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**Name:** Mark Lavon "Levon" Helm

**Years:** May 26, 1940 - Present

**Residence:** Woodstock, New York

**Brief Biography:** Helm grew up in Turkey Scratch, a hamlet west of Helena, Arkansas. He was encouraged by his parents to be musical. When he was six, he saw Bill Monroe & his Blue Grass Boys, which ignited the lifelong goal of following a musical career path. He learned to play guitar at age nine and drums at seventeen. Helm met Ronnie Hawkins in 1957 who then asked him to go on tour through Canada in his band. Helm took the opportunity promising his parents he would return to finish high school. Helm's band sold 750,000 records with hits such as, "Forty Days" and "Mary Lou," as well as appearing on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. The band became tired of Hawkins's strict control and went on their own to create "Levon and the Hawks" in which Helm sang and drummed. This band was approached by Bob Dylan in 1965 to go on tour with him and help him make his sound more electric. The fans didn't like this and booed the band. After the tour Levon Helm took a short trip to Arkansas before rejoining the band in Woodstock, New York. They stayed in a large pink house to work on their music, culminating in a new album call *Music from Big Pink* as well as a new name for themselves called "The Band." Helm married his wife Sandra Dodd in Woodstock after a seven year courtship. In 1975, he had

built a studio in a barn near his permanent residence. *The Last Waltz* concert was “The Bands” final appearance before splitting up. Helm went on to produce several solo albums. He then went on to acting in such movies as *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *In the Electric Mist*. Helm reunited with several members of his former band in the 80s and 90s. Today he is hosting live performances and recordings at his studio in Woodstock called *The Midnight Ramble*.

**References:** [http://theband.hiof.no/band\\_members/levon.html](http://theband.hiof.no/band_members/levon.html),

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=628>.