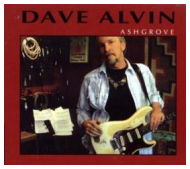
Dave Alvin - Ashgrove (2004)



01. Ashgrove [06:15] 02. Rio Grande [04:25] 03. Black Sky [04:48] 04. Nine Volt Heart [04:57] 05. Out of Control [06:34] 06. Everett Ruess [04:51] 07. Sinful Daughter [04:28] 08. The Man in the Bed [04:35] 09. Black Haired Girl [05:25] 10. Ashgrove 2 [05:56] Dave Alvin - Guitars, Vocals Chris Gaffney - Vocal Harmony, Vocals (Background) Bob Glaub - Bass Don Heffington - Drums, Percussion Greg Leisz - Guitars, Vocal Harmony, Vocals (Background) David Piltch - Double Bass Patrick Warren - Keyboards

Dave Alvin began examining the quieter side of his musical personality in earnest on his 1994 disc, King of California, and subsequent albums Blackjack David and Public Domain: Songs from the Wild Land followed in a similar path, leaving some fans to wonder when or if Alvin was ever going to crank up the amps in the recording studio again. Well, the news on Ashgrove, Alvin's first album for the Yep Roc label, is that Dave is rockin' again...though just a little bit. Ashgrove (named after the famed L.A. nightspot where Alvin saw legendary bluesmen play when the was a teenager) finds Alvin digging into the blues, and while Dave's blues don't kick like, say, Jon Spencer these days, this is still several steps closer to the sound and feel of his early solo work such as Romeo's Escape and Blue Blvd. The lean but potent blues undertow of "Ashgrove" and the smoky slow burn of "Black Sky" offer subtle but genuine muscle and punch, and the sinuous "Out of Control" and "Black Haired Girl" prove that Alvin's tougher side has not abandoned him. At the same time, Alvin hasn't abandoned the more contemplative side of his nature, either, and as a songwriter he's continued to mature. "Everett Ruess" and "The Man in the Bed" are two deeply moving but very different portraits of men pondering their lives near the end of their journeys through this world, and "Nine Volt Heart" is a witty but powerful testament to what music can mean in someone's life. Overall, the quieter material makes up the bulk of Ashgrove's playing time, but the handful of blues-based tunes on board give the set a texture that's cool and sharp, and the result resides in a satisfying middle ground that ought to please fans on both side of the electric guitar issue. ---Mark Deming, AllMusic Review

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