



David Mallett **"Midnight On the Water"** North Road Records

With a duration of a tad under sixty-one minutes Mallett is supported on this seventeen song live recording by long-time sideman Michael Burd [bass] and Susan Ramsey Crippen [violin, viola]. Burd and Crippen also contributed to the Mainer's most recent studio effort **"Artist In Me"** [2003]. In a recording career spanning three decades, Mallett last cut a live album, for Noel Paul Stookey's Newworld label, back in late November 1980. On that occasion the album, a mix of Mallet originals and covers, was titled **"Hard Light."** On this occasion the material featured was penned entirely by Dave, including one co-write, and amounts for time-served Mallett fans to a collection of familiar songs.

My recall is that Michael Burd first played bass on a Dave Mallett recording back in 1983. On that occasion it was the Flying Fish album **"Open Doors & Windows."** The latter collection was the first of a consecutive trio of 1980's studio albums that Mallett cut for the then Chicago based label – the other titles were **"Vital Signs"** [*] and **"For A Lifetime."** The latter trio and **"Hard Light"** apart [+], there are songs here from every one of Dave's seven other album releases.

Recorded at two Maine venues during August 2005, it's hardly surprising that Dave's set leans heavily upon material from the recent **"Artist In Me,"** and the collection opens with "Angel Standin' By." Later, there are readings of that album's title track wherein Dave poses the question *"Why am I amazed at the wonder of it all,"* there's the album's opening cut and lesson on life "Didn't Nobody Teach You" and, finally, "Strange Life." While the venues where **"Midnight On the Water"** was captured were probably seated shows, for those who love to waltz [at least in their own mind], Dave delivers a sweeping version of "Here We Go," a Mallett/Estes co-write that first appeared on **"...In The Falling Dark"** [1995]. Dave recorded **"Ambition"** during his, second, late 90's sojourn with the Flying Fish label, by which time he had moved back to Sebec, Maine after living in Nashville for a decade. By then the Flying Fish imprint was part of Rounder Records, but "Greenin' Up" confirms that Dave was still firmly 'in touch' with the cycle of the seasons and the land.

Dave's 1978 debut solo recording was self-titled, and from that collection he performs "Dulcimer." From the same collection "I Knew This Place" is a precious remembrance of growing up, having returned to once familiar places later in life. Towards the close there's the cautionary tale of life on a farm, "Fire," which 'once upon a time' opened **"David Mallett."** The uneasy tale "Walkin'" hails from **"Ambition,"** and there's some fine Burd bass playing during "Somewhere In Time," a love song, and the only **"This Town"** [1993] song in this collection. Mallett's trio of 1978 – 1981 Newworld recordings were reissued on CD during 2002, and the title of this collection is taken from a song that first appeared on his sophomore release **"Pennsylvania Sunrise"** [1979]. Way back then it was "Midnite On The Water," now it's "Midnight On The Water."

Although covered by Marty Stuart on his 1986 self-titled album, I have to admit to being unfamiliar with "Hometown Heroes." To the best of my knowledge this is the first time it has appeared on a Dave Mallett album. Following a close second to **"Artist In Me,"** Dave's live set features a trio of songs from **"Parallel Lives"** [1997]. "Summer Of My Dreams" amounts to a portrait of partaking joyous activities in simpler times, while "Parallel Lives," a sad tale of lost love, was the closing cut on the album. Finally, on **"Parallel Lives"** it was titled "Nothin' But A Long Goodbye," here, it's "A Long Goodbye." Whatever. As a lyricist Mallett's focus on the realities of day-to-day life has remained intact, even during the aforementioned sojourn in Nashville, and "A Long Goodbye" is an exposition on the passage of time, making friends – then [sadly] losing them, while continuing to deal with life the best one can. This

collection closes with “Ballad Of The St. Anne’s Reel” the second cut from “**Pennsylvania Sunrise**,” and features a spirited fiddle solo from Crippin.

Sadly on “**Midnight On the Water**” there’s no between song chat or insights from Dave, rather it’s a ‘let’s get on with it’ workmanlike collection of Mallett originals.

Note.

[*] - The only Mallett recording never to have been issued on CD, and one that Dave still doesn’t acknowledged on his web site discography.

[+] – I’m discounting Mallett’s “**Inches & Miles : 1977 –1980**,” since it was a compilation of his three previously released Newworld recordings.

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 08/06.