

## Al Perkins Biography



**AL PERKINS** today is equally at home in the studio adding his timeless pedal steel to albums by Nashville's elite band of artists, as he is adding white hot snarling lap steel to the dynamic live appearances of alt.country acts, or complementing Chris Hillman's traditional bluegrass sound with his signature dobro playing.

This legend of popular music was born and raised in Texas and learned to play Hawaiian steel guitar at the age of 9. Playing in West Texas bands throughout the sixties, it wasn't until his discovery by Mickey Jones & Kenny Rogers of The First Edition, and release from the US Army Reserves in the early seventies, that his musical career took off with the country rock band Shiloh. Perkins found himself hired to play pedal steel and lead guitar in the new incarnation of The Flying Burrito Brothers, and recorded

the seminal live album *The Last of the Red Hot Burritos* in 1972. The band splintered, and Perkins along with former Byrd, Chris Hillman, joined Manassas. Led by Stephen Stills, they were one of the most talented units in music at the time. Equally at home with Latin jams, rock, blues, country, folk, and bluegrass, Manassas was one of the most versatile outfits in rock history.

As the second album was released and Stills was being drawn more towards his work with Crosby Stills and Nash, Perkins and Hillman found themselves joining up with Richie Furay (Buffalo Springfield and Poco founding member) and J.D. Souther, forming the Souther Hillman Furay band. Perkins moved into producing records in the mid 70s, but did tour again with Michael Nesmith, Debby Boone and McGuinn & Hillman. He managed to also continue working as a session player, contributing to many of the notable albums of that time, including the Eagles' *On The Border*. Continuing his production work into the 80s, Perkins also toured with Chris Hillman as a duo which later developed into the Desert Rose Band. In 1986 Al toured and recorded with Dolly Parton for several years before moving to Nashville in 1989.

It was in Nashville he reunited with Emmylou Harris on a new project called the Nash Ramblers. Al previously worked with Emmylou on the two Gram Parsons solo albums. (It was this association with Parsons that led to Perkins being called in to play on the Rolling Stones' *Exile on Main Street* album) Emmylou and her new band, obviously inspired by the history of the famous auditorium, responded by putting together a stunning live set spanning the history of country music. The album, *Live at the Ryman*, was to win a Grammy award in 1992.

Al Perkins continues to tour and record, and is highly regarded for taking time to help develop new musical ventures with up-and-coming artists. He has played and toured with artists as diverse as Bob Dylan, Cher, Rita Coolidge, Dan Fogelberg and Dwight Yoakam, yet he manages to share his time, appearing with long-time associate Chris Hillman and with veteran country singer Michael Martin

Murphey. A highlight of Perkins' long career was his appearance on stage alongside James Burton and Keith Richards and a host of stars at the Gram Parsons tribute show in California in the summer of 2004.

Somehow in his busy schedule, Perkins managed to find enough time to put together a collection of studio outtakes and rare recordings spanning the breadth of his career. His *Snapshots* album chronicles associations with many of his previous musical buddies, and features long lost or forgotten recordings by the Nash Ramblers and the Burritos, among others. It is a fascinating project.

Triple Play was Perkins' first solo album of his own music, and effortlessly swings through blues, country, bluegrass, gospel and even Cajun influences. The enjoyment of being able to cut loose on his own self-penned material is clear, as Al Perkins comes up trumps with an infectious set of studio and live cuts.

Today Al Perkins is involved in many projects, including the HiPower Band - a group of seasoned professionals playing R&B and rock in and around Nashville, and fronting Big Dog 3. A 'Power Trio' including Emmylou Harris band members past and present, Brady Blade and Chris Donohue. Big Dog 3's self-titled debut album, released in July 2009, features a range of self-penned and classic material, given an extra dimension with the help of some very special musical guests.

## **Awards**

### **Grammy Awards:**

**1997** - Producer on Best Southern, Country, or Bluegrass Gospel Album

**1992** - Best Country Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocal

**1991** - Best Bluegrass Album

### **Other Awards:**

**2015** - Induction to the Colorado Music Hall Of Fame (Manassas)

**2007** - 'Musician of the Year' Texas Music Awards

**1997** - Induction to The Texas Steel Guitar HALL OF FAME

**1993** - Induction to Opryland's STARWALK

**1985** - Indie Award for album production on 'Desert Rose'