

Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer - Bio – In 3 Harmonious Parts

Dave's True Story

Dave Carter was born August 13th 1952 in Oxnard, California but only lived there for three weeks. His father worked for the navy. They moved to College Station, Texas where his father attended College, and studied mathematics and petroleum engineering. His parents were both Texans. The next move took them to Tulsa, Oklahoma. From time to time, Dave also lived in Grand Prairie, Texas and in Dallas. He recalled, *"I was in Texas from when I was really young through four, and then at various periods between the ages of seven and thirteen. Then we went back to Oklahoma."* Given piano lessons, by his paternal grandmother initially, from the age of four, those lessons came to an abrupt halt at age twelve when his maternal grandfather presented him with guitar. In Tulsa, he took lessons from country guitarist, Wayne King. Later he took classical guitar lessons from Manuel Eglesias. Dave began writing music before he became a teenager. As a teenager, his favourite musician was Texas blues man, Johnny Winter. Later his interest turned to the song poems of Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan and Paul Simon. Aged eighteen, Dave was in a rock band *"We used to travel around Kansas and Missouri and Oklahoma."* Reaching College age, he relocated to Norman, Oklahoma. *"I'd go to college for a while, then I'd quit school and hitchhike around. At one point I was moving pianos and organs in Tulsa, and I got tired of being treated like an idiot. That's when I threw myself into academics for a few years. I started racking up degrees. I was studying music at College."* Further degrees in Music Theory [a Masters] and Computer Science followed. It was while Dave was studying Mathematics in Norman, that he decided to relocate to a College in Portland, Oregon. The reason for the move, *"The west-coast is more open minded and more liberal. In Portland, Oregon if you say to people 'I'm a musician,' they go 'Oh, good.' It's fine to be a musician. If you say you're a musician in Oklahoma, the idea is that you should be arrested."* While he was studying Mathematics in Norman, Dave worked in a piano bar. *"I played jazz, but that's really glorifying it. I played in hotels. I was sort of Mr. Piano of Oklahoma City for about a year.."* Dave's move to Portland took place in the early nineties. Over the years that followed Carter was unsettled, but could never pinpoint the cause. Inspired by the television show **"The Road"** he decided to visit Nashville, and check out the songwriting community. During his one-week sojourn in Music City, Dave performed at a Douglas Corner Writer's Night. Inspired by his trip to the East, back in Portland, he won a songwriting competition promoted by the Portland Songwriters Association. Shortly after that he won the Sisters Folk Festival Songwriting Contest. For the ensuing two years they made him a competition judge, but we've jumped ahead a little. Carter also began performing at numerous open mikes in Portland. *"I knew I had to do it. Terrified as I was of doing it."* He met Dana Denton, a local songwriter with a studio in his house. Dave's first CD **"Snake-Handlin' Man"** was recorded there, literally one month after he returned from Nashville. With a recording to promote, he gathered a band of local musicians around him including Eric Park [accordion], Susan Martin [vocals], Arlene Hale [bass] and during 1996, Tracy Grammer [violin]. The story of Dave and Tracy's subsequent exploits follows below.....

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Sweet Tracy's Tale

Tracy Grammer first saw the light of day in Homestead, Florida. Her father was serving in the Air Force at the time. At the age of three her parents relocated to Southern California, specifically Laguna Hills in Orange County. As a young girl, Tracy's mother had played accordion and as she recalled *"My dad was a guitar player and he played for us all through my childhood. He had an electric and a lap steel guitar."* In the Grammer family archives there's a photograph of Tracy holding a guitar at the age of three. Six years later she picked up her first violin. Following some private lessons, Grammer began playing in, and later leading, her school orchestra, and eventually state orchestras. By the time she began attending College in Berkeley, in her own words, *"The violin just kind of fell out of favour with me. I didn't feel like playing anymore."* In order to fund her education, Tracy studied for a term and then worked for a term. During one of her visits home, her father introduced her to Curtis Coleman, one time member of the New Christy Minstrels during the sixties. Eventually, Tracy began performing with Curtis in local clubs. In the process she became reacquainted with her beloved violin, and also began playing guitar. They worked together as a duo for one summer. When she returned to complete her studies, Tracy discovered that if

she was a part-time College employee, her tuition fees were vastly reduced. Eventually she took a full-time job at the College, and also joined a four piece, San Francisco based electro-pop band, Juicy. Although the band was short lived, Tracy gained her first taste of working in a studio when cutting some band demos. It was an experience she wanted to repeat, and soon. A friend invited her to visit Portland. It was love at first sight. Having spent a decade in the Bay Area, Tracy decided to move north to the cleaner Oregon air. It was January 1996. Within months she was working with a local songwriter by the name of Dave Noble, and following one of their sets at the The Buffalo Gap, she caught her first Dave Carter gig. In the Spring of 2000, she encapsulated her reaction to Carter and his music with the words "*I wanted to play with that guy. I didn't know how that would happen, and it's the kind of thought that you don't really let yourself have. You know, this is just like a dream come true.*"

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Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer – A Very Fruitful Partnership

When Dave subsequently asked Tracy to audition for his band, she jumped at the opportunity. Over time, band members drifted away due to family commitments. In fact they were down to a duo, with a gig to fulfil, and Dave felt he needed to recruit a singer. As Tracy recalls, "*I had not sung with Dave at this point. It was, like, the day before the show, and Dave says "Do you sing?" I said, "Well, yeah." I had been waiting for months to be offered the opportunity to sing.*" As they say, eureka. "*He said, "Do you think you can learn these harmonies" and I said "Well, let's try it." I already knew the harmonies, because I had been listening to Susan do them. Dave was floored. He thought it was a miracle. It wasn't really a miracle, but he thought it was.*" Deciding to work as a duo, they sequestered themselves for about a year, and emerged in the Spring of 1998 in Texas, first winning at the Wildflower Folk Festival and then the prestigious Kerrville New Folk Songwriting competition. Returning to Portland, they cut their debut album **When I Go** in Tracy's kitchen. Taking the songs *on the road*, with Tracy adopting the role of booker, they toured aggressively for the following year. Subsequently signed by the Signature Sounds label, their sophomore disc, **Tanglewood Tree**, recorded in early 2000, received glowing reviews upon its release. Their third album **Drum Hat Buddha** was released in the summer of 2001, to even greater acclaim. Apart from now touring on a national basis, that year they played three of Canada's major summer Festivals, Falcon Ridge, Philadelphia and the fall Wine & Music Festival at Kerrville. In the spring of 2001 the pair toured the States with Joan Baez, and later that year they re-recorded the majority of songs that appeared on Carter's 1995 solo debut, "**Snake-Handlin' Man.**" Carter was such a prolific writer that the pair had hatched a plan to record and self-release, a series of *side project* albums, in addition to their official label releases. In the end they decided to shelve the release of the duo version of Carter's debut. A week before the couple were due to appear at the 2002 Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, Dave Carter suffered a heart attack and passed on Friday 19th July, in Hadley, Massachusetts, following an early morning run.

Dave and Tracy contributed to a couple of compilation albums. "**If I Had A Song : The Songs Of Pete Seeger, Vol. 2**" [2001] featured them performing Seeger's "The Emperor Is Naked Today-O," while "**Wonderland : A Winter Solstice Celebration**" [2002] contained Dave's "American Noel." Released in late July 2006, the album titled "**Seven Is The Number**" featured two previously unreleased Dave Carter songs – the album title track and "Gas Station Girl," while the remainder were duo interpretations of songs featured on Dave's "**Snake-Handlin' Man.**"

Discography

Dave Carter : "**Snake-Handlin' Man**" [1995] :

Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer : "**When I Go**" [1998] ; "**Tanglewood Tree**" [2000] ; "**Drum Hat Buddha**" [2001] ; "**Seven Is The Number**" [2006] :

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