

THE DAKOTAS



The Dakotas were formed in Manchester in 1960, where they quickly gained a reputation as one of the most professional groups in the area.

They were also one of the earliest of the Manchester bands to appear at the legendary Cavern Club in Liverpool.

In 1962, at the suggestion of Paul McCartney and John Lennon, Brian Epstein teamed the band up with Billy J Kramer and they were signed up to EMI's Parlophone label. Their first hit was a Lennon/McCartney song, "Do You Want to Know a Secret". It reached No.2 in spring 1963.

Other Lennon/McCartney hits quickly followed: "Bad To Me" made the No.1 spot, then "I'll Keep You Satisfied" and "From a Window" both went into the Top 10.

"Little Children" gave the band a second No.1 in the spring of 1964.

Later that year, both "Bad To me" and "Little Children" reached the American Top 10, prompting the group to visit the USA, playing sell-out shows to frenzied fans of the "British Invasion" sound.

The Dakotas and Billy each had separate recording contracts with EMI, being billed as "**Billy J Kramer with the Dakotas**".

The group also recorded guitar instrumentals such as the "Cruel Sea", written by lead guitarist Mike Maxfield. It reached the Top 20 in September 1963. The Dakotas and Billy J Kramer's last Top 20 chart entry was "Trains and Boats and Planes" in 1965. Following the death of manager Brian Epstein in 1967, the British Invasion phenomenon had waned and by 1968, the Dakotas disbanded.

In 1989 The Dakotas reformed, with original guitarist **Mike Maxfield** & drummer **Tony Mansfield**. Mike, along with new bass player/vocalist Eddie Mooney, invited **Toni Baker** to join the band on keyboards. This new version of The Dakotas reunited with Billy J Kramer and toured the UK in 1999. Tony Mansfield left to concentrate on his financial career, and long time friend **Pete Hilton** was drafted in to take over the percussion seat.

In 2003 The Dakotas were associated with yet another number one hit! Peter Kay's "**Phoenix Nights**" TV Show. The band played all the music, and the theme tune was written by Toni Baker. The Dakotas appeared on the 2004 Solid Silver 60s tour, and later in that same year had a cameo role in the Peter Kay TV series, "**Max and Paddy's Road to Nowhere**". All the original music was again written by Peter Kay & Toni Baker.

Sadly in 2004, founder member Mike Maxfield was forced to retire from live performing for health reasons, although he is still involved behind the scenes.

Alan Clare, who had worked before with Pete and Toni became the new lead guitarist. Eddie left The Dakotas in January 2008 to join The Fortunes after their singer Rod Allen sadly passed away. Paul Rafferty became the new singer/bass player but he too was to leave the band for health reasons.

Marius Jones joined the band on bass in October 2010. He was already well known to Pete, Alan & Toni, so was an obvious choice when it came to choosing the right man for the job.

Ronnie Ravey too had been known to The Dakotas for many years as a professional singer/frontman and so when they decided to become a 5 piece outfit in November 2010, Ronnie was the perfect man to front the band.

The Dakotas are:

Toni Baker - keyboards/vocals.
Pete Hilton - drums/percussion.
Alan Clare - lead guitar/vocals.
Marius Jones - bass guitar/vocals.
Ronnie Ravey - lead vocals.

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