



Supporting Elvis: back-up bands and singers


Bands and Individual singers	Timeline	Back-up singers (groups)
	1954	
	1955	
Ben Speer; Brock Speer; Gordon Stoker	1956	1956 The Ken Darby Trio
1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1957	1956-1970 The Jordannaies
1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham; Kitty White	1958	
1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1959	
Charlie Hodge; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1960	
Charlie Hodge; Jacqueline (Jackie) Allen; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham; Dorothy McCarthy; Loulie Jean Norman; Virginia Rees	1961	1961 The Surfers
1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1962	The Amigos
Joe Babcock; Dolores Edgin; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1963	1956-1970 The Jordanaies 1963-1964 The Jubilee Four 1962-1965 The Mello Men
Charlie Hodge; Dolores Edgin; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1964	1963-1964 The Carole Lombard Quartet/Trio 1956-1970 The Jordanaies 1963-1964 The Jubilee Four 1962-1965 The Mello Men
Charlie Hodge; Dolores Edgin; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham	1965	1956-1970 The Jordanaies 1962-1965 The Mello Men
Charlie Hodge; Larry Bunker; Dolores Edgin; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham; June Page	1966	1966-1971 The Imperials Quartet
Charlie Hodge; Dolores Edgin; Priscilla Hubbard; 1957-1975 Millie Kirkham; June Page	1967	1968 The Blossoms 1956-1970 The Jordanaies
Charlie Hodge; Dolores Edgin; 1957 – 1975 Millie Kirkham; June Page	1968	
TCB Band; Bobby Morris conducted a 30 strong orchestra till the August / September 1970 engagement, when Joe Guercio and his orchestra took up a permanent place in the lineup; Charlie Hodge; 1966-1977 June Page; Sandy Posey 1969 Mary Greene; Ronnie Milsap; Donna Thatcher 1969-1971 Sonja Montgomery 1969-1973 Jeannie Green; Susan Pilkington 1969-1975 Ginger Holladay; Mary Holladay 1969-1976 Hurshel Wiginton 1970 James Glazer 1957-1975 Millie Kirkham 1976 Myrna Smith; Wendellyn Suits 1970-1977 Temple Riser; Kathy Westmoreland 1975-1977 Lea Jane Berinati 1963-1976 Dolores Edgin 1975-1977 Sherrill Nielsen 1977 Janie Fricke	1969	1969-1977 Sweet inspirations worked with Elvis in Vegas, on his national concert tours and on recordings
	1970	
	1971	1970-1971 The Nashville Edition
	1972	
	1973	
	1974	1956-1970 The Jordanaies
	1975	1969-1971 The Imperials Quartet 1971-1977 The Stamps Quartet/Voice by Elvis
	1976	
	1977	

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Fact sheet

Name	Picture	Facts
Sweet inspirations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founded by 'Cissy' Houston (related to Whitney Houston and Dionne Warwick) • Sylvia Shemwell, Cissy Houston, Myrna Smith and Estelle Brown. From August 1970, Ann Williams replaced Cissy Houston • Worked also as session singers with artists as diverse as Aretha Franklin (Chain of Fools), Dusty Springfield (Son of a Preacher Man), Van Morrison (Brown Eyed Girl) and Jimi Hendrix (Burning of the Midnight Lamp) • <i>Sweet Inspiration</i> became a monster hit (top 5 R&B, top 20 Pop) in early 1968. This is what brought them to Elvis' attention <p>https://youtu.be/OKQ2Ayf0nN4?si=RzArUi6ZSd5Yqb-1</p>
TCB Band		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Burton (lead guitar), Larry Muhoberac (piano), Jerry Scheff (bass), Ronnie Tutt (drums) and John Wilkinson (rhythm guitar) • <i>“A trick-question maybe: RCA had a marketing campaign titled 'Elvis - Artist of the Century'. Who, in your honest opinion, is the artist of the century? Artist is a word that encompasses a broad spectrum, and I don't think it's fair to say 'Artist of the Century'. What about for example Pablo Picasso? He's also an artist. But if you say 'Entertainer of the Century', I think that Elvis is right up there. I think there are two singers that communicated more directly from the heart than anybody else, and that's Frank Sinatra and Elvis. When Elvis sang a song, you just KNEW that the song was going through his mind. It wasn't just coming out of his mouth, but it was going through his mind, and affected his emotions when he sang. So many singers sing a song, and they're thinking about the way they're going to sing - the projection, the phrasing and so forth. When Elvis sang a song, it was just going through him, and it came out to the people that way. He was probably better at that than anybody that ever lived.”</i> <p>Interview with Jerry Scheff, conducted in Denmark 1999 by Arjan Deelen</p>

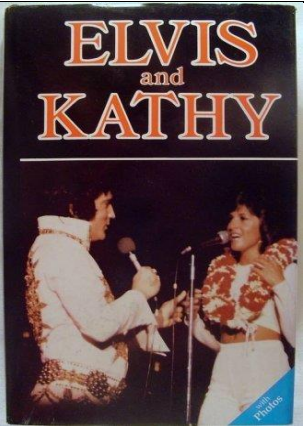

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<p>The Imperials Quartet</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jake Hess, Jim Murray, Gary McSpadden, Armond Morales • During their nearly 40-year history, the Imperials have released an average of an album a year, had 14 of their songs hit number one, and earned four Grammys and 13 Dove Awards • The group recorded with Elvis his two Grammy Award-winning albums: <i>How Great Thou Art</i> (featuring a duet with Hess on the classic Statesmen song "If the Lord Wasn't Walking By My Side") and <i>He Touched Me</i>
<p>JD Sumner and The Stamps Quartet (later "Voice by Elvis")</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ed Enoch (lead) (J.D.'s son-in-law); Ed Hill (baritone); Larry Strickland; Donnie Sumner (lead) (J.D.'s nephew); Bill Baize; Buck Buckles; Richard Sterban (bass); Ed Wideman (bass); Pat Brown (first tenor); Dave Roland (baritone) (Dave later was part of the country group) • When he was a teenager, Elvis met J.D. Sumner while J.D. was singing with the Sunshine Boys in Memphis. J.D. would let Elvis in backstage to meet the gospel groups. • In 1972, after losing both the Jordanaires and the Imperial Quartet, Elvis asked J.D. and his group, the Stamps Quartet, to back him both on stage and in the studio. They were performing with Elvis live by at least February of 1972, when recordings were made of Elvis' Vegas show. Their first session together in the studio was in March of that year and produced "Burning Love", "Always On My Mind", and "Separate Ways", among others. These last two songs were filmed for <i>Elvis On Tour</i>. The Stamps can be seen throughout the film. • In January 1974, Dave Rowland replaced Donnie Sumner in The Stamps Quartet and a new group was formed and named, Voice by Elvis. Others to appear in the 'Stamps Quartet' line up (From 1976) were: Ron Booth, Pat Brown and Buck Buckles, with Buck Buckles staying until the final tour in 1977. • Voice was a hand picked group consisting of three members; Donnie Sumner, Sherrill Nielson, Tim Baty (Who wrote Thinking About You). For the March 1974 tour Swede Per-Erik Hallin replaced Sherrill Nielson.




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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Elvis' death, the Stamps released the tribute albums <i>Elvis' Favorite Gospel Songs</i> and <i>Memories of Our Friend Elvis</i>. • J.D. Sumner released a tribute single called "Elvis Has Left the Building". After J.D.'s death in 1998, the members of the Stamps formed Ed Enoch & The Golden Covenant.
Charlie Hodge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elvis' close friend (and Memphis Mafia member), Charlie sang harmony with Elvis on stage and in the studio all the years they were together. • Although they met in 1956, they became good friends in the army in 1958. On the way to Germany aboard the <i>USS Randall</i>, they sang a duet of "I Will Be Home Again", which they recorded together when they got back in 1960. • Charlie continued to sing and play rhythm guitar for Elvis throughout his career, both in the studio and on stage. He also had bit roles in several of Elvis' films during the '60's.
Millie Kirkham		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backed Elvis on various recordings for almost his entire career. Her initial appearance was on the sessions that produced <i>Elvis' Christmas Album</i> in 1957. Yes, she's that voice in the background on "Blue Christmas". • She can be heard prominently on others like "Give Me the Right" and "Angel". • She was with Elvis on stage during his comeback period of the late '60's and both on stage and in the studio up to 1971. • She can also be seen in <i>Elvis: That's The Way It Is</i>. • In March of 1975, she recorded with Elvis one last time for his <i>Today</i> album.
Kathy Westmoreland		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Elvis' introductions on stage, he always singled her out, saying something like "the beautiful little girl who does the high-voiced singing". • Kathy explains her & Elvis' love life How long it took Elvis to warm up https://youtu.be/xglr69sXt-k?si=6_Au-XF16EN2wdn • Kathy Talks About Elvis https://youtu.be/gFA-K-GNIKI?si=mIxnLe0KDm0lkrPj


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		 <p>• by Kathy Westmoreland (Author), William G. Quinn (Author) https://www.elvisinfonet.com/bookreview_susan_westmoreland.html</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• She sang this song at his funeral: https://youtu.be/wnMBxGL2RwE?si=2QNLXGPVfi21z3BR
The Amigos		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jose Vadiz; Miguel Alcaide; Felix Melendes; Pedro Berrios; German Vega• The Amigos backed Elvis on "We'll Be Together" from <i>Girls! Girls! Girls!</i>, in March of 1962, and their version of "Mama", without Elvis, was featured in the film briefly. They backed Elvis again on the <i>Fun In Acapulco</i> soundtrack, in January and February of 1963.

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<p>The Blossoms</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darlene Love; Jean King; Fanita James • Backed Elvis for his NBC-TV special "Elvis" (the "comeback" special). • Darlene does the duet with Elvis on "Let Yourself Go", in the video version of the song (the CD version is just Elvis). Darlene also sings lead on "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" with the others backing her, as part of the Gospel Medley. • The Blossoms also sang at the sessions for <i>The Trouble With Girls</i>, at least on "Swing Down Sweet Chariot". • They appeared briefly in Elvis' last feature film, <i>Change of Habit</i> (1970), as Elvis' neighbors.
<p>The Carole Lombard Quartet/Trio</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carole Lombard; Gwen Johnson; Jackie Ward; Marjorie Cranford (quartet only) • As a quartet, they backed Elvis on his recording of "What'd I Say", from <i>Viva Las Vegas</i>, in July 1963, and as a trio, sang on the <i>Girl Happy</i> soundtrack session a year later in July 1964.
<p>The Jordanaires</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Stoker (first tenor); Neal Matthews (second tenor); Hoyt Hawkins (baritone); Hugh Jarrett (bass) (up to June 1958); Ray Walker (bass) (from June 1958 on) • Probably the group most often associated with Elvis, the Jordanaires appeared on almost all Elvis' recordings from July 1956 through September 1970. They had previously backed Hank Snow, among others, having sung at the Grand Ole Opry for many years. • In Memphis at the Cotton Carnival in early 1954, Elvis met the Jordanaires backstage and told them, "If I ever cut a record, I want to use you guys singing background with me." • Their first session with Elvis took place on July 2, 1956, and produced the double-sided hit record "Don't Be Cruel" / "Hound Dog" which would be Elvis' biggest selling single of all-time.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their last sessions with Elvis were the marathon recording dates of June 4 - 8, 1970, which yielded 34 songs, and a follow-up session on September 22 producing only 4 cuts. These sessions produced the albums <i>That's The Way It Is</i>, <i>Elvis Country</i>, and <i>Love Letters</i>, along with a few leftovers!• The Jordanaires can be seen in a few of Elvis' films, most notably in <i>Loving You</i>, in the final number on stage, and in <i>G.I. Blues</i>, during the song, "Frankfort Special".• After Elvis' death, they released a tribute album, <i>The Jordanaires Sing Elvis's Gospel Favorites</i>.
The Jubilee Four		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bill Johnson; Georgie "Biggie" McFadden; Jimmy Adam; Ted Brooks• In July of 1963, this quartet took part in the <i>Viva Las Vegas</i> sessions.• George McFadden of the group sang the lead vocal on "The Climb", with Elvis and the Jordanaires singing backup. In the film itself, George and the Jubilee Four lip-sync the song in that great dance scene!• Also, the group, along with the Carole Lombard Trio, backed Elvis on "What'd I Say".• The quartet also backed Elvis on the soundtrack recording session for the film, <i>Girl Happy</i>, which took place in June and July of 1964.

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The Ken Darby Trio




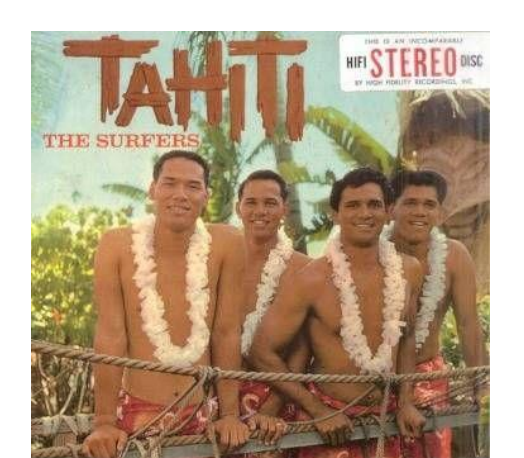
- Chuck Prescott; John Dodson; Rad Robinson
- Ken Darby was the musical director for *Love Me Tender*, Elvis' first film. The Ken Darby Trio backed Elvis on the four soundtrack songs, including the hit title song.

The Mello Men



- Thurl Ravenscroft – bass; Max Smith - tenor (retired in 1966, replaced by Gene Merlino); Gene Merlino - tenor (1966 - 1972?); Bill Lee – baritone; Bob Hamlin - lead tenor (until 1955, left the group); Bob Stevens - lead tenor (1955 - 1961, Bob died in 1961 and was replaced by Bill Cole); Bill Cole - lead tenor (1962 - 1972?)
- This group backed up Elvis on the soundtrack session for *It Happened At The World's Fair* in October 1962. They can also be seen in the film, during the performance of "One Broken Heart For Sale".
- They also provided backing on the title song to the film *Roustabout*, recorded in March 1964, as well as the entire session for the soundtrack of *Paradise Hawaiian Style*, in July and August of 1965.
- They also appeared as the gospel quartet in *The Trouble with Girls*, and provided the singing voices for the college boys in other scenes

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<p>The Nashville Edition</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dolores Edgin; June Page; Hurshel Wiginton; Joe Babcock• This vocal group consisted of people who sang with Elvis individually on different recordings.• As The Nashville Edition, they accompanied Elvis during the recording sessions of March 15 and June 4 - 8, 1970, and March 15, 1971.
<p>The Surfers</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bernard Ching; Patrick Sylva; Clayton Naluai; Alan Naluai• Led by brothers Clay and Alan Naluai, The Surfers were popularizing Hawaiian music long before Don Ho! They were a natural choice to sing backup on the soundtrack recordings for <i>Blue Hawaii</i>, March 21 - 23, 1961.

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Individual Backup Singers

Jacqueline (Jackie) Allen	Soprano - Part of a female backing group, along with Dorothy McCarthy, Loulie Jean Norman, and Virginia Rees, that backed Elvis on the song, "Moonlight Swim", from the Blue Hawaii soundtrack session, on March 22, 1961. As far as I know, this is the only time this group sang with Elvis. Jackie was a studio singer and frequent voice double and chorus singer in MGM musicals of the 50s.
Ben Speer	For Elvis' first sessions with RCA, Chet Atkins wanted the Speer Family to back up Elvis, but he could only get Ben and Brock at the time. Along with Jordanaire Gordon Stoker, they backed Elvis on "Heartbreak Hotel" and "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You", among others.
Brock Speer	See "Ben Speer" above.
Dolores Edgin	Sang backup with Elvis beginning on the session for the <i>Kissin' Cousins</i> soundtrack in September 1963, and ending with Graceland recordings in February 1976. Also see the Nashville Edition above.
Donna Thatcher	Sang backup for the January and February 1969 American Studios sessions in Memphis.
Dorothy McCarthy	Part of a female backing group, along with Jacqueline (Jackie) Allen, Loulie Jean Norman, and Virginia Rees, that backed Elvis on the song, "Moonlight Swim", from the <i>Blue Hawaii</i> soundtrack session, on March 22, 1961. Studio and backup singer, sang in the chorus in countless films starting in the mid-40s.
Ginger Holladay	Ginger's association with Elvis spanned the period from the August '69 comeback in Vegas to the <i>Today</i> sessions of March 1975.
Gordon Stoker	See "Ben Speer" above
Hurshel Wiginton	Besides the sessions as a member of the Nashville Edition, he also backed up Elvis on several recordings starting with the American Studios sessions of February 1969, and ending with the Graceland sessions of February 1976.
James Glazer	Sang on the live recordings of February 1970 in Las Vegas.
Janie Fricke	Before becoming a Country & Western star, she sang backup as one of The Lea Jane Berinati Singers on Elvis' last tour and on the TV special, <i>Elvis In Concert</i> .
Jeannie Green	Sang with Elvis during his comeback live engagement in Vegas, August 1969, and her last session was in Stax studios in December of 1973.
Joe Babcock	Sang with Elvis on the May 26/27, 1963 session that would later become known as "The Lost Album". Joe later sang with Elvis as The Nashville Edition.

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June Page	Her first session with Elvis was the <i>How Great Thou Art</i> album in May of 1966. She backed him up on various recordings, both in the studio and on stage, through to the June 1971 sessions.
Kitty White	Provided the female voice on the song "Crawfish" from <i>King Creole</i> .
Larry Bunker	Sang backup on the song "She's A Machine", recorded for the <i>Easy Come, Easy Go</i> soundtrack, but not used in the film.
Lea Jane Berinati	Worked with Elvis on the March 10/13, 1975 sessions (the <i>Today</i> album), as well as the 1977 CBS special, <i>Elvis In Concert</i> . For this special, credit is given to "The Lea Jane Berinati Singers", but no members are known other than Janie Fricke.
Loulie Jean Norman	Soprano - Part of a female backing group, along with Jacqueline (Jackie) Allen, Dorothy McCarthy, and Virginia Rees, that backed Elvis on the song, "Moonlight Swim", from the <i>Blue Hawaii</i> soundtrack session, on March 22, 1961. A soprano who started out with the Mel Tones in the 40s, sang in the chorus in numerous movies, also voice double for Diahann Carroll in <i>Porgy and Bess</i> (1959), for Juliet Prowse in <i>G.I. Blues</i> (1960), Stella Stevens in <i>Too Late Blues</i> (1961). Famous for singing the <i>Star Trek</i> theme. Recorded extensively as studio singer.
Mary Greene	Provided vocals for Elvis during the January & February 1969 sessions in Memphis.
Mary Holladay	Mary sang with Elvis in the studio sessions of January & February 1969, and her last session was in March 1975 for the <i>Today</i> album.
Myrna Smith	One of the Sweet Inspirations (see above), Myrna also backed Elvis up during his 1976 Graceland recordings, both in February of that year, and in the October/November sessions.
Priscilla Hubbard	Overdubbed vocals on "Confidence", for the soundtrack of <i>Clambake</i> in February 1967.
Ronnie Milsap	Besides playing piano for Elvis' January 1969 sessions in the American Studios in Memphis, Ronnie also provided a backup vocal, overdubbed later, for the recording of Elvis' hit "Kentucky Rain". Elvis recorded it on February 19th, but Ronnie's vocals were overdubbed in March or May of that year.
Sandy Posey	Sang backup for Elvis in the studio for the <i>How Great Thou Art</i> sessions and the American Studios January 1969 sessions. She sang live with Elvis in August 1969, and in February 1970.
Sherrill Nielsen	Sang with both the Imperials and Voice (see above), and in 1975 began backing Elvis on stage, often as a "guest lead vocal", like on "O Sole Mio / It's Now Or Never", and "Softly As I Leave You". He was also present at Elvis' last Graceland recording sessions (October 29-November 1, 1976).
Sonja Montgomery	Sang backup on studio recordings from the February 1969 sessions up to the June 1971 sessions for his gospel album, <i>He Touched Me</i> .

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Susan Pilkington	Provided backup vocals for the American Studios sessions of January & February 1969, as well as the Stax Studios sessions of December 1973.
Temple Riser	Sang on the marathon June 1970 sessions, as well as the March and May 1971 sessions. She performed a duet with Elvis on "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" from the March 15th session.
Virginia Rees	AltoPart of a female backing group, along with Jacqueline (Jackie) Allen, Dorothy McCarthy, and Loulie Jean Norman, that backed Elvis on the song, "Moonlight Swim", from the Blue Hawaii soundtrack session, on March 22, 1961. Mainly worked as ghost-singer for actresses like Lucille Ball (1946), Angela Lansbury (1946), Vera Ralston (1953-55), Adele Jergens (1949-50) and even Marlene Dietrich (1942)! Also part of the Merry Macs during the 50s. Frequent back-up singer.
Wendellyn Suits	Provided vocals for Elvis' Graceland recording sessions of February 28, 1976.

Source: <https://elvisfaq.greggers.net/baksingr.htm>