

The Gourds – Bio

By the early nineties Kevin Russell [born Beaumont, Tex. c. 1967], Jimmy Smith [born Dallas, Tx. c. 1968] and Claude Bernard [born Shreveport, La. c. 1973] were all living in Austin, Texas. Along with local doctor and musician Ron Byrd, they formed The Grackles and played the local clubs for about a year. A few years earlier, while living in Dallas, Russell and Smith had played in the final version of The Picket Line Coyotes. Back in the late eighties Russell lived in Shreveport, where Robert Bernard, Claude's older brother, played in an early version of the Coyotes. When The Grackles split up, Smith and Bernard worked for a time as a duo, Old Government. Meantime, Russell stayed home and wrote songs, but when Smith and Bernard recruited a drummer by the name of Charlie Llewellyn [born Chepstow, Wales, UK c. 1964], The Gourds evolved and Russell joined the fold.

Instrumentally and vocally, the line-up of The Gourds on their debut recording **“Dem's Good Beeble”** amounted to Russell (vocals, guitar, mandolin) [also see separate Folkwax Biography], Smith (vocals, bass, guitar), Bernard (accordion) and Llewellyn (drums). Russell and Smith penned the material on the album, individually. Russell's song publisher went by the curious name of Krakatowa McDinglefury, while Smith's efforts were credited to Slosinger-Redbury Productions. As for the band's sound, it was a rootsy mix that recalled the sounds of The Band, Hank Williams Sr., Credence Clearwater Revival and countless others, while it is practically impossible to describe [or analyse] the *image filled, strange combinations of words* that Kevin and Jimmy weld together as lyrics. From the outset Mike Stewart produced their albums, sometimes in collaboration with the band. The first three recordings were made at Laurel's Ranch near Comfort, Texas which is owned by Russell's in-laws.

Having completed work on the album **“Stadium Blitz,”** Charlie departed in 1997 to be replaced by Russell's brother-in-law, Keith Langford [born San Antonio, Tx. c. 1969]. Langford had previously been a member of two Austin bands, Damnations. Tx and Prescott Curleywolf. The *mini* album, **“gogitchyershinebox,”** was a mix of a handful of live recordings made during their appearance on VPRO Holland's “Rumble” radio show in May 1998. The three studio tracks were cut in Austin at Arlyn Studios. By the time **“Ghosts Of Hallelujah”** was released, The Gourds had become a quintet with the addition of Max Johnson (fiddle, dobro, banjo). Johnson [born Dallas, Tx. c. 1969], Michelle Shocked's brother, had formerly been a member of the alt. country bands Uncle Tupelo and Wilco. Following Johnson's arrival the band's line-up stabilised, and they have released a couple of more studio albums **“Bolsa de Agua”** and **“Cow Fish Fowl Or Pig,”** and reissued **“gogitchyershinebox”** as **“Shinebox”** with the addition of five new tracks. Employing the *nom de plume*, Clocker Redbury and Dusty Slosinger, Smith released a self-titled album in 2000 and followed it up with **“Cold War's Hot Water Shower”** [2002], while Russell entered the fray in early 2002 with the intriguingly titled **“Buttermilk & Rifles”** credited to Kevin Russell's Junker.

Discography : **“Dem's Good Beeble”** [1996]; **“Stadium Blitz”** [1998]; **“gogitchyershinebox”** [1998]; **“Ghosts Of Hallelujah”** [1999]; **“Bolsa de Agua”** [2000]; **“shinebox”** extended version [2001] ; **“Cow Fish Fowl Or Pig”** [2002] :

Arthur Wood

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