

= Wicked Lester =

Wicked Lester was a New York @-@ based rock and roll band that would later become known as Kiss . The band formed in 1970 , under the name Rainbow . Two notable members were bassist Gene Klein (born Chaim Witz) and rhythm guitarist Stanley Eisen , who later adopted the stage names Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley , respectively . In 1971 the band changed their name to Wicked Lester , and recorded an album for Epic Records , which was never officially released .

The sessions have been released in bootleg form as The Original Wicked Lester Sessions . Kiss officially released three tracks from these sessions on their 2001 Box Set release . Wicked Lester 's music featured elements of rock and roll , folk rock and pop . Simmons and Stanley , feeling that the group lacked a unifying musical vision , began forming a new band in late 1972 . Adopting a more straightforward , harder rock sound and an emphasis on stage theatrics , they became the band Kiss in early 1973 .

= = History = =

= = = Rainbow = = =

The origins of the band trace to 1970 , when bassist Gene Klein and keyboardist Brooke Ostrander recruited lead guitarist Stephen Coronel , a childhood friend and former bandmate of Klein . The group took the name Rainbow shortly thereafter . Coronel recommended rhythm guitarist Stanley Eisen , who had actually been rejected by the group after a previous audition . Shortly after Eisen joined , Ostrander recruited drummer Joe Davidson , and the first Rainbow lineup was completed . Davidson 's stay did not last long and he was replaced by Tony Zarrella .

In early 1971 , Rainbow played its first show , which consisted of two sets performed at Richmond Community College in Staten Island . After the show , the group discovered that there was already another band called Rainbow . They decided to drop the name , and came up with the name Wicked Lester , which Simmons liked because it was unusual . While the decision to change the group 's name came partly out of a desire to avoid any potential legal issues , it also reflected Klein and Eisen 's desire to start playing more original compositions .

= = = Crossroads = = =

During their brief existence , Wicked Lester performed in public twice . The first show took place at the Rivoli Theatre in South Fallsburg , New York on April 23 , 1971 . The second , in late summer 1971 , was at an Atlantic City , New Jersey hotel hosting a B 'nai B 'rith Youth Organization event . Not long after that show , the band suffered a major setback when they had all of their musical gear stolen . After a chance meeting with Electric Lady Studios engineer Ron Johnsen , Wicked Lester was given the opportunity to record some demos in late 1971 . Johnsen , who produced the demo tape , shopped it to a few labels , with no success . Eventually the tape was screened by Epic Records , who purchased the masters and agreed to fund the recording of a full album . One of the conditions , however , was that Stephen Coronel be fired and replaced with a better guitarist .

Coronel was replaced by session musician Ron Leejack , and the group continued their efforts to finish the album . Some songs were completely re @-@ recorded to accommodate Leejack 's different playing style . The entire recording process , which followed a haphazard schedule , took nearly a year to complete . When the completed album was presented to Don Ellis , Epic 's A & R director , he stated that he hated the album and was not going to release it . The next day , Wicked Lester manager Lew Linet requested and received the group 's release from Epic Records .

= = = Kiss = = =

At this time , Klein and Eisen , now using the stage names Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley ,

decided that one of the reasons for Wicked Lester 's lack of success was their lack of a singular image and musical vision . They made the decision to move forward and start a new band . Wicked Lester began auditioning for a drummer in late 1972 . Soon after , Tony Zarrella left the group . Ostrander , feeling that the band was going nowhere , quit . He went on to teach music at Missisquoi Valley Union High School in Swanton , Vermont . Ostrander died on September 3 , 2011 from cancer . For a short time , Ron Leejack continued on with the new version of Wicked Lester .

Whereas Wicked Lester 's original sound was rooted in varied musical styles , including folk and pop , when Simmons and Stanley decided to recruit new members , they made the decision to focus on a more aggressive and simple style of rock and roll . The first new member they added was drummer Peter Criss , who had placed an ad in Rolling Stone . The ad stated , " EXPD . ROCK & roll drummer looking for orig. grp. doing soft & hard music . Peter , Brooklyn . " The new Wicked Lester , without a recording contract , began a strict and regular regimen of rehearsals .

In November 1972 , the group arranged a showcase with Don Ellis , the Epic Records executive who earlier had rejected Wicked Lester 's album . While one Epic executive , Tom Werman , was impressed by the power and theatrics of this new incarnation of Wicked Lester , Ellis once again turned them down . As Ellis was leaving , Peter Criss 's brother , who was drunk , vomited on his foot . In early December , Paul Stanley placed an ad in The Village Voice stating , " LEAD GUITARIST WANTED with Flash and Ability . Album Out Shortly . No time wasters please . " The ad ran for two issues , December 7 and December 14 , 1972 , leading to several audition sessions . One audition was by Paul " Ace " Frehley who showed up wearing different @-@ colored shoes , walked into the room without saying a word , hooked up his guitar and started playing . Frehley was asked back for a second audition and was a member of the band by Christmas 1972 . Within a few weeks , the group changed its name to Kiss and played their first concert on January 30 , 1973 .

= = Unreleased album = =

The recording of Wicked Lester 's album , which began in November 1971 at Electric Lady Studios in Greenwich Village , took place over multiple sessions and was finished in July 1972 . The album was a mixture of original material and covers , showcasing the group 's eclectic style . Three of the songs recorded for the Wicked Lester album would later resurface as Kiss songs , with varying degrees of similarity .

The chorus of their cover version of The Hollies ' " I Wanna Shout " would serve as the inspiration for " Shout It Out Loud " from 1976 's Destroyer , although the two songs otherwise bear little similarity . Two of the tracks , " Love Her All I Can " , written by Paul Stanley , and " She " , written by Simmons and Steve Coronel would resurface on 1975 's Dressed to Kill . " Love Her All I Can " featured similar arrangements in both versions while the Kiss version of " She " lacked the congas and flute of the original .

The only part of Wicked Lester 's album to initially be released was the cover art , which was used for The Laughing Dogs ' self @-@ titled debut album in 1979 . CBS Records , who owned the rights to the album , remixed it and planned to release it in late 1976 to capitalize on Kiss 's popularity at the time . Kiss and Neil Bogart , the president of their label , Casablanca Records , purchased the master tapes from CBS for \$ 137 @, @ 500 and never released it . The label and band feared that if CBS released the tracks it would diminish their commercial appeal . The band worried that their hard rock image would be damaged by these more eclectic recordings . It was also feared that the release would be accompanied by pictures of Simmons and Stanley without their trademark makeup ; Kiss had yet to officially unmask themselves at the time . In later years the album surfaced as a bootleg named The Original Wicked Lester Sessions . The band bought Bogart 's share and eventually released three of the tracks , " Keep Me Waiting , " " She , " and " Love Her All I Can " , in 2001 as part of a five @-@ disc box set .

Track @-@ list :

- 01 " Love Her All I Can " (2 : 28) Stanley
- 02 " Sweet Ophelia " (2 : 56) Barry Mann / Gerry Goffin
- 03 " Keep Me Waiting " (3 : 04) Stanley

04 " Simple Type " (2 : 33) Simmons
05 " She " (2 : 54) Coronel / Simmons
06 " Too Many Mondays " (3 : 27) Barry Mann / Cynthia Weil
07 " What Happens In the Darkness " (2 : 59) Tamy Lester Smith
08 " When The Bell Rings " (3 : 11) Austin Roberts / Christopher Welch
09 " Molly " (aka " Some Other Guy ") (2 : 23) Stanley
10 " We Want To Shout It Out Loud " (2 : 04) The Hollies
The band also recorded a song called " Long , Long Road " that might have made it onto the album
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= = Members = =

Paul Stanley ? rhythm guitar , vocals (1970 ? 1973)
Gene Simmons ? bass , vocals (1970 ? 1973)
Brooke Ostrander ? keyboards (1970 ? 1972 ; died 2011)
Stephen Coronel ? lead guitar (1970 ? 1971)
Joe Davidson ? drums (1970)
Tony Zarrella ? drums (1970 ? 1972)
Ron Leejack ? lead guitar (1971 ? 1972)
Peter Criss ? drums (1972 ? 1973)
Ace Frehley ? lead guitar (1972 ? 1973)

= = Timeline = =