

DAVE MILLIGAN

The short story so far:

Dave is a highly versatile musician and a leading figure in the diverse Scottish music scene. His musical imagination flows freely between multiple genres; most notably in the worlds of jazz and celtic music. In a professional career spanning thirty years, he has travelled all over the world as a performer, composer, arranger, musical director and educator.

Now based near Edinburgh, Dave grew up in the Scottish Borders and studied at the City of Leeds College of Music, before returning to his native Scotland. To this day he continues to draw inspiration from a wide range of music; from jazz to folk & traditional, and film scores to dance music.

Having established himself early in his career as one of the country's leading jazz pianists, Dave's work with some of the folk and Celtic music scene's brightest artists earned him a reputation as a hugely adaptable, creative force.

As part of Glasgow's *Celtic Connections* festival in 2003, he co-founded and directed – along with harpist, vocalist and composer **Corrina Hewat** – ***The Unusual Suspects***, a 22-piece big-band of leading folk and jazz musicians that set the bench-mark for the wave of large-scale ensembles that followed in the contemporary folk scene. The *Scotsman* would later count their debut performance in a list of the top 20 gigs of all time.

Dave has played a key role in countless projects and performances at Celtic Connections since its inception, most recently as musical director of the festival's star-studded 25th anniversary opening concert. Other performances include appearances with artists such as **Larry Carlton**, **Mark Knopfler**, **The McCrary Sisters**, **Karine Polwart**, **Trilok Gurtu**, **Art Farmer**, **Carol Kidd** and **Camille O'Sullivan** to name a few.

Dave has performed all over the world with a diverse array of bands, including: his long-established duos with **Corrina Hewat** and with concertina virtuoso **Simon Thumire**; as pianist and arranger with award-winning jazz trumpeter **Colin Steele**; as pianist and founding member of the international super group **String Sisters**, featuring six of the world's top female fiddlers: **Liz Carroll**, **Annbjörg Lien**, **Liz Knowles**, **Emma Härdelin**, **Catriona Macdonald** and **Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh**. String Sisters started in 2001 and have continued to dazzle audiences worldwide, from the **Celtic Colours** festival in Canada to the **Rainforest World Music Festival** in Borneo. Their latest album ***Between Wind and Water*** was released in 2018 to universal critical acclaim.

SELECTION OF PRESS QUOTES:

THE INDEPENDENT

"A pianist of quite astonishing verve and subtlety... a whirlwind tour de force."

THE GUARDIAN

"One of the Scottish jazz world's modest stars, an almost carelessly-gifted eclectic, his roots are as deep in folk music as jazz. The themes are terrific, and so is the playing. Eccentric... memorable and unique."

THE HERALD

"Scottish music, Jazz, Cuban rhythms – all let out with an entirely natural sense of flow."

THE SCOTSMAN

"Dazzling music-making... he is equally at home in jazz and folk, and the genres are now deeply interlinked in his musical imagination."

ARTIST WEBSITE: <https://www.davemilligan.co.uk/>

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS:



BANDCAMP

<https://davemilligan.bandcamp.com/>



SOUNDCLOUD

<https://soundcloud.com/davemilligan/>



FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/davemilliganmusic>



TWITTER

<https://twitter.com/milligandave>



INSTAGRAM

<https://www.instagram.com/thedavemilligan/>



SPOTIFY

https://open.spotify.com/artist/0YJniQJFG48YB9IfLDGL90?si=byoQykoTQTaqtg8xND0h_Q



APPLE MUSIC

<https://music.apple.com/us/artist/dave-milligan/90860630>

The slightly longer story so far:

AS AN ARTIST

As a collaborator and sideman, Dave has worked with a huge range of musicians from very diverse backgrounds – in one-off projects to long-term partnerships.

Since the mid 1990s he's been working with award-winning trumpeter **Colin Steele** on a variety of projects including: Midnight Blue Band, Melting Pot, Masquenada, Colin Steele Quintet, Stramash and most recently in duo format.

He has been pianist and arranger for every album by Colin's quintet and quartet as well as the debut release for the 10-piece Stramash with a follow up planned for later in 2025/early 2026.

Dave have also worked extensively over the last decade with writer and story-teller **Mike Maran** on his theatre shows '*Did You Used To Be R.D. Laing?*', '*A Funny Valentine – The Story and Music of Chet Baker*' and he wrote the score for '*Novecento – The Legend of 1900*'.

His duo with concertina virtuoso **Simon Thoumire** has also been a greatly admired musical partnership over the last decade. They first met whilst playing on a tour of Germany with the band Seannachie. It was clear that their playing complemented each other's styles and they decided to make an album together. The CD "The Big Day In" was launched at Cape Breton's Celtic Colours festival in October 2001. Since then they have played all over the UK, Europe, Canada & Australia, and have released a second album "Third Flight Home".

In 1998 he teamed up with Shetland fiddle star **Catriona Macdonald** to form the core of her band, they have since recorded two hugely popular albums and toured throughout the UK, Europe and Canada. January 2000 also saw Catriona and the band create the String Sisters project and it premiered at Celtic Connections that year. This project brought together six of the most exciting female fiddle players in the world: **Liz Carroll, Annbjørg Lien, Liz Knowles, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh** and **Natalie MacMaster**, later replaced by **Emma Hardelin**. 2007 saw them release the sensational String Sisters "Live in Norway" CD & DVD for which they were nominated for The Spelamann Prize, followed by the release of "Between Wind and Water" in 2018. They have performed some extensive tours of Scandinavia, and in 2012 headlined at the Rainforest World Music Festival in Borneo.

Other artists Dave has worked with include: **Larry Carlton, Mark Knopfler, Art Farmer, Trilok Gurtu, Scott Hamilton, Pete King, Joe Temperley, Harry Allen, Charlie Mariano, Valery Ponamarev, Bill McHenry, Spike Robinson, Howard Alden, Ken Peplowski, Buddy DeFranco, Enzo Favata, Danilo Gallo, U.T. Gandhi, Julian Arguelles, Tommy Smith, Carol Kidd, Tina May, Camille O'Sullivan, Eliza Carthy, McFall's Chamber, Session A9, Alasdair Fraser, Chris Stout, Gordie Sampson, Jason Singh and Eugene Skeef.**

AS A COMPOSER

Dave has written an extensive range of work: commissions, original music for recordings, theatre, T.V and Radio. These include works for Piano solos & duos, Jazz Trio, String Quartet, Large Folk Ensemble, Jazz Big Band, as well as countless tunes performed by groups within both Jazz & Folk idioms.

In 1998 Dave was amongst the first musicians to be invited to write music for the New Voices series at the Celtic Connections festival. The result was a 45 minute work for 2 two pianos, performed along with Scottish piano legend **Andy Thorburn**. More recently, he was commissioned to write for the **Edinburgh Jazz Festival Orchestra**, for which he produced the 90 minute work ‘Sylvander & Clarinda’, featuring an international 16-piece jazz big band plus guest soloist **Joe Temperly** and three of Scotland’s leading folk singers **Karine Polwart, Annie Grace & Corrina Hewat**. Dave has more recently been working on some brand-new music for the Edinburgh Jazz Festival, to be performed by the ‘Stone Islands Big Band’ – an exciting new eleven piece group made up of Scottish, Italian and Sardinian musicians.

DAVE MILLIGAN TRIO

Dave’s trio, with **Tom Bancroft** (drums) and **Tom Lyne** (bass) started playing together around 1998. Initially they played regularly around Scotland, exploring the jazz repertoire, but soon gravitated toward playing Dave’s original compositions. Considered one of the leading forces of the jazz scene in Scotland, they have released 2 highly acclaimed albums.

“A pianist of quite astonishing verve and subtlety... A fervently jigging, Scottish-dance feel... a cracking trio.”

THE GUARDIAN

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

In January 2003, a giant project that set a new benchmark in Scottish music was unveiled at the Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow. Conceived and masterminded by Dave Milligan & Corrina Hewat, the project became a massive super-group called The Unusual Suspects.

It turned out to be a pivotal moment in the contemporary Scottish music scene. It was highly acclaimed by the press: *“The Legend in the making that is The Unusual Suspects...”* *“The sound of the century in Scottish Music”*, with the **Scotsman** later listing it as one of their top 20 gigs of all time.

It also proved to be a catalyst for countless musicians who went on to form large scale bands and folk orchestras, such as Bellowhead and Treacherous Orchestra, as well as providing inspiration for a host of youth projects including Aberdeen International Youth Festival’s Ceol Mor, Kathryn Tickell’s Folkestra, and The Gordon Duncan Experience to name only a few.

Milligan and Hewat devised the concept and formation of the band partly in response to the growing number of large-scale works that were being commissioned by festivals around the UK, that invariably involved a host of traditional and folk musicians, within the setting of a classical orchestra or other established mass ensemble. For Dave and Corrina, the thing that continually let these projects down was the sense that the traditional musicians were being asked to play composed music that was alien to them. And while that may be great for their personal development, the music always sounded somewhat uncomfortable. The underlying ethos of The Unusual Suspects from the start was to bring together world-class musicians who already shared a musical dialect, and allow them to do what comes naturally to them. From there, you can fuse the music with other influences by getting other musicians into that same environment who also do what is natural to them. In short, get the best, and let them do what they do best.

The Unusual Suspects went on to develop and refine their sound — numbers varying between its original 32-piece line-up, down to a handful of performances with the tighter 17-piece. They have toured throughout the UK, France, Spain, Norway, Luxembourg, Germany, Croatia and in Canada

where Dave & Corrina were invited to create the Unusual Suspects of Celtic Colours as part of the Celtic Colours Festival in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. They have released 2 albums to date.

"It's big, bold, brassy, and adventurous... This whirlwind of sound takes Scottish music to unimagined heights! Is this the best live folk orchestra Scotland ever saw? What a statement [The Unusual Suspects] make with this album!" **THE LIVING TRADITION**

BACHUÉ

Several years before the Unusual Suspects, Dave and Corrina's first joint project was a band called **Bachué**. Always with the duo of harp/vocals & piano at its core, Bachué often performed as a quartet with percussion, occasionally fiddle or trumpet, and latterly settled on a trio with drummer **Donald Hay** until they stopped performing in 2007. The band was consistently acclaimed for its groundbreaking and jazz-inflected approach to Scottish and Celtic traditions. Their music has inspired a whole new generation of players and their three releases are often cited as a source of inspiration for new music being created to this day.

"The cross-fertilization between Hewat and Milligan's shared jazz training and their love of Scottish tradition has been a strikingly fruitful one from the start. A decade down the line, though, their range of expression and depth of technical assurance has expanded tremendously, cemented by the fine-tuned rapport between their minds and hands."

SCOTTISH PIANO COLLECTION

In 2003 Dave published a book of piano music; a mix of traditional Scottish music and his own compositions. Through his work with Bachué, The Unusual Suspects and as a collaborator with some of the UK's leading folk musicians, he has developed a style of playing that has made him one of the most individual voices in the Scottish music scene. The book has since become highly popular with pianists (and other instrumentalists), and is widely used by students looking for inspiration to develop their music and technique.

"A huge influence on me. He is a key player in developing possibilities within Scottish folk solo piano arranging and his Scottish Piano Collection proves to be an inspiration to all." Heather Shelley, RCS student.

EDUCATION

Dave has earned a reputation as a highly effective and inspirational teacher. He first started teaching when saxophonist Tommy Smith invited him to join a small team of tutors in the National Jazz Institute in Glasgow in 1996. He has gone on to teach at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Napier University, Newcastle University, the Irish World Music Centre in Limerick, National Centre for Excellence in Traditional Music in Plockton, Feis Rois, as well as workshops and master classes at festivals around the world. He teaches piano, group work, composition, arranging, harmony and improvisation.

He has recently been working for Music For Youth as a mentor, which involves judging at their National Festivals in Scotland and England. Music for Youth is a national music education charity providing free access to performance and audience opportunities for young musicians across the UK through its annual season of festivals and concerts. In 2011 Dave also took a group of youngsters from Feis Rois to perform at the MFY proms at the Albert Hall in London.

FURTHER PRESS QUOTES:

"A great trio – thunking, funky Bad Plus-style grooviness... this is a unit with a deep sense of dynamics and groove. Highly contagious." **JAZZWISE**

"A delight – excellent, captivating, entertaining... an individual voice..." **JAZZ REVIEW**

"The trio has an exceptionally complete and cohesive sound... beautifully restrained" **THE OBSERVER**

"Superbly constructed composition, breathing as one... intensely satisfying." **JAZZVIEWS**

"A dazzling display of technical skills and invention... makes an enormous impression – a keyboard master of today who is more melodic than, say, Bobo Stenson, but gentler than Jarrett. Certainly that's the sort of company he belongs in." **JAZZ UK**

SELECTED RECORDINGS

- **Dave Milligan - *Momento*** 2020 / 2021 (BBRCD018)
(Featuring Danilo Gallo and U.T. Gandhi)
- **Dave Milligan Trio - *Shops*** 2009 (TRCD0025)
(Featuring Tom Bancroft and Tom Lyne)
- **Dave Milligan Trio - *Late Show*** 2003 (CABER030)
(Featuring Tom Bancroft and Tom Lyne)
- **Dave Milligan - *Did You Used To Be R.D.Laing?*** 2002 (MMP001) (Solo piano)
- **Karine Polwart and Dave Milligan - *Still As Your Sleeping*** 2021 (HUD025CD)
- **Simon Thoumire and Dave Milligan - *Portraits*** 2023 (HUD025CD)
- **The Unusual Suspects - *Big Like This*** 2011 (BBRCD017)
- **The Unusual Suspects - *Live In Scotland*** 2004 (FSRCD0027)
- **String Sisters – *Between Wind & Water*** 2018 (SISTERS 118)
(Featuring Liz Carroll, Annbjørg Lien, Liz Knowles, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Catriona Macdonald and Emma Hardelin)
- **String Sisters – *Live in Norway*** 2018 (COM4520)
(Featuring Liz Carroll, Annbjørg Lien, Liz Knowles, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Catriona Macdonald and Emma Hardelin)
- **Colin Steele – *Joni*** 2020 (MA 82)
(Featuring Dave Milligan, Calum Gourlay and Alyn Cosker)
- **Colin Steele – *Diving For Pearls*** 2017 (MA 82)
(Featuring Michael Buckley, Dave Milligan, Calum Gourlay and Stu Ritchie)

- **Colin Steele – *Even In The Darkest Places* 2017** (GAD002)
(Featuring Michael Buckley, Dave Milligan, Calum Gourlay and Stu Ritchie)
- **Colin Steele - *Stramash* 2008** (GAD001)
(Featuring Phil Bancroft, Dave Milligan, Aidan O'Rourke, Catriona Macdonald, Mairi Campbell, Su-a Lee, Rory Campbell, Aidan O'Donnell, Stu Ritchie)
- **Colin Steele - *Through The Waves* 2004** (act9436-2)
(Featuring Michael Buckley, Dave Milligan, Aidan O'Donnell and Stu Ritchie)
- **Colin Steele - *The Journey Home* 2002** (CABER029)
(Featuring Julian Arguelles, Dave Milligan, Aidan O'Donnell and John Rae)
- **Colin Steele - *Twilight Dreams* 2000** (CABER024)
(Featuring Julian Arguelles, David Milligan, Brian Shiels and John Rae)
- **Simon Thumire & David Milligan - *Third Flight Home* 2007** (CDFSR1736)
- **Simon Thumire & David Milligan - *The Big Day In* 2001** (CDFSR1713)
- **Bachué - *The Butterfly* 2004** (BBRCD015)
(Corrina Hewat, Dave Milligan, Donald Hay, Colin Steele)
- **Bachué - *A Certain Smile* 1999** (CUL114D)
(Corrina Hewat, Dave Milligan, Davy Cattanach, Brian Shiels, Phil Bancroft, Horse MacDonald)
- **Bachué - *Bachue Café* 1996** (HRMCD001)
(Corrina Hewat, Dave Milligan, Mairi Campbell, Iain Fraser, , Brian Shiels, Davy Cattanach)
- **Corrina Hewat - *My Favourite Place* 2007** (CDFSR 1719)
(Featuring Dave Milligan, Donald Hay, Karine Polwart)
- **Catriona - *Macdonald Over The Moon* 2007** (PAP002)
(Featuring Dave Milligan, Conrad Ivitsky and James Mackintosh)
- **Catriona - *Macdonald Bold* 2000** (PAP001)
(Featuring Dave Milligan, Tony McManus, Conrad Ivitsky and James Mackintosh)
- **Karine Polwart - *Scribbled In Chalk* 2006** (Hegri Music)
- **Sophie Bancroft - *Hot and Cold* 2005** (LISALEO)
- **Kathryn Tickell - *Back To The Hills* 2002** (RES001)
- **Swirler - *Swirler* 1999** (CABER006)
(Featuring Kevin Mackenzie. Phil Bancroft, Dave Milligan, Tom Bancroft & John Spiers)
- **Suzanne Bonnar - *Empty Tables* 1998** (JBCD9001)
(Featuring Tommy Smith, Dave Milligan, Tom MacNiven, Ewen Vernal and John Rae)
- **Carol Kidd - *A Singer For All Seasons* 1998** (JACD11)