burning Tree, the Crowes released their second album *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion* in 1992. The record debuted at #1 on Billboard's top 200 albums. The title is a tribute to the shape note anthology of the same name that has been sung annually at *The Big Singing* in Benton, Kentucky, since 1884. The effort spawned the singles "Remedy", "Thorn In

"My Pride", "Sting Me", "Sometimes Salvation" and "Hotel Illness". "Remedy" and "Thorn In My Pride" both broke the Top 100 in 1992.

Because of the prevalence of studio musician Chuck Leavell's piano and organ parts on the first release, the band recruited a keyboardist of their own, Eddie Harsch, to play on the album. He became a permanent member of the group beginning on the "High As the Moon" tour. The spelling of his last name is often listed as "Hawrysch."

In 1994 the now six-piece offered up *Amorica* after scrapping the unreleased album *Tall* the previous year. Though *Amorica* failed to produce a hit single, the album still eventually reached "Gold" status, selling over 500,000 copies. Die hard fans still embraced songs like "Gone", "A Conspiracy", "Nonfiction" and especially "Wiser Time". Controversially, the album cover featured a photo showing a woman's pubic hair. As some stores would not carry the album due to the cover, an alternate version was released simultaneously with a solid black background. While on tour to support *Amorica*, The Black Crowes opened for the Grateful Dead at a concert in Tampa on April 7, 1995, the only time the two bands performed together.