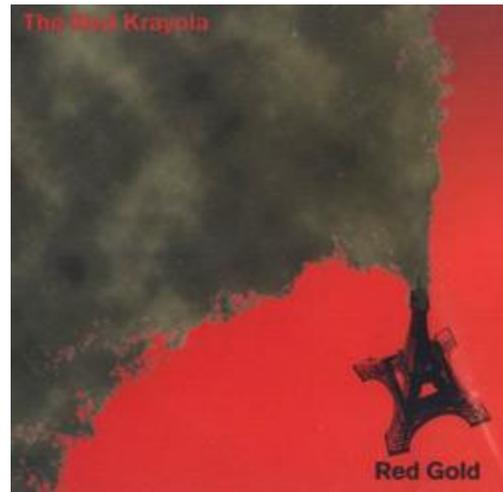


# The Red Krayola

**The Red Krayola:** The Red Krayola, originally known as the Red Crayola, was a popular Houston-based psychedelic rock band. Founded in 1966 by Mayo Thompson, Frederick Barthelme, and Steve Cunningham, the Red Crayola soon earned a reputation as a boldly innovative group that was not afraid to “push the musical envelope.”

Lelan Rogers, brother of Texas country music singer Kenny Rogers, signed the Red Crayola to International Artists in December 1966. International Artists also was home to the Austin-based psychedelic rock band, the 13th Floor Elevators. With Lelan Rogers as producer, the Red



Crayola recorded the album *The Parable of Arable Land*. In 1967, the band made an even more innovative second album, *Coconut Hotel*, which, because of label concerns over its marketability, would not be released until March 1995 by Drag City Records. In 1967, the group also traveled to California where it played several festivals and recorded the album *Live 1967*. However, after returning to Texas, the band parted ways with International Artists. Barthelme soon relocated to New York, and the Red Crayola disbanded.

Later that year, International Artists contacted Thompson about making a new album. Around the same time, the Crayola Crayon Company began demanding that the group no longer use the name “crayola.” As a result, the members changed the name to Red Krayola. In 1968, Thompson and Cunningham recruited drummer Tommy Smith to join them in recording *God Bless the Red Krayola and All Who Sail With It*. Due to the album’s lackluster sales, however, International Artists soon lost interest in the group, and the Red Krayola disbanded.

Thompson went on to record and co-produce a solo album in 1970, although it was not released until the late 1980s. In 1971, Thompson reunited with Barthelme to record “Old Tom Clark” and “Pig Ankle Strut” for Texas Revolution Records under the band name Saddlesore, even though these would not be released until the 1990s by Drag City Records. In 1977, Thompson moved to England, reformed the Red Crayola, and began recording for Andrew Lauder’s Radar Records. Following negotiations with the Crayola Crayon Company, the band was allowed to once again use its original name. In 1979, the Red Crayola recorded a new album, *Soldier Talk*, which featured more of a punk sound, along with new band personnel, including Lora Logic of XRay Spex and Essential Logic, Dick Cuthell of the Specials, and several members of Pere Ubu. Thompson remained active in Europe throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, although most Red Crayola albums were not being distributed in the United States at the time.

By the mid-1990s, Chicago’s Drag City Records began working with the band. To avoid possible future litigation with the Crayola Crayon Company, Drag City required that the band change its name back to the Red Krayola. In 1994, Drag City began distributing many of the group’s recordings that were previously unavailable in North America. In addition, Drag City released *The Red Krayola*, the group’s first album produced in the United States since 1968. Over

the following decade, the Red Krayola would record additional albums, including the 2006 *Introduction*, and it continues to tour throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan.

*Candace Goodwin*