

Hailing from [Raton, New Mexico](#) in the late 50's, the Fireballs were New Mexico's first Rock & Roll recording band to become internationally known.

The group was christened the FIREBALLS® after their standing ovation performance of "*Great Balls of Fire*" at the Raton High School PTA talent contest in New Mexico, USA...January 1958. By the year's end they had auditioned for the late Norman Petty at his already internationally famous recording studio at 1313 W. 7th Street, Clovis, New Mexico, where it stands today - a monumental contribution to the birth of early Southwest style Rock & Roll.



Arriving on a Sunday afternoon for their audition, Petty acknowledged his interest in their basic style, simplicity, and feel in which the group performed their original guitar instrumentals and vocals penned by members George Tomsco and Chuck Tharp.

Buddy Holly and the Crickets were scheduled for night time recording sessions Monday and Tuesday, so Petty logged the first Fireballs session for Wednesday night.

January 1959 found their first record released on KAPP records. "[Fireball](#)", a guitar instrumental; and "[I Don't Know](#)", a vocal by Chuck Tharp. "Fireball" was the Billboard 'pick' which resulted in the first airplay and sales.

Petty soon negotiated a contract for the group with a new aggressive British based label in the US, TOP RANK records. As a result, more chart instrumental singles and albums followed: "[Torquay](#)", "[Bulldog](#)", and "[Vaquero](#)" which led to two appearances on Dick Clark's American Bandstand shows. January 4, 1960 featured them performing "Bulldog", and on June 23, 1961 they performed "Quite A Party". They later appeared on Clark's Saturday Night show, as well as various other national and regional shows.

WARWICK records released additional singles which included "[Quite A Party](#)", and an album. Little did the Fireballs know by now that their guitar instrumental music was one of the foundational influences of the Surf music culture that was starting to make big waves.

Coupled with a new vocalist, Jimmy Gilmer, the Fireballs savored success in a new dimension. "[Sugar Shack](#)" on DOT records was a #1 hit and the largest selling single of the year. More vocal singles and albums followed. It was a very unique transition in the music business for an 'instrumental guitar band' to become 'vocal' and retain prestige in both fields.

Besides their own recordings, Petty recruited the Fireballs as studio musicians for other recording artist projects. Among many, folk singer [Carolyn Hester](#) and Arthur Alexander. It was during this time that Petty orchestrated the group through the task of musically enhancing the Buddy Holly 'apartment tapes' which surfaced after Holly's death.

The late 60's found the Fireballs on ATCO records with more chart singles and albums. Gilmer's gutsy lead vocal along with the backup vocals from the Fireballs sang their way to another top 10 tune with "[Bottle of Wine](#)" followed closely by "[Come on React](#)", of which albums were released under each of the titles.

Their Current recordings of traditional 50's/60's style guitar instrumentals, vocals, and their own brand of country- rock music reflect trace influences of Mexican and 'western' music dominant in the Southwest prior to the start of their recording career.

Fireballs recordings and songs are heard in the soundtracks of the following films: Forrest Gump, Mermaids, Congo, Dogfight, From Dusk Till Dawn, Box of Moonlight, The Real Blonde, with others being negotiated for upcoming films.



Original members (1958) L-R George Tomsco; lead guitar, vocals, writer / Stan Lark; vocals, electric & acoustic bass Eric Budd; drums / Chuck Tharp; lead vocal, writer / Dan Trammell; rhythm guitar

July 28, 1989 the Fireballs were inducted into the Norman Petty Studio Walk of Fame by Vi Petty, and headlined the show that evening at the Petty's Main Street Theatre in Clovis, New Mexico. Three original members performed: Chuck Tharp- vocal & guitar, Eric Budd - drums and George Tomsco - lead guitar. Standing in for original bass player (Stan Lark) was Fireball's historian Jerry MacNeish on bass.

The Fireballs performed at the Nebraska Music Hall of Fame induction ceremonies in Lincoln, Nebraska in 2000. On August 29, 2001, The Fireballs were inducted into the West Texas Rock & Roll Walk of Fame in Lubbock, TX. Members present were George Tomsco, Stan Lark, Eric

Budd, Chuck Tharp & Jimmy Gilmer - all performed together at the Texas Tech Stadium that evening.

In recognition of their appearance on American Bandstand performance 45 years previous, The State Of New Mexico declared January 20, 2005 "The Fireballs Day".



Stan Lark retired from the band in 2016, after being the group's bassist for 58 years. The lead guitar stylings of George Tomsco are still enjoyed today with his performances with backup bands, and the occasional show with Jimmy Gilmer as The Fireballs enter their 59th year!

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