

DAVE BERRY



Like its American counterpart, British rock'n'roll has given us some memorable figures. Amongst the many artists each era has produced there have been those performers who have that special something that sets them apart transcending the era from which they came. Sheffield's own rock'n'roll troubadour Dave Berry has to be one of those entertainers - a very stylised and original musical personality.

His early musical heroes were people like Chuck Berry and Gene Vincent and developing their influences into his own unique style and presentation, Dave created a stage act that has in turn gone on to influence others. Such names as Gary Glitter, Adam Ant and Alvin Stardust openly admit the influence that Dave had on their own careers whilst his work on record continues to be remembered for its individualism.

The son of a jazz drummer, Dave's early exposure to music was through his father, leading to him becoming a musician himself. Forming his first band in 1960 Dave Berry & The Cruisers quickly established themselves as a popular local outfit in and around Sheffield before expanding their popularity further afield.

Their reputation as a hard-driving, above par rockin' R&B band eventually attracted the attention of Decca Records who subsequently signed them. Their first outing on disc had Dave wearing his musical roots on his sleeve with a re-working of his idol Chuck Berry's "Memphis Tennessee". In September 1963 Decca's intuition paid off with Dave & Co. enjoying a top twenty hit with their first record. Introducing the sound of Dave Berry & The Cruisers to a wider audience, this then opened the door for future successes. "My Baby Left Me" (featuring some fiery guitar from Jimmy Page) entered the UK top 40 on two occasions in January '64 whilst his cover of the Shirelles' US hit, "Baby It's You" was another chart contender the following April. It was Dave's fourth single that will remain his 'career song', Geoff Stephens' wistful "Crying Game", featuring the highly distinctive guitar played by the great Big Jim Sullivan (and not Jimmy Page as often quoted). The record gave Dave a Top 5 hit in August '64 and a place in British pop history and set the precedent for future cover versions of the song. Using other top session men like John Paul Jones, Reg Guest and John Bonham, Berry continued to deliver the goods with "One Heart Between Two", another top 40 hit in November '64. Bobby Goldsboro's highly distinctive "Little Things" provided Dave with another big UK hit in March '65, whilst his next hit came from the pen of Ray Davies of The Kinks. Ray's "This Strange Effect" was only a minor UK hit for Dave but became a massive No.1 hit for him in Holland, a country where he still enjoys superstar status. Dave's most commercial offering "Mama" hit the UK Top 5 again in June '66, completing an impressive list of hit singles for the Sheffielder. Amongst the hits, Dave's other recorded output always included a selection of interesting material whether it be that of legendary names like Buddy Holly and Muddy Waters or the work of contemporary pop writers like The Gibb Brothers and Graham Gouldman. Reflecting the popularity and continued interest in Dave's work on record are the number of compilation albums which have been released through various collector's labels.

Promoting his records, Dave made regular appearances on such memorable TV shows as 'Thank Your Lucky Stars', 'Top Of The Pops' and 'Ready, Steady Go!'. It was here that Dave perhaps made his biggest impact with his unique and totally visual presentation. Whether hiding behind a stage-prop or slowly lowering a microphone down his back, audiences would be compelled to watch his every move and gesture. His hand movements, either covering his face or reaching out to some invisible object, made a lasting impression on everybody watching his curious stage mannerisms. Major nationwide package tours in the 60's with names like The Rolling Stones, The Ronettes and Roy Orbison were ideal opportunities for Dave to craft his skill as a live performer. This proved invaluable experience when he went onto enjoy a successful and lengthy period in the 70's on the cabaret circuit. His relevance and influence in British pop was re-evaluated in the 80's as he received the attention of audiences both young and old. Dave's own interest in music has certainly never dwindled as he keeps his eyes and ears constantly open to all kinds of musical development. With loyal support from his band The Cruisers, who currently sport one of the best ever line-ups in the group's history, Dave continues to maintain a highly active career through the 90's. He also now enjoys the benefit of combining his success as a pop entertainer together with the role he started out in, that of a stylish rhythm & blues performer. Dave regained some much overlooked recognition in this area when he was the surprise hit of the annual Alexis Korner Tribute in 1995. Reflecting this, his current work both onstage and on record comfortably embraces all aspects of Dave's career, underlined of course by his great originality and showmanship.



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