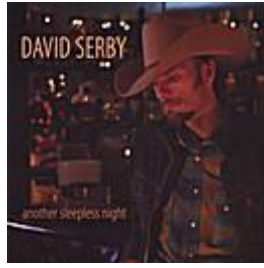


## Mp3 David Serby - Another Sleepless Night



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Everything from jumpin' buck shuffles and roadhouse rock, to cryin' time tearjerkers and honk-a-billy blues - Serby's music is a fistful of quarters fed into the jukebox at your favorite old honky tonk bar. 15 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Country Rock, COUNTRY: Traditional Country Details: David Serby knows his songbook is a bit intense with its inventory of heartache, desperation and sordid surrenders. There's just not much he can do about it. "There aren't a lot of happy endings in my songs, I know that, and I've tried to find some. But like a lot of folks, in my life the most memorable things that have happened to me were the saddest. There's tremendous feeling in the bad things - That's what I end up coming back to, and that's what I end up singing about." There are plenty of bad things in the lyrics but the music itself has been quite kind to Serby, who lives in South Pasadena and walks in line with L.A.'s long history of big-city troubadours who shuffle down urban sidewalks wearing rural boots. There's plenty of 1960sBakersfield in his sound, as well as healthy doses of Dave Alvin and John Doe, but his genre--like his life story--defies tidy cataloging. Serby's path has been a vagabond affair and no surprise his music favors rootless characters and tumbleweed hearts. He was born in North Hollywood in April 1964 and, six months later, his parents gave him and his older brother up for adoption. The two boys were split up and bundled off to different families. David ended up with the Serby family and soon was playing by the creeks and cornfields of Illinois on the banks of the Fox River in a small town called Yorkville. By seventh grade, the family moved to Orange County,California, but instead of the posh coastal enclaves that the county name now conjures up, he was living in Placentia, a drab inland town where rows of look-alike tract homes were quickly replacing rows of orange trees. The city's name, by the way, comes from the Latin for "a pleasant place to live." Serby says "pleasant" just about nails it. "There's not a lot to the place and what there is, well, it's about eighteen shades of beige." After high school came a wrenching marriage and a quick,

curious career in Hollywood as script reader. There was no particular sign that music would be part of his life; there had been a teenage stint as a punk singer but that was more about the chance to scream than anything else. When his marriage crashed and his adoptive father died, the 30-year-old Serby was reeling. He took a job as an insurance adjuster only because his dad had done it and the son was desperate for anything steady in his life. The job came down to indexing calamity and its costs--it was heartache by the numbers. "That damn job.... I was instantly miserable." But even in this grim swirl, Serby made two moves that would become major pivot points in his life; he began searching out information about his biological parents and he went and bought himself a guitar. "I hadn't touched a guitar in years and music wasn't even on my radar as a career move. But right then and there, I just wanted to have a guitar in my hands. I can't explain it." He started playing at backyard parties in Long Beach and, scribbling lyrics, eventually worked up his nerve to try some open mike nights. "I was scared out of my mind, no joke. I had tunnel vision, everything started to go dark. I was so nervous. But I made it through and did it again and again." Eventually, he made it to Billy Block's Western Beat show at Highland Grounds and then to a local circuit of clubs where the pay usually included a free round of drinks. He picked up some fans and supporters, none more important than veteran player Ed Tree, who became Serby's bandleader and guide to this new amplified life. In 2004, Tree also guided Serby during his first recording sessions. While he was searching for his music future, he also learned he has a surprising music past. He and his new wife, Barbara, tracked down his biological parents, and his brother, for a reunion that brought a barrage of emotions, not all of them good. There was also an unexpected revelation: His biological father, Pete Canton, was a longtime musician who had come home from Vietnam and launched into a successful honky-tonk career. Canton handed his "new" son his old career scrapbook. There were photos of Canton with Johnny Cash, Reba McIntire and Tex Williams, a letter from Merle Haggard and, on one page, an especially familiar face. "That there is about the best pedal-steel player on Earth," Canton said of one of his best friends, who was pictured sharing a beer with him. "That's Jay Dee Maness," Serby said. He knew because the esteemed player had sat in with Serby on his first album. The pair were both plainly shocked by how their separate lives had become connected even without their knowledge. The more Serby plays, the more his biological father's era seems to echo in his own music. There were also those early, simple days back in Illinois, when the youngster listened to the distant twang of WMAQ, the Chicago country-music beacon, and as he finds his voice, more and more of the old signals are coming

through. "I find that the more I learn the more I go back further and further." He also listens to the music of peers and searches their work for lessons. There's one, though, that still eludes him. "I've got this friend, he writes these great songs about his happy memories and all the good things, and he plays these really upbeat numbers in his show. It's great, it really is. I just don't know how he does it." -- GDB

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