

Thee Swan Recording Company

Artist Biography: "Dave Cloud: Specialist in Ecstasy"

Historian of religions Mircea Eliade described *shamans* as specialists in ecstasy, able to "penetrate the underworld and rise to the sky" in a transcendent state.¹

Not surprisingly, fans and critics alike have used the word "shamanistic" to describe Nashville's Dave Cloud. By day a volunteer book reader for the blind, Cloud underwent a transformation at night, and for over three decades entertained patrons of local dive bar Springwater, often with his band The Gospel of Power. Cloud's unpredictable performances could be uproarious, jaw-droppingly bizarre events, delighting some while frightening others. His music – an amalgam of experimental garage rock and lounge crooning – defies easy categorization, but his delivery makes the experience hard to forget. As *The Sunday Times* observed, "Cloud's bellowed vocals, Beefheart-style beat poetry, hefty riffs and freestyle wig-outs achieve a transcendental psychedelic primitivism."²

It was 20 years after his first gig at Springwater that Cloud finally decided to record an album. Bassist Matt Swanson produced *Songs I Will Always Sing* (1999) and *All My Best* (2004), and released both CDs on his own Thee Swan Recording Company label. Listeners from Paris to Auckland embraced Cloud, the lo-fi tantric yogi whose songs provide a sort of musical psychiatry through their darkly humorous exploration of carnal hedonism.

UK label Fire Records took notice and in 2006 re-released Cloud's entire catalog as the double-CD *Napoleon of Temperance*. European critics greeted the album enthusiastically; one even suggested that Cloud might be "the last genuine lost genius."² To support the new album Cloud and his band performed a dozen shows in London and at Bergenfest, where Cloud enjoyed a four-day residency. Producer Swanson colorfully described Cloud's appeal: "he holds a dusty mirror to pop music's tawdry conventions, deftly dismembering the Frankenstein's monster of modern musical excess."

Cloud also worked as an occasional actor, appearing in several films, videos and television programs, including Harmony Korine's films *Gummo* and *Trash Humpers*, an episode of the TV comedy show *Travel Sick*, and the music video for Bobby Bare's "Are You Sincere." In spring 2008 Cloud was featured in a TV ad campaign for Budweiser beer in the UK.

Dave Cloud & The Gospel of Power created several more recordings for Fire Records, including *Pleasure Before Business* (which the band supported with another tour of Norway and the UK), "Fever," *Practice in the Milky Way*, *Live at Gonerfest*, and their final album *Today is the Day That They Take Me Away*.

On February 18, 2015 Dave Cloud died in Nashville of complications related to melanoma. He was 58.

For more information visit www.davecloud.com.

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¹Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1951), 182.

²Stewart Lee, "Dave Cloud & The Gospel of Power: *Napoleon of Temperance*," in *The Sunday Times*, 25 June 2006.