

## **Wildcats Rock!**

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In this day of mp3, iTunes, YouTube, streaming, downloading, expensive, live concerts, CDs, it is intriguing to hear about performers who have rocked K-Staters since 1960. Current students may be



**Def Leppard Concert**

too young to recognize the names of many music stars who entertained the Wildcats during the earlier decades, even though they might recognize their hits. The performers in Ahearn Field House, McCain Auditorium, Bramlage Coliseum, and outdoors were often the biggest and baddest names of time! Bramlage has seen its share of rock stars, the Beach Boys played that facility's first concert in 1988, Queensryche in 1991, and Jason Durelo performed in 2011, for example. However, the list pales in comparison with Ahearn Field House in previous decades when it comes to the number

of concerts. So, let's take a look at an unofficial and purely subjective list of members in K-State's rock and roll hall of fame, along with one of their hits.

Bad Company (1991), "Feel Like Makin' Love"

Beach Boys (1988), "Good Vibrations"

Harry Belafonte (1967), "Day O"

Chicago (1979 & 1985), "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?"

Def Leppard (1988), "[Bringin on the Heartache](#)"

John Denver (1973), "Rocky Mountain High"

Dixie Chicks (2000), "[Long Time Gone](#)"

Doobie Brothers (1978), "[Listen to the Music](#)"

Electric Light Orchestra (1977), "[Evil Woman](#)"

Fifth Dimension (1969), "[Age of Aquarius](#)"

Jethro Tull (1976), "Too Old to Rock and Roll, too Young to Die"

Billy Joel (1980), "Piano Man"

Johnny Mathis (1985), "Chances Are"

Willie Nelson (1988), "On the Road Again"

Pointer Sisters (1976), "[Slow Hand](#)"

Helen Reddy (1988), "[I am Woman](#)"

REO Speedwagon (1974), "[Keep on Loving You](#)"

Righteous Brothers (1966), "[You've Lost that Lovin' Feelin'](#)"

Leon Russell (1981), "[Heartbreak Hotel](#)"

Soul Asylum, (1995), "[Runaway Train](#)"

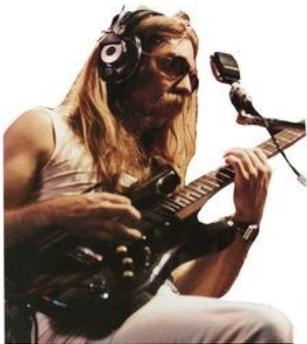
Temptations (1971), "[Papa Was a Rollin' Stone](#)"

Three Dog Night (1971), "[Joy to the World](#)"

UFO. (1976), "[Too Hot to Handle](#)"

But, wait, there's more at the tip of the iceberg! Among those who made an appearance at K-State between 1960 and 2011 include Leon Bibb, Bread, Brewer and Shipley, Harry Chapin, Cowsills, Emerson Lake and Palmer, Ben Folds, Flying Burrito Brothers, Four Preps, Janis Ian, Lee Greenwood, Jefferson Starship, Kansas, B. B. King, Los Lonely Boys, Marshall Tucker Band, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Ozark Mountain Daredevils, Pure Prairie League, Seals and Crofts, Shooting Star, Billy Squier, and the beat goes on...

**Doobies  
dazzle  
campers**



**Doobie Brothers**

Still, a "Keepsake" does not allow the space for more names to be listed, nevertheless, from this roster most of you should agree that K-State has attracted a large and somewhat diverse number of big name performers during their prime. The styles of music are certainly diverse, however, it should be noticeable that African Americans and women are underrepresented.

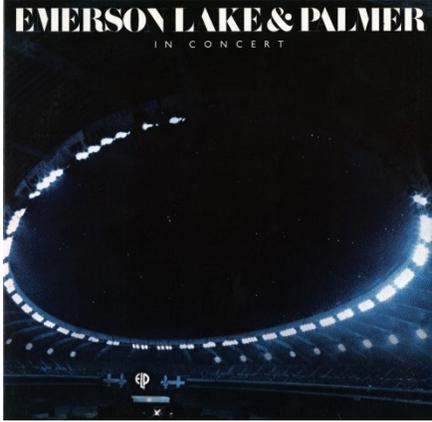


**Helen Reddy**

After World War II numerous performers visited campus representing several musical genres: folk (Limelitters, Glenn Yarbrough); jazz and "big band" (Count Basie, Dave Brubeck, Nina Simone, Duke Ellington); pianists (Peter Nero); brass (Canadian Brass, Tijuana Brass, Al Hirt); country (Garth Brooks, Lee Greenwood, Roger Miller); etc. Even so, many of them crossed over and recorded at least one tune that made it to rock's "top 40." Also, we should understand that back in the day "rock 'n'

roll" had a much broader definition.

Although big name "rock" groups still perform at K-State, the numbers began to decline in the mid-1980s. Articles in the *Collegian* over the years provide enlightening details regarding patterns in K-State's rock history. Students have always been vocal about their desire for more performers to grace the campus: "\$40,000 + 8 Months = 1 Concert" (1976), yet, in so many cases, the turnouts were disappointing ("Ticket sales remain slow: money, scheduling could be factors"). At other times, unpopular groups were booked ("K-State doesn't need kiddie band," "Concert a bummer"). Another problem has been the facilities ("Facilities keep super-groups away"). How about this headline? "Drug use at ELP [Emerson, Lake, and Palmer] highest in K-State history" (wonder what made the *Collegian* reporter who penned that headline an authority on the subject!?)



In the last few years, the McCain Performance Series has been more diverse in its booking of rock/pop entertainers. For example, Janis Ian, Kansas, and Los Lonely Boys performed during the 2010-2011 season. Certainly, these are not rock concerts on the level of those in larger venues and it is questionable if large crowds would flock to Bramlage to experience their music, nonetheless, McCain is providing the people in the Manhattan area a taste of rock from well-known performers!

It appears that K-State has become a victim of 21st century live concert big business in terms of the ability to attract mainstream rock stars on a regular basis: the expenses involved in booking a big name performer; Manhattan's location as it relates to the one night concert circuit; small population base; small indoor venues which don't allow high tech special effects, etc.

The performance in Bramlage by Soul Asylum on Oct. 2, 1995 illustrates the iffy proposition of sponsoring a concert at K-State. According to the 1996 *Royal Purple*, 1,200 attended the event sponsored by the Union Program Council (Bramlage holds approximately 12,500 for basketball games). The actual loss was not provided but it was "...below the original \$40,000 estimation"! And \$4,000 was spent on advertising.



In contrast, the Dixie Chicks' concert in Bramlage on October 12, 2000 drew "about 7,000" at \$45 a ticket. Even though Bramlage administrators hoped to fill 9,800 seats, "It was the highest grossing event in Bramlage's 12 year history." The group needed 12 semi-trailer trucks to bring its equipment, along with 70 crew members, plus an additional 75 student and community stagehands once they arrived, to set up for the performance!

No doubt this information reminds many readers of Manhattan's successful Country Stampede (which usually includes a "rock" group such as Lynyrd Skynyrd), nonetheless, it has yet to be proven that booking country entertainers for one night stands in K-State facilities on a consistent basis would be successful ("Willie Nelson a financial flop"). Maybe a more interesting hypothetical situation would be the potential success of a multiday outdoor festival with live performances by Lady Gaga, Beyonce, Adele, Kanye West, Foo Fighters, and, dare I say, Justin Bieber? Prairiestock? Bill Snyder Family Stadium? Easy to say it will never happen... but you get the picture!

On that note, if you want to learn more about K-State's rock 'n' roll history, visit the University Archives in Hale Library! Rock on!

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*Sources: Royal Purple; Collegian; University Archives-Vertical Files; ELP and Bad Company album covers from the Jerry Wexler Collection, Morse Dept. of Special Collections; Internet for information regarding performers and hit songs: photographs, Royal Purple and University Archives.*