

David Crosby - Life and Transplant Recipient

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Possibly more than anyone on the planet, David Crosby has lived a life that is emblematic of his generation's dizzying journey -- an agrarian ride through exhilarating highs and soul crushing lows on the paths of creative expression, political activism, personal growth and spiritual self-discovery. And yet amazingly, Crosby continues in perfect step with our times: healthy, sober and as productive as ever, he heads into the new millennium with a host of fresh creative projects and a successful new band, CPR, an aggregation that in itself is small miracle of creative synchronicity that grew out of the musician's chance reunion with his 30 year-old biological son.

A founding member of two seminal rock bands, Crosby is a two-time inductee in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. When the singer/songwriter stepped onstage in front of some 500,000 music- and life-celebrating - fans at Woodstock in 1969 as part of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young -- Crosby both shared and contributed to what many see as the generation's defining moment. In the three decades that followed, he enjoyed stunning artistic and financial success, collecting multiple gold and platinum records while continuing to be an artistic firebrand with over a dozen albums by Crosby, Stills and Nash (and sometimes Young), solo projects and duet albums with fellow band member Graham Nash. But long before Woodstock, Crosby had already made his mark on rock music and the culture that spawned it.

The son of Academy Award-winning cinematographer Floyd Crosby (â ¬ SHigh Noon â ¬ •, â ¬ STabu â ¬ •, among others), the performer grew up in Santa Barbara, and then migrated south to Los Angeles during the folk music revival of the early 60's. During this period he also traveled extensively throughout the United States as a solo singer/songwriter, honing his craft alongside such luminaries as Fred Neil, Cass Elliot, Bob Dylan and many others, performing dates at college hootenannies and smoke-filled coffeehouses. After a brief stint (with his late brother, Chip) in Les Baxter's Balladeers, Crosby returned to L.A. in 1963, eventually joining forces with fellow musicians Roger (formerly Jim) McGuinn, Gene Clark, Chris Hillman, and Michael Clarke as the Byrds -- a ground-breaking band that virtually gave birth to the Folk/Rock genre, possibly the most important wave in pop music during the mid-60's.

The group's distinctive sound blended the melodic strength and sweetness of folk music with the energy and drive of amplified rock, propelled by McGuinn's 12-string electric guitar and Crosby's ethereal harmonies. Beginning with a effulgent interpretation of Bob Dylan's â ¬ SMr. Tambourine Man â ¬ • - an international Top-ten it which combined the best elements of The Beatles and Dylan - continuing with classic material such as Clark's â ¬ SI'll Feel A Whole Lot Better â ¬ •, a re-working of Pete Seeger's â ¬ STurn, Turn, Turn â ¬ • and culminating with the progressive psychedelic classic â ¬ SEight Miles High, â ¬ • (co-written by Crosby) the Byrds perfectly conveyed the mix of social irony, youthful optimism and free expression that characterized the still-dawning â ¬ Syouth counterculture. â ¬ •

Following Gene Clark's departure in mid-1966, Crosby was given more room to express himself as a songwriter, and took great advantage of the creative space, delivering such visionary compositions as â ¬ SWhat's Happening?!?! â ¬ •, â ¬ SRenaissance Fair â ¬ •, â ¬ STribal Gathering â ¬ • and â ¬ SEverybody's Been Burned â ¬ •. These songs brought forth a wellspring of musical ideas and moods that began to define Crosby's sense of progressive style, a style that continues to this very day. Utilizing open guitar tunings, extraordinary chord progressions and occasional Jazz-inspired melodic flavors â ¬ as well as intelligent, penetrating lyrics which mirrored the mood of the day, it was often the case that many of Crosby's

songs that stood out on such Byrds albums as *Younger Than Yesterday* and *Notorious Byrd Brothers*.

Crosby's musical and personal idealism often found him clashing with the other members of The Byrds, and by autumn of 1967 he was unceremoniously fired from the band. Immediately after this, on a trip to Florida, he purchased a sixty-foot wooden schooner, *The Mayan*, that the sea-loving artist still sails today. On this trip he also met Joni Mitchell, and wasting neither time nor talent, Crosby went to work producing the debut album that introduced the world to this extraordinary genius singer and songwriter. In fact, Mitchell was just one in a long line of talented artists -- including Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Jackson Browne, and Phil Collins -- whose careers have been graced through the years by Crosby's support, participation and encouragement.

Meanwhile in 1968, Crosby had begun writing songs with Stephen Stills, at the time partnered with Neil Young in Buffalo Springfield. The pair knew they had struck musical gold when they invited singer-songwriter Graham Nash, from the British band the Hollies, to add his voice to theirs on two songs, "Helplessly Hoping" and "You Don't Have To Cry." In Crosby's words, "When we heard Nash put on that third harmony, I thought I was gonna die.... It was about the rightist thing I ever heard."

In 1969 the trio released their debut album, *Crosby, Stills & Nash*. The group's unprecedented sound, superb musicianship and collection of enduring original songs, including Crosby's near-Elizabethan "Guinevere" and the Aquarian anthem, "Wooden Ships" (co-authored by Crosby, Stills and the Airplane's Paul Kantner) sent the album straight to number one on the charts. That summer, Neil Young joined the congregation, and the Woodstock performance cemented their identity as an iconic presence in rock music, and thirty years of successful tours and albums have repeatedly reaffirmed that fact.

In 1970, Crosby also released his solo debut, *If I Could Only Remember My Name*, a record that is still considered one of the greatest albums of the 1970's. Although overflowing with sterling guest performances by Neil Young, Graham Nash as well as members of Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead and Santana, the innovative album clearly illustrated how much Crosby had grown as a truly original and imaginative musician. Aside from this landmark project, Crosby also paired up with Graham Nash in between CSN (&Y) albums and tours, and throughout the 1970's the duo cut several excellent albums, including the critically acclaimed *Wind On The Water*, among others.

But the astonishing numbers of creative highs in Crosby's life have been offset by an equally mind-boggling share of personal challenges and disasters. Drugs and alcohol were an omnipresent part of the music scene, and for Crosby, success led to increasingly destructive habits, and eventual alienation from most of his friends and fellow musicians. As the 1980's began he found himself in the grips of a serious drug abuse problem. He had found lasting romance with Jan Dance, who worked at Criteria Studios in Florida; but the couple's bond couldn't compensate for the downward addictive spiral of their lives.

The crash came in 1985, when a drug-related arrest in Dallas a few years earlier resulted in a prison term for Crosby. He spent a year in Texas jails before the court overturned his conviction on appeal, and he was set free. In that time both Crosby and Dance had undergone detoxification and the first steps toward recovery. After the musician's release the two were married, beginning a happy life together that continues to flourish today.

Yet, in spite of his hard-won personal transformation and renewed productivity, Crosby endured a new series of personal disasters in the 1990's. These included a serious motorcycle accident, financial woes due to criminal mishandling of his business affairs, and severe earthquake damage to his lovingly restored home, followed by its loss through foreclosure. By far the worst news, however,

was the threat to his life the musician faced as his liver, damaged by years of substance abuse and a previously undiagnosed case of Hepatitis C, went into rapid deterioration. By 1995 Crosby was hospitalized, facing certain death in a very short time unless he received a liver transplant.

In a series of events worthy of Charles Dickens, an organ donor miraculously became available and the musician's life was saved by a successful transplant; almost simultaneously, 30 year-old professional composer and keyboardist James Raymond discovered through a birth record search that Crosby was his biological father; the two met, and not only got along, but formed a personal and musical connection that eventually led to their teaming with guitarist Jeff Pevar in the new band, christened CPR. Crosby told BAM magazine at the time, "The kind of telepathic interchange that takes place between these guys is the kind of thing that I have with Nash. It's astounding." In this same short season of miracles, Crosby and his wife gave birth to a son, Django, and James and Stacia Raymond presented Crosby with a new granddaughter, Grace.

Today, Crosby continues to tour and record with CPR, who have so far released three critically lauded albums, CPR, CPR Live at the Wiltern, and 2001's Just Like Gravity, which appeared on several 'Top-Ten albums of the year' polls, including the venerable rock magazine, 'Crawdaddy!'. In addition, a lifetime of blissfully dedicated and committed work for the environment, free speech, human rights and other causes inspired the artist to write a book documenting the activism and social awareness of contemporary musical artists. Titled Stand and Be Counted, the book was being made into a series of television documentaries, with Crosby selecting the subjects from among his friends and doing many of the interviews.

Aside from all of this activity, David Crosby didn't ignore his day job with CSN&Y, and the legendary quartet conducted two monumentally artistic and financially successful U.S. tours between 2000 and 2002, as well as recording and releasing the acclaimed Looking Forward on Warner Bros. Records, which featured Crosby's song, Stand And Be Counted as a sort of musical centerpiece.

With a new family, a successful new band and quite literally a new lease on life, David Crosby is a genuinely happy man whose passion and artistry continues to touch and inspire us all.

Bryan Alsop

[Submitted by Radical Red]