

THE KISS FAMILY TREE: LESTER/KISS

Rainbow #1 (Summer 1970)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Joe Davidson
Drums

Brooke Ostrander
Keyboards/Horns

Stephen Coronel
Lead Guitar

During the summer of 1970 the first lineup of Rainbow was short lived with drummer Joe Davidson quickly being replaced by Tony Zarella. Tony was apparently simply hired due to his similarity to Bill Ward of Black Sabbath's looks!



Rainbow #2 (Summer 1970 – Summer 1971)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Tony Zarella
Drums

Brooke Ostrander
Keyboards/Horns

Stephen Coronel
Lead Guitar

Rainbow was the completion of the circle, with Gene, Stephen, Paul, and Gene associate Brooke. After playing just one show the band changed its name to Wicked Lester.....



Wicked Lester #1 (Summer 1971 – Feb. 1972)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Tony Zarella
Drums

Brooke Ostrander
Keyboards/Horns

Stephen Coronel
Lead Guitar

Wicked Lester was simply a transformation from Rainbow. During the first recording efforts for Epic Stephen was fired from the band.



Stephen Coronel would eventually leave music and would make his career as a teacher in New York.

Wicked Lester #2 (Feb. '71 – Sept. '72)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Tony Zarella
Drums

Brooke Ostrander
Keyboards/Horns

Ronnie Leejack
Lead Guitar/Banjo

Ron Leejack was recruited for Wicked Lester without even having to audition. He was strictly a studio member while the band made their second attempt at recording an album for Epic and never played live with Wicked Lester, except for one showcase for Epic's A&R man Tom Werman, which was required for the band to keep their record deal. This was the famous session where he sat down while playing – still blew Tom's mind though!



Ronnie went on with live touring and session work...

Wicked Lester #3 (Sept. '72 – Jan. '73)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
Guitar/Vocals

Peter Criss
Drums/Vocals

This line up was really not Wicked Lester, per se, but a band that had not yet officially dropped the Wicked Lester moniker. The band was rehearsing in the famous loft developing the songs which would become later KISS classics. Peter had essentially joined the band from unemployment. Plenty of other musicians jammed with the Gene and Paul throughout the summer of 1972, including J.J. French, later of Twisted Sister. Wicked Lester continued in name even after Gene and Paul had formed KISS.



KISS #1 (Dec. '72 – May '80)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Ace Frehley
Lead Guitar/Vocals

Peter Criss
Drums/Vocals

The classic KISS lineup, perhaps even Wicked Lester #4 for a brief time in January 1973, that evolved from the clubs into the arenas of the world. This band would become what CK Lendt would describe as "Super-KISS". However, Peter departed the band in March 1980, to record his second solo album "Out Of Control." His departure was not announced until May, and auditions for a new drummer were held in June and July 1980. Eric Carr, then Paul Caravello, with a disco and rock background was chosen to take over from the kitty, in the guise of the fox.



Initially, Peter Criss would use mostly session players on his first two post-KISS solo albums before settling back into the band mentality.

KISS #2 (July '80 – Dec. '82)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Ace Frehley
Lead Guitar/Vocals

Eric Carr
Drums/Vocals

Once Peter was gone, the balance in the band had shifted in Gene and Paul's favor, and Ace knew that his days were numbered. He also didn't like the direction that the band was taking, so he left after the recording of Music From "The Elder" in early 1982. News of his departure was withheld until the Creatures Tour was about to begin in December 1982, even though he had had nothing to do with the recording of the album, and only helped out with promotions to perpetuate the guise. Ace went solo (eventually)...



Ace Frehley's solo career has been marked by the numerous line-up changes that have occurred.

KISS #2a (January 1982)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Eric Carr
Drums/Vocals

While Ace would not be "out" of the band, his non-involvement would be obvious when he failed to show at KISS' Studio 54 satellite broadcast performance on the Italian San Remo festival. KISS were receiving an award, and the show must go on. It did, without Ace, with KISS lipsynching as a trio...

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

KISS #3 (Dec. '82 – April '84)

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Vinnie Vincent
Lead Guitar

Eric Carr
Drums/Vocals

Vinnie Cusano was recruited during the Creatures recording sessions when he and his band Warrior were rehearsing next door to KISS. Vinnie's tenure was short, and included two albums, one of which was as close in substance to the band's debut. Vinnie was fired, rehired, and then fired/let-go at the end of the "Lick It Up" tour in March 1984 due to personality/contract conflicts. Because he never signed an employment contract with the band he was never technically a member/employee. Vinnie went solo...

Vinnie Vincent's solo career was essentially short, it is his pre-KISS bands that are of more interest.

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

KISS #4 (April '84 – Dec. '84)

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Mark St. John
Lead Guitar

Eric Carr
Drums/Vocals

Mark St. John was brought into the band on the advice of Grover Jackson, who knew that KISS wanted a shredder, even though Dana Strum had been hired to find a replacement for Vinnie. It became apparent, very quickly, that Mark's style and personality clashed with Gene and Paul, and after stress related health issues, Bruce Kulick was brought in to temp for Mark on the "Animalize" Tour in September. When it became apparent that Bruce was working out well musically and personally, Mark went bye-bye. Mark went solo...

Mark's post-KISS musical career was essentially as short as his KISS tenure.

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

KISS #5 (Sept. '84 – Sept. '91)

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Bruce Kulick
Lead Guitar

Eric Carr
Drums/Vocals

With Bruce Kulick in the band, KISS found a stability they had not had since the 1970's. Eric Carr, was in 1989, allowed to venture into the realms of lead vocals, on "Little Caesar", unfortunately he died from cancer related complications in November 1991. While Eric's status in KISS had not been resolved, Eric Singer had essentially already replaced him.

Paul Charles Caravello a.k.a. Eric Carr "The Fox" 12 Jul 1950 - 24 Nov 1991 R.I.P.

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

KISS #6 (Oct. '91 – March '96)

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Bruce Kulick
Lead Guitar/Vocals

Eric Singer
Drums/Vocals

Eric Singer had been brought in to work with KISS for their cover of "God Gave Rock And Roll To You" on the Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey OST (which included Eric Carr on harmonies). He had also worked with Paul Stanley on his solo tour of 1988, so he was the natural choice of a replacement for Eric Carr. No one departed this lineup, following the Unplugged/KISS Konvention Tour of 1995 which culminated with the mini-Reunion with Peter Criss and Ace Frehley for MTV Unplugged in August 1995, it was announced in March 1996 that Peter and Ace were rejoining the band – Eric and Bruce were not fired, but technically put on a leave of absence. Like Eric Carr, Bruce Kulick got a chance to sing lead vocals on a KISS album, "Carnival Of Souls"...

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

KISS #7 (March – August '96)

Bruce Kulick
Lead Guitar

Eric Singer
Drums/B. Vocals

Ace Frehley
L. Guitar/Vocals

Peter Criss
Drums/Vocals

"Super-KISS", 2 drummers and 3 guitarists, though they only performed once together, at the previous year's (8/95) MTV Unplugged studio filming/recording at SONY Studios in New York. However, once the Reunion tour got underway it became clear that their hiatus was going to be long and Bruce and Eric resigned from the band, to move on to new projects...

Bruce Kulick would do a bit of session work before forming Union with ex-Motley Crue vocalist John Corabi.

Eric Singer would go back to doing what he'd done in the past, journeyman session work – have drums, will travel!

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

KISS #1 Again (August '96 – Jan. '01)

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Ace Frehley
Lead Guitar/Vocals

Peter Criss
Drums/Vocals

The Reunion quickly turned into a new studio album project, plus "Detroit Rock City" movie project, which would have one new KISS song (which was essentially a Paul solo track), plus a live recording of "Detroit Rock City" cut in the studio. That song was recorded, KISS' final group recording, but it was judged as unusable (too rough) for use on the soundtrack and was only used in the movie. After the Psycho Circus Tour, KISS announced their Farewell Tour. At the culmination of the Farewell Tour's North American leg in October 2000 Peter quit. Eric Singer returned to fill in to complete Farewell obligations to Japan and Australia. Even with all of the hints, few saw this departure coming...

KISS #8 (Jan. '01 – Feb. '02)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Ace Frehley
Lead Guitar/Vocals

Eric Singer
Drums/Vocals

Following the departure of Peter, and expiration of Ace's contract with the band, the band got one of it's best lineups, even if some did not appreciate Eric appearing in Peter's makeup design...



Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals



KISS #9 (Feb '02 – Oct. '02)

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals



Tommy Thayer
Lead Guitar/B. Vocals



Eric Singer
Drums/Vocals

With Ace performing with the band on an "at will basis", tour manager, and former KISS tribute band member, Tommy Thayer would be brought in to the band's lineup - he would make two live appearances with the band in Ace's makeup though would not an official member. Technically, Ace was neither out of the band nor still in it, and as of October 2002 Peter has agreed to return to the band for at least one show in 2003. This lineup would do one studio recording, without Ace or Tommy, for the Ramones tribute album...



KISS #10 (Oct. '02 – March '04)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Tommy Thayer
Lead Guitar/B. Vocals

Peter Criss
Drums/Vocals

Peter Criss would return to the band, again, while the question of KISS' guitarist would remain an issue, Tommy would continue to fulfill his role...



KISS #9 Again (March '04 –)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Paul Stanley
R. Guitar/Vocals

Tommy Thayer
Lead Guitar/B. Vocals

Eric Singer
Drums/Vocals

Peter Criss would not be invited to return to the lineup for the 2004 tour...



KISS #9a (July 2007)

Gene Simmons
Bass/Vocals

Tommy Thayer
Lead Guitar/B. Vocals

Eric Singer
Drums/Vocals

One show in 2007 would be conducted as a trio when Paul was taken ill and forced into hospital...