

"Lemonsmyth" was a musician, historian, and a valuable part of San Bernardino Americana



Riki Hendrix, Robert Palmer, and Lemonsmyth before opening for War in 1976 at San Bernardino Swing Auditorium.

By Harvey M. Kahn

An irreplaceable part of San Bernardino history ended on April 17 when Richard LeMon Smith moved up into the rock and funk heavens. Also known as "Lemonsmyth" he was among the first of a new wave of soul musicians of the late 1960's

who could attract an audience of hard rock music enthusiasts. Beyond his music career that bordered near stardom, "Lemonsmyth" was a walking encyclopedia of local and world history. Friends called him a nonviolent person of great humanitarian proportions. He was a sophisticated thinker, but to those who knew him, he was like an in-

nocent child who never did understand why people could be cruel.

"Lemonsmyth" seemed to purposely put a halt to his rapidly advancing music career. He had the financial backing, the inside industry connections, news reporters listened, and he could navigate gracefully through cultural diversity. He had the talent but perhaps never really wanted the trappings



COURTESY PHOTO

Lemonsmyth and Riki Hendrix at San Barbara Bowl before opening for Tower of Power in 1976.

of commercial success. Friends said Smith was badly shaken when Jimi Hendrix died.

"Richard always wrote sad, pretty songs. He would get disappointed at how some people could be," said childhood friend Ricky Goodloe, now known as Riki Hendrix. He explained how he joined teenage bands that Lemonsmyth formed and how they were later recruited by B.B. Dickerson to open for War and Tower of Power. They were known as "Booty People" and went on the road to open for KC and the Sunshine Band, the Ohio Players and Evelyn "Champagne" King. A prized contract with ABC Records was signed, followed by a 1976 appearance on Soul Train. Their album was released internationally but the terribly trusting Lemonsmyth didn't realize that he signed away ownership to all of his future creative talent.

"I was a fighter who went and demanded that I be released from such a contract," said Hendrix. "I tried to fight for Richard, too. But he was always a sensitive player. He didn't understand. It was sad to see. He just stayed out of the music business." Other members of Booty People like Mitch McDowell, Robert Palmer, and Joe Phillips also broke free and started another group of note called General Caine.

Hendrix recalled that the Booty People would perform at various cultural festivals and that Lemonsmyth would dress in formal Indian attire and perform the ceremonial dances while playing the keyboard. "I remember one at the old California Theatre," said Hendrix. Smith can be heard on the rikihendrix/facebook singing

one of his compositions entitled, "After the Rain." Lemonsmyth always sang difficult songs with meaning. At Aquinas High, he was a member of its league championship basketball team that lost in the 1970 CIF championship game to Aviation High at the Los Angeles Sports Arena.

Hendrix said that Lemonsmyth was known to friends as "Honest Richard" just like "Honest Abe." Lemonsmyth was afflicted by a number of ailments over the years, yet at the time of his death, he had hopes of one more live performance. He got sick right before one in February. Another in March was canceled. After 34 years away from the music business and four months before his death, Lemonsmyth released the album, "Children of the Darkness." He chose to give it away free.

Riki Hendrix was frantically trying to put together a rock opera in time to include his friend. "I had a segment written for Richard. It's what he liked. A visual piece set to an orchestra production. We tried to go on the road again. I think we both knew deep down that he was in no shape. We were going to try again anyway. Maybe capture the good times like when we watched puppet shows and cartoons as little kids," said Hendrix. "When kids in the neighborhood were hungry, we'd go to his house. Richard could cook the best waffles in the world. His father was Dr. LeMon Smith, who offered to pay my way through college. I told him no thank you but Richard, Larry Kennedy, and myself were roommates at Cal Poly Pomona. I think at some point Richard wanted to be a doctor like his father."

Cal State SB to open Leadership Challenge Center For Team Building



On Wednesday, May 22, Cal State San Bernardino will unveil the Inland Empire's first leadership challenge center designed specifically for multiple participants – and it is built atop utility poles standing 50 feet high.

The grand opening will be from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The challenge center is located north of Cousoulis Arena on campus.

The state-of-the-art center, which is part of the Cal State San Bernardino's Recreational Sports program, provides unique team-building and leadership development programs for CSUSB students, departments, clubs and off-campus organizations from communities throughout the region, said Mark Oswood, CSUSB Recreational Sports Outdoors programs coordinator, who will oversee the center.

"The Leadership Challenge Center is unlike any other challenge courses in the area," Oswood said. "The center will be the first in the Inland Empire built specifically to

encompass the needs of groups by allowing multiple participants to experience the high elements together."

The Leadership Challenge Center consists of not only the 50-foot-high-structure, but also other challenge sections built lower to the ground. A team elements section allows teams of two to eight people work together to support each other in problem-solving, as well as an individual/partner portion that emphasizes support and goal setting.

Programs are designed to help and teach a person how to appropriately build trust in others; empower a person to develop skills necessary to be part of a healthy community; and increase individual interpersonal, social and physical skills. The center will provide a safe environment that allows participants ages 10 and older to "step outside their comfort zone and take a risk," Oswood said.

"I look forward to the thousands of students and community members who will take a step outside

their comfort zones and have an intense and positive learning experience," said Oswood. He has extensive experience as a challenge course manager and began leading experiential education and challenge course programs in 1995. He was the founding director of the University of California, Riverside Challenge Course program in 2002.

"With the addition of a challenge center to CSUSB, the students, faculty and staff will be able to learn about themselves and group cohesion in a new and exciting way. They will be granted the ability to challenge themselves in ways they never thought possible," Oswood said.

Funding for the course comes from a collaboration of CSUSB Recreational Sports, an Associated Students Inc. Class of 2012 gift, and the university's Student Success Initiative. As a result, costs for CSUSB students and campus groups to experience the Leadership Challenge Center will be kept minimal.

Challenge Works Inc. of Scotts Valley, Calif., which constructed the course, has installed hundreds of challenge course elements, zip lines and climbing towers and has trained thousands of facilitators worldwide.

For more information, contact Mark Oswood at (909) 537-3863 or by email at moswood@csusb.edu. Stay connected with the CSUSB Leadership Challenge Course Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CSUSBLeadershipChallengeCenter>.

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