Joey Dee and The Starliters ~ Joey Dee (Joseph DiNicola), The Godfather of The Twist – Joey is a “Jersey Boy”, born in Passaic, New Jersey. An Icon, Living legend and International Star – An American popular music group. Best known for their successful multi-million selling recording and dance, Peppermint Twist™ (1961), the group was started by Joey Dee. And universally known for performing at The World Famous Peppermint Lounge – NYC – The most popular night club in the world. (also credited as Joey Dee and the Starlighters).

Joey Dee has firmly established his place in pop culture and the music industry. Actively performing over 50 years later, Joey Dee will surely be remembered generations down the line.

**Early Singles**
With lead singer Rogers Freeman, Joey Dee and the Starliters’ first single was “Lorraine,” backed with “The Girl I Walk To School,” in 1958, distributed by Little Records Company. That same year, Joey Dee recruited David Brigati for the team after meeting him during a gig at Garfield High School in New Jersey.

David, Rogers and Joey would subsequently share lead vocal honors for the Starliters, with Joey ultimately becoming the primary lead singer. Another early single for the group was “Face of an Angel,” with David as lead vocalist, released on Scepter Records; the flipside was “Shimmy Baby,” sung by Rogers Freeman. An album entitled The Peppermint Twisters and credited to “Joey Dee and the Starliters” was subsequently released by the company Scepter Records as well. The Shirelles were very instrumental in getting Joey Dee signed with their record company, Scepter Records.

Various members of the Starliters, such as vocalist Rogers Freeman and organist Bill Callanan performed with Joey Dee during the next few years. The most famous lineup of Joey Dee and the Starliters is considered to be Joey Dee, David Brigati (vocals), Larry Vernieri (vocals), Carlton Lattimore (organ), Sam Taylor (guitar) and Willie Davis (drums).

**THE PEPPERMINT TWIST™** became a dance phenomenon throughout the country and the world. The Peppermint Lounge laid the foundation and blueprint for all future night clubs. Many writers and columnists have said that the Peppermint Lounge was the **FIRST Disco**. The incredible...
success of the Peppermint Lounge inspired the opening of over 5,000 discotheques in the USA. A number of reputable sources have written that the discotheques phenomenon was "Born" at a Times Square bar called the Peppermint Lounge.

The International success of the Peppermint Lounge led to the creation of The "Peppermint Twisters". Young, pretty ladies that served drinks and "danced" to the music of Joey Dee & The Starliters. The girls were an instant success.

At the very height of the Twist Craze, The Peppermint Twisters, became the FIRST and ORIGINAL Go-Go Dancers. They usually wore custom sexy costumes when performing. When Hugh Hefner came to the Peppermint Lounge, the Playboy Bunny costume was similarly designed and worn. The Peppermint Twisters were also the first to use Strobe Lighting and Black Lights. The Twisters girls spray painted their stiletto shoes to glow under the black light. At the end of the show, the lights were turned off except for that black light. The girls also performed at Madison Square Garden, Carnegie Hall, Waldorf Astoria, Plaza hotel, South America.

One night in 1961, a trio of pretty teenagers were waiting in line and eventually got inside the nightclub. During the break in the show, Ronnie Bennett asked Joey Dee if she and the other girls could perform with Joey on stage. Joey invited the girls on stage to sing and dance – Ronnie and Estelle Bennett and their cousin, Nedra Talley.

The Ronettes spent the rest of that night dancing and singing along with Joey Dee and The Starliters, and the reaction from the group and the crowd was so positive, that Joey Dee hired them. Every night, The Ronettes would dance and perform along with The Starliters at the Peppermint Lounge. That summer in 1962, Joey took The Ronettes on tour to Wildwood, NJ.

One day Joey turned on the radio and heard "Be My Baby" by The Ronettes. Unbeknownst to Joey, Phil Spector had already recorded the girls. Their success made Joey Dee extremely happy. The Ronettes were inducted into the Rock N’ Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

Over the years, other members of the group included: Alvin Morse, Richard Costiera, Paul Bauman, Billy Suppa, David Lavender, Louie Russo, Renee Cardona, Craig van Tillbury, Kenny Kaufman, Joey Amato, and Ron Grieco on the sax, Ricky Mendoza, Jim Carling, Benny Troy, Tommy Davis, Steve Benson and many others...

Oscar Winner Joe Pesci played the guitar in the band with Joey Dee and The Starliters.

Joe Pesci the actor in his first bit part dancing the Peppermint Twist in the feature movie “Hey Let's Twist” starring Joey Dee & The Starliters. What a head of hair!

Jimi Hendrix (Jimmy James) played guitar for Joey Dee & The Starliters. Jimi was a young, wild-haired guitarist from Seattle. "He showed up at my house for a tryout with just an electric guitar," Joey Dee says. "I had sound equipment in the garage, and he plugged his guitar into an amp, and after he played for 30 seconds, I said, 'You're hired.'"

Jimi Hendrix proved himself such an
accomplished showman, that Joey Dee began giving him solos on stage, during which he'd do splits or play his guitar behind his back or with his teeth. Playing for a year with Joey Dee and the Starliters had a lasting impact on Hendrix. "With Joey Dee, Hendrix got to savor the Twist craze right up close…. It was like Joey Dee was a high priest, a messenger bringing a sacred message to all. Right there Hendrix witnessed the power of word and music…. The Twist included all ages and all kinds of people, and it was not necessarily youth-oriented. Widely recognized as one of the most creative and influential musicians of the 20th century, Jimi Hendrix pioneered the explosive possibilities of the electric guitar. Jimi Hendrix was inducted into The Rock N’ Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

Later, members of the Starliters band group would include Felix Cavaliere (keyboards, vocals), Eddie Brigati (vocals), and Gene Cornish (guitar). Felix remembers joining The Starliters very quickly and was on a plane to Europe, where Joey Dee was touring in support of his worldwide number one hit single, "Peppermint Twist." "With Joey Dee, I got a taste of what it was like to be a professional musician, and I guess I got stung by it," says Cavaliere, who did two European tours with the Starliters, as well as a year in the Starliters house-band at Joey Dee’s Manhattan nightclub. "That’s when things really began picking up for me.”

Early in 1965, Felix Cavaliere left The Starliters and formed the "Young Rascals" (Rascals) band with former Starliters Eddie Brigati and Gene Cornish, which was three-quarters of their new band. From 1965 through 1969, the Rascals were one of the biggest groups in the country, with hits that included “Groovin’,” “Good Lovin’”, “A Girl Like You,” “A Beautiful Morning”. The (Young) Rascals were inducted into the Rock N’ Roll Hall of Fame in 1997.

The Peppermint Lounge
In 1960, the Starliters were noticed by agent Don Davis while performing at a Lodi, New Jersey nightclub called Olivieri’s. The group was booked at an obscure venue on 45th Street in New York City called the Peppermint Lounge, for what was supposed to be a one-time weekend gig, which lasted 13 months.

While performing at the Peppermint Lounge, Joey Dee & The Starliters attracted the following celebrities, Merle Oberon and Prince Serge who actually danced the Peppermint Twist™ with the regular audience that was in attendance that night.

This being in print the next morning by columnists Earl Wilson and Cholly Knickerbocker, it took barricades and mounted police to keep the crowds in line, which had backed to Broadway, the next night. For several years, the craze would continue at the World Famous Peppermint Night Club.

Joey Dee wrote “Peppermint Twist,” along with producer Henry Glover, as a tribute to the now World Famous Peppermint Lounge. The very popular song scored #1 on the U.S. charts in early 1962. Number One for twelve weeks. It sold several million copies, and was awarded a Gold Record, personally presented by his good friend Dick Clark on The American Bandstand show in Philadelphia, PA.

Joey Dee & The Starliters performed on American Bandstand TV Show many times.

Also in 1961, Joey Dee and the Starliters filmed the movie "Hey, Let’s Twist", with Jo Ann Campbell and Teddy Randazzo, for Paramount Pictures. Hey, Let’s Twist was a fictional story of Joey Dee (Randazzo and Dino DiLuca played the parts of Joey’s brother and father, respectively) and the Peppermint Lounge; its release capitalized on the current twist craze and made the once-obscure Lounge famous. The movie and soundtrack album did their part in making the Peppermint Lounge a world-famous venue.

Successful singles spawned from Hey, Let’s Twist were the title track and “Shout – Part I,” which became the group’s second-biggest selling record, reaching the Top Ten on the Billboard charts. This was the only time any recording of “Shout” ever achieved the Top Ten status ranking. It also sold over a million copies, giving the group their second Gold Record. Other albums released during this time were “Doin’ The Twist” at The Peppermint Lounge which became a Platinum Album for the Starliters.

1962 ~ Joey Dee – Voted the #1 Best Newcomer Male Vocalist ✽ Annual Year End Cash Box Poll ~ “Baby You’re Driving Me Crazy” ~ “Help Me Pick Up The Pieces”

Later in 1962, Joey Dee and The Starliters starred in their second motion picture, "Two Tickets to Paris", along with Gary Crosby, Jeri Lynne Fraser and Kay Medford. One of the songs from this film, “What Kind Of Love Is This,” written by Johnny Nash, was released in September of that year and scored Top Ten. In December 1962, the original Starliters did their final recording session as a group, producing “Help Me Pick Up the Pieces,” also composed by Nash, and “Baby, You're Driving Me Crazy,” written by Joey Dee and Henry Glover.

In 1963, Joey Dee recorded an album entitled Dance, Dance, Dance, with The Ronettes as his backup group. During spring of that year, Roulette released the track “Hot Pastrami with Mashed Potatoes”, from the previously issued live album, as a two-part single; the record made the U.S. Top Forty. Roulette later released “Ya Ya” and “Fannie Mae” from the same album.

During October and November 1963, the Starliters toured Europe, performing one extraordinary night in Stockholm, Sweden with The Beatles. The Beatles made their “First” International appearance in Stockholm as the ‘OPENING’ act for Joey Dee! A hot European band called “The Beatles” was billed ‘second’ to Joey Dee & The Starliters. A October 26, 1963 ~ After the performance that night, Joey Dee invited The Beatles to his party at the Foresta Hotel in Stockholm. ? “We went to my hotel suite, and we must have drank a gallon of whiskey each,” Joey Dee recalls. “We had a lot of laughs.”
The Beatles’ visited The World Famous Peppermint Lounge – NYC – The Beatles very first tour of the USA. Paul, Ringo, John and George, danced, sang, drank and had a great time. The Peppermint Twist™ song and dance “craze” was rapidly spreading like wildfire throughout Europe. And The Beatles knew it and wanted to be part of the wonderful craze. The number one hit playing 24/7 on radio everywhere! It was a very memorable Peppermint Twist™ evening, that 53 years later is still talked and written about today. Click this “LINK” and view the video of The Beatles visit to The World Famous Peppermint Lounge.

Joey Dee ~ “International” Star and Living Legend "All The World is Twistin” Peppermint Twist™. Joey Dee & The Starliters, Very popular in Europe including Germany, England, France, Italy, Sweden, Spain, etc. And worldwide in Japan, Australia, Canada, Caribbean, Mexico, etc…

The Peppermint Twist™ song and dance “craze” was rapidly spreading like wildfire internationally! The whole world was twisting, both young and old.

Joey Dee & The Starliters perform on stage at the Famous Star-Club (1962) in Hamburg, Germany. A few of the artists that performed at the famous Star-Club – The Beatles, Ray Charles, Bill Haley, Fats Domino, and more...

Joey lived in Hamburg, Germany for about six months and toured Europe performing in different countries. Joey also recorded a song "No No" in German lyrics. The Beatles were the “Opening Act” for Joey Dee in Stockholm, Sweden.

Dee was so impressed by the sound system at the Star-Club, that he invited the sound expert to New York to design and install a sound system in the Peppermint Lounge.

The Mob Ruled The Recording Business. “I actually saw a guy hung out of a 20 story building – they were holding him by the ankles – they said... Are you going to sign the contract?” Morris Levy made his fortune as the wheeling-and-dealing head of Roulette Records that doubled as a front for the Genovese crime family. Click this LINK and listen to an interview with Joey Dee describing the “Mob” (Mafia) and it’s involvement in the recording business.

Joey Dee and the Starliters was one of the very FIRST early racially-integrated rock bands in the country and the world. Jimi Hendrix, Jimmi Mayes, Sam “Bluzman” Taylor, Carlton Lattimore, Rogers Freeman and Willie Davis were members of the Starliters band at one time or another. Sam, Carlton and Rogers were “original” Starliters. Recorded interviews are available by these talented artists describing their experience.

**TWIST DANCE CLICK HERE! PEPPERMINT LOUNGE**
During the height of the Peppermint Twist Song and Dance craze, numerous merchandise inspired by the "Peppermint Twist™" was sold to fans around the world. It was popular to market anything that involved the famous and legendary "Peppermint Twist™" Dance and Song.

Today, the items are still very popular and highly sought by collectors. This is an example of one of the many items. And a Peppermint Twist men's suit, men's underwear to make you a better twister. Guitars, dancing lessons, hats, shoes, animated toys, Christmas items, jackets, shirts, ash trays, glasses, etc...

Dick Clark – American Bandstand – Philadelphia, PA – Joey Dee & The Starliters performed on American Bandstand at least nine times or more over the years and also a number of interviews. Dick Clark was a close long-time friend.

Later history
Dee continued to record and issue solo recordings from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, as well a song he wrote with original Starliters David Brigati and Larry Vernieri entitled "How Can I Forget" in the late 1960s which was released under the name Joey Dee and The New Starliters. He continued to travel and make personal appearances with various Starliters.

In 2000 and the next few years, original Starliters Joey Dee and David Brigati were joined by new member Bobby Valli, brother of Four Seasons lead singer Frankie Valli performing with a very busy schedule of appearances touring coast-to-coast with sell-out audiences of old and young. Other members of the group at that time were Ronnie Greico, John Lepore, Larry Tomaso, Rene Cardona, and David Gerstein.

In 2001, the group was featured on a PBS special, Rock, Rhythm and Doo-Wop hosted by Frankie Valli and Jerry Butler. In 2005 they appeared on the Jerry Lewis telethon for muscular dystrophy hosted by Joey's good friend Tony Orlando.

On Sunday September 19, 2010, a street corner was dedicated to the band in their home town of Passaic, New Jersey. "Joey Dee And The Starliters Square". The street signing took place on the corner of Washington Place and Columbia Ave. A very proud achievement and recognition for Joey Dee & The Starliters.

Currently The Starliters consist of son Ronnie Dee, daughter Jamie Lee, and grandson AJ Dee with Andrew Beer, the musical conductor for the last 26 years. Over 50 years later and still fabulous, performing continuously.
“Wowing” audiences from coast to coast with their high-energy show, that includes their hits interspersed with a wide range of selections from pop, rock n’ roll, and mixed with spirited dancing and comedy.

Joey Dee reflected on The Starliters impact on the music industry and influence on other artists through the years. "I think we were the only act ever to make a nightclub famous (Peppermint Lounge) and at the same time make ourselves famous. We were a band that motivated the audience and I think we still do today. My goal every time I get on stage is to get the audience involved to make the show as great as possible.

Having sold over 15 million records, Joey Dee & The Starliters remains very popular today.

Joey Dee, a true Icon that created a worldwide sensation with a song and dance that today, more than 50 years later is still very popular. Turn on the radio, or watch an old movie and chances are you are going to hear The Peppermint Twist™. Don’t be surprised if you start twisting and singing whether you are young or old.

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