

Butch Hancock – Bio

George 'Butch' Hancock was born on 12th July 1945 in Lubbock, Texas and was raised on a farm near to this major Panhandle conurbation – in fact, the title of his debut solo album would attest to that! During his time in high school he became acquainted with Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Joe Ely, and they eventually realised they shared an interest in music. Early in his Monterey High School career Hancock had begun playing the banjo and guitar. Following graduation from high school, Butch enrolled as a major in architecture at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. Gilmore also remained in town, while Ely spent some time 'on the road.' By the Ely returned to Lubbock, Hancock had abandoned his studies and the threesome began living in a house on 14th Street and eventually formed The Flatlanders. Occasional band members included Al Strehli, John Reed and Tony Pearson. In late May 1972 The Flatlanders were unscheduled performers at the first Kerrville Folk Festival. The group line-up at that time included the late Sylvester Rice [bass], Tommy Hancock [fiddle] and Steve Wesson [saw], and earlier that year the quintet had travelled to Nashville to record an album at Shelby Singleton's studio, ostensibly for release on Plantation Records. According to Gilmore, Tony Pearson accompanied them to Nashville, although he wasn't credited as playing on the sessions. A single featuring Gilmore's "Dallas" was issued, credited to Jimmie Gilmore and The Flatlanders. The seventeen-track Flatlanders album **"One More Road"** first appeared in the UK on Charly Records during 1980. Featuring different artwork and titled **"More A Legend Than A Band"** it was issued in the States by Rounder Records during 1990, but only contained thirteen tracks. The Flatlanders disbanded later that year although Messrs. Hancock, Gilmore and Ely continued to pursue the performance of music in public on an individual basis. Gilmore [and Tommy Hancock] headed to Denver, Colorado to study in an ashram, Butch headed for Clarendon, Texas where he worked on a building project and lived in a caboose, while Ely 'famously' joined the Ringling Bros. circus for a time. Joe Ely's major label, debut album was released during 1977 by MCA Records, and featured songs composed, individually, by the trio.

In the mid nineteen-seventies Butch moved to Austin. Ely already lived on the outskirts of the city, and Gilmore would settle there during the following decade. In 1978 Hancock released his debut studio recording **"West Texas Waltzes & Dust-Blown Tractor Tunes"** on his own Rainlight label. Production of the recording was credited to Butch and Earl Epiphone [aka Joe Ely]. **"The Wind's Dominion"** a self-released double studio set was followed by the single disc **"Diamond Hill."** Joe Ely's **"Live Shots"** [1980] was recorded in London during a UK tour, and featured contributions from Carlene Carter and Micky Gallagher. During his London shows Ely was joined onstage [but not on the 'live' record] by The Clash. Hancock accompanied Ely on the tour and appeared in a couple of photographs on the album liner. In 1981 Hancock self-released released two 'live' recordings, **"Firewater...Seeks It's Own Level"** and **"1981 : A Spare Odyssey."** Both discs were recorded during April that year at the now defunct Alamo Lounge in Austin.

During the early eighties, for a period of three years, in partnership with George Howard, Hancock filmed/produced numerous music shows for broadcast, initially, on the Austin cable tv channels, and later on stations across the state. One series was titled "Dixie's Bar and Bus Stop." Hancock teamed up with Marce Lacouture for a couple of recordings during the mid-eighties. Their first collaboration was the studio effort **"Yella Rose"** [1985], and a couple of years later, recorded at Austin's Cactus Café, the pair issued the cassette only **"Cause Of The Cactus."** Another cassette only live recording **"Split & Slide II – Apocalypse Now Pay Later,"** a Hancock solo effort, appeared in the year between the duo recordings. In 1988 the California based imprint, Hightone, issued Jimmie Dale Gilmore's debut solo album **"Fair And Square."** Produced by Joe Ely, the collection featured songs by Gilmore, Ely and Hancock, plus David Halley and Townes Van Zandt.

The first Hancock recording to appear on a label other than his own Rainlight imprint was **"Own And Own"** a compilation that Sugar Hill Records issued in 1989. Demon Records issued the disc in Europe. In addition to previously released material, the disc included four tracks by Hancock's late eighties Austin based band, The Sunspots – a quartet that featured the late Jesse Taylor, one time guitarist in the Joe Ely Band. Over six consecutive nights January 31st – February 5th 1990, Hancock performed a series of shows at Austin's Cactus Café titled **"No Two Alike"** – the principle being that no song would be repeated. By the close of the sixth night [it was originally meant to last 5 nights] some 140 songs had been performed. Ely, Gilmore, Van Zandt and others made guest appearances. The concerts resulted in a series of sixty minute long, cassette only, live recordings that were released over a fourteen-month period during 1990/91. Hancock and Gilmore undertook a tour of Australia during 1990 and was

captured by the Australian arm of Virgin Records on the live album **“Two Roads.”** In 1993 Sugar Hill issued another Hancock compilation of previously released and unreleased material titled **“On The Way Over Here.”**

Hancock has appeared on a number of compilation discs. **“Pastures Of Plenty : An Austin Celebration Of Woody Guthrie”** [1993] featured Ray Wylie Hubbard, Jimmy LaFave, Christine Albert, Sarah Elizabeth Campbell, Michael Fracasso, Steve Young, Lisa Mednick, David Halley, Hancock and more, and was recorded at La Zona Rosa on July 18th 1993. It was released later that year on the now defunct, San Marcos based Dejadisc label. The Hollywood Records release **“Chippy”** [1994] featured musical contributions from Joe Ely, Jo Carol Pierce, Wayne Hancock, Robert Earl Keen, Butch Hancock, plus Terry and Jo Harvey. Commissioned by The American Music Theatre Festival in Philadelphia the world premiere of **“Chippy,”** a play penned by musician Terry Allen and his wife, Jo Harvey, took place at the theatre during 1994.

Hancock’s next project **“Eats Away The Night”** a collection of new material was released in the States by Sugar Hill Records, and in Europe by the German based Glitterhouse label. A couple of years later, Hancock relocated from Austin to Terlingua on the Texas/Mexico border where he had begun working as a rafting trip guide/entertainer for Far Flung Adventures on the Rio Grande. For his next studio album Hancock revived his Rainlight label and released **“You Coulda Walked Around The World.”** During the late 1990’s Tony Brown [reputedly a Flatlanders fan] asked Messrs. Hancock, Ely and Gilmore to supply a song for **“The Horse Whisperer”** soundtrack recording – the trio composed “South Wind Of Summer.” By 2000 the track had sparked a revival of The Flatlanders, although the forgoing trio were the only original members involved. In 2002 New West Records issued their sophomore album **“Now Again”** and it was followed by **“Wheels Of Fortune.”** Later the same year New West released an archive recording titled **“Live ‘72”** recorded at The One Knite in Austin, Texas.

Apart from Messrs. Ely and Gilmore, Hancock’s songs have been covered by Emmylou Harris [“West Texas Waltz” with Flaco Jimenez on **“Partners”** (1992) and “If I Were a Bluebird” on her own **“Bluebird”** (1988)] and by the Texas Tornados [“She Never Spoke Spanish To Me” on **“Texas Tornados”** (1990)]. **“War And Peace”** Hancock’s latest solo outing, a thirteen song politically motivated opus, was released on Two Roads Records in early October 2006.

Discography

Solo - **“West Texas Waltzes & Dust-Blown Tractor Tunes”** [1978] ; **“The Wind’s Dominion”** [1979] ; **“Diamond Hill”** [1980] ; **“Firewater...Seeks It’s Own Level”** [1981] ; **“1981 : A Spare Odyssey”** [1981] ; **“Split & Slide II – Apocalypse Now Pay Later”** cassette only live recording [1986] ; **“Own And Own”** compilation [1989] ; **“No Two Alike”** series of 14 monthly, cassette only, live recordings [1990/1991] ; **“On The Way Over Here”** compilation [1993] ; **“Eats Away The Night”** [1994] ; **“You Coulda Walked Around The World”** [1997] ; **“War And Peace”** [2006] :

with Marce Lacouture - **“Yella Rose”** [1985] ; **“Cause Of The Cactus”** cassette only live recording [1987] :

with Jimmie Dale Gilmore - **“Two Roads”** [1990] :

with The Flatlanders - **“One More Road”** aka **“More A Legend Than A Band”** [1980/1990] ; **“Now Again”** [2002] ; **“Wheels Of Fortune”** [2004] ; **“Live ‘72”** [2004] :

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