

(The following words were written in response to the media's request for biographical information on Dave. It was done quickly and to a deadline and left us feeling that we had come nowhere near doing justice to Dave's life or work.)

VALE DAVID McCOMB 17-02-1962 – 02-02-1999

On Wednesday night Paul Kelly dedicated his entire show at the Prince of Wales to the memory of David McComb. The bookend songs of the evening were McComb compositions. Paul also combined with Chris Bailey at the recent Mushroom Concert of the Century to perform a version of Dave's "Wide Open Road" to make sure one of his favourite writers was represented. This indicates the esteem in which Dave was held by his peers.

The youngest of four sons, Dave was born into a medical family; his father, Harold, is a plastic surgeon and his mother, Athel, a geneticist. He grew up in Perth and attended Christ Church Grammar School. A gifted student, Dave consistently won prizes throughout high school in English Literature and Divinity.

Whilst still in high school he formed his first band, Dalsy, with Alsy MacDonald. Ambitious from the start, Dalsy was a multimedia project that saw the boys producing music, books and photographic images. His early musical influences reveal an adventurous and discerning taste - the Velvet Underground, David Bowie, Patti Smith, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen. McComb was naturally drawn to the wordsmiths though his eclectic inclinations would soon see him developing an interest in early electronica, country music, girl groups and hip hop - influences reflected later in his own music. His early songs demonstrated a keen melodic ear combined with a witty, often sardonic approach to lyrics.

By the end of his high school years, Dalsy had become The Triffids. Dave continued his education at Curtin University, studying journalism and literature while still developing his musical craft. The Triffids first single, "Stand Up", was released in 1980, the result of winning a band demo competition. The lyrics of the chorus exemplify a tone that Dave would pursue throughout his work.

"...Stand up for your rights
Grab your baby and hold her tight
If she don't love you well it's OK
We're all gonna die anyway..."

After graduating in 1981 Dave moved to Melbourne before eventually settling in Sydney with The Triffids. There they recorded their debut album "Treeless Plain" bringing the band to national attention. Now a full time concern The Triffids released numerous records and toured Australia many times over the next few years - often returning to their native Perth by road across the Nullabor.

In 1984 the band relocated to London and made the landmark album "Born Sandy Devotional" which featured the single "Wide Open Road", a song which has since entered the lexicon of Australian music. (Besides, they had finally made it on Countdown.)

Like so many artists before them it was as if McComb and The Triffids could only see the Australian experience clearly from afar. The album's evocative descriptions of, as Dave put it, love in bright landscapes, suggested an environment filled with light and optimism and an emotional/spiritual wilderness vast enough to get lost in. Wide Open Road? A metaphor for the journey within.

The albums "In The Pines", "Calenture" and "The Black Swan" followed as The Triffids continued to expand their following abroad, returning to Australia each summer to tour. A sensation in Scandinavia, playing to 70,000 people at festivals in Belgium, being involved in a huge rock riot in Athens, selling out the Town and Country in London and appearing twice on the front cover of prestigious rock journal the New Musical Express - these things were all very well but commercial success still eluded the band and in 1989 they took an extended break which turned out to be terminal.

After completing one of their last annual summer tours McComb co-founded The Blackeyed Susans and recorded and performed with them over subsequent years whilst pursuing a solo career.

Dave moved from London to Melbourne in 1992 and in '94 released his long awaited solo album "Love Of Will" as evidence of his unwaning potency. A band was assembled, The Red Ponies, to tour Europe. A fabulous time was had by all and Dave was heartened to see that his fans, in such old stomping grounds as Belgium and Sweden, had not forgotten him.

On his return Dave travelled to New York on a songwriting expedition. He was taken ill and immediately flew home where he was admitted to a cardiac ward. The prognosis was not good and he was put on the heart transplant waiting list. In early 1995 a donor was found and a successful operation performed.

Dave commenced studies at Melbourne University and formed a new band, costar, (named after one of his dogs) to perform his ever accumulating collection of great songs - now resonant with the experience only a heart transplant could provide. Although his health made performing difficult, costar played sporadically around Melbourne, audiences impressed with the quality of the songs and the undeniable stage presence of the band leader. Recordings had begun and a single was ready for a limited release.

On Saturday 30 January Dave was involved in a car accident. He was not badly injured but spent the night in St Vincents Hospital. He was released on Sunday and went home to recuperate. On Tuesday at about 6pm he died suddenly.

Everyone who knew Dave either personally or through his music will always remember him. He is sadly missed.

Phil Kakulas

Graham Lee

Rob Snarski