

A tribute to David James Ball (3rd May 1959 - 22nd October 2025). The Soft Cell electronic music pioneer Dave Ball passed away 22nd October 2025 aged 66.



Electronic music pioneer Dave Ball, one half of groundbreaking electronic music duo Soft Cell and successful acid house act The Grid, passed away peacefully in his sleep at his London home on Wednesday 22nd October. He was 66. Singer Marc Almond, Dave's musical collaborator of 46 years and Soft Cell bandmate, leads the tributes, describing Dave as a "wonderfully brilliant musical genius". What turns out to be Dave's final appearance with the band came only weeks ago at the Rewind Festival in Henley-on-Thames, where Soft Cell headlined in front of over 20,000 fans.

Formed when electronic musician Dave and singer Marc were both art students at Leeds Polytechnic in 1979, Soft Cell helped to define the sound of British music in the 1980s and beyond. Their 1981 debut album, 'Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret', changed the course of pop and paved the way for an avalanche of synth-based duos, including Yazoo, Eurythmics, Pet Shop Boys and Erasure, while bringing something deliciously dark to the table. Their second single, 'Tainted Love', b/w 'Where Did Our Love Go', topped the charts in the UK and 17 countries around the world and was certified as Britain's best-selling single of 1981.

A fan of northern soul and Kraftwerk, Dave had moved from Blackpool to Leeds to study fine art and first worked with Marc when he supplied an electronic backdrop to a piece of Marc's improvised performance art, accidentally establishing a winning template that would cast Almond as the outgoing showman and lyricist and Ball as his quiet, poker-faced foil – a foil who went on to become a fearless sonic innovator.

Between 1982 and 2021, Soft Cell released four more studio albums – 'The Art Of Falling Apart', 'This Last Night In Sodom', 'Cruelty Without Beauty' and '*Happiness not included' – plus what is considered as one of the first remix albums 'Non Stop Ecstatic Dancing'. Dave and Marc also secured four more UK Top Ten singles in 'Bedsitter', 'Torch', 'What!', and 'Say Hello, Wave Goodbye', with Dave also helping to create extended, 12-inch mixes of the singles, often splicing segments of tape together with razorblades, to give the band a decisive, club-friendly edge.

Their 2018 reunion concert in front of 20,000 fans at The O2 in London was intended as a grand farewell. Instead, in true Soft Cell style, it unwittingly provided the launching pad for a glittering resurgence that saw the band re-establish their live credentials. The duo celebrated the 40th anniversary of 'Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret' by taking their acclaimed 1981 debut on tour in the UK and America. Since those memorable anniversary shows, they have also headlined Hampton Court Palace, Audley End's Heritage Live and Blenheim Palace and played live in Australia, Brazil, Germany, Spain and at the Montreux Jazz Festival. Most recently the band had been back in the studio working on what will be their sixth – and now, sadly, final – studio album. Named after the legendary 1980s New York nightclub 'Danceteria' – a venue which once hosted a Soft Cell album launch – the album is due to be released in spring 2026 via a new global deal with Republic Of Music. The final mixes were completed only days before Dave's passing.

Away from Soft Cell, Dave was also one half of The Grid alongside esteemed musician and producer Richard Norris, with whom he enjoyed a string of chart successes in the 1990s, including the Top Three single and international hit 'Swamp Thing'. An in-demand songwriter, producer and remixer, he worked with music superstars such as David Bowie, Kylie Minogue, Pet Shop Boys and Erasure as well as alternative artists such as Psychic TV and Gavin Friday.

In full tribute to Dave and his recent purple patch of songwriting and production, Soft Cell's upcoming releases will remain as scheduled. This includes a super deluxe reissue of Soft Cell's classic 1983 album 'The Art Of Falling Apart', a 6CD boxset complete with new remixes and dubs by Dave, and a 'Martin' EP, which are both released next Friday 31st October on Universal Music and Republic of Music respectively. The release date of the brand-new Soft Cell album 'Danceteria', which has been initially discussed by Marc and Dave in MOJO and Classic Pop interviews, is to be announced.

Dave's passing is announced with great sadness and affection for this gregarious, warm-hearted man of many musical talents. Dave is survived by his close family including his four children. We would like to respect Dave Ball's family's privacy at this very sad time.

TRIBUTES TO DAVE BALL

"It is hard to write this, let alone process it, as Dave was in such a great place emotionally. He was focused and so happy with the new album that we literally completed only a few days ago. It's so sad as 2026 was all set to be such an uplifting year for him, and I take some solace from the fact that he heard the finished record and felt that it was a great piece of work. Dave's music is better than ever. His tunes and hooks are still unmistakably Soft Cell, yet he always took it to the next level too. He was a wonderfully brilliant musical genius and the pair of us have been on a journey together for almost 50 years. In the early days we were obnoxious and difficult, two belligerent art students who wanted to do things our way, even if it was the wrong way. We were naive and made mistakes, although we never really saw them as such. It was all just a part of the adventure. Dave and I were always a bit chalk-and-cheese, but maybe that's why the chemistry between us worked so well.

"Whenever we came back together after long periods apart there was always that warmth and chemistry. There was a deep mutual respect that gave our combined songwriting its unique power. We laughed a lot, and shared a sense of humour, and a love of film, books and music. Dave had shelves full of books and an array of wonderful and surprising musical references. He was the heart and soul of Soft Cell and I'm very proud of our legacy.

"It's fitting in many ways that our next (and now our last) album together is called 'Danceteria', as that theme takes us back to New York City in the early 1980s where a good many of our musical ideas were formed. That was a time and place that really shaped us. As well as being quintessentially British, we always felt that we were also an honorary American band. We've been invested in the Soft Cell myths and stories, and 'Danceteria' will now stand as an album that brings everything full circle for us. I just wish that Dave could have stayed on long enough to celebrate our 50 years together in a couple of year's time. He will always be loved by the Soft Cell fans who love his music and his music and memory will live on. At any given moment, someone somewhere in the world will be getting pleasure from a Soft Cell song.

"Thank you Dave for being an immense part of my life and for the music you gave me. I wouldn't be where I am without you."

Marc Almond, Soft Cell

"Dave has been a huge part of my musical life for many years. Being in a duo with someone is different from being in a band: the bond is very tight. That's how it was with us. We went through so many remarkable, extraordinary, life-affirming experiences together. Thank you, Dave. Thanks for the good times, the endless laughter, your unwavering friendship. Most of all, thank you for the music."

Richard Norris, The Grid

"I am extremely sad today to hear the awful news of Dave's passing. I had the pleasure of working with Dave and Marc in the very early days of Soft Cell. I was extremely impressed with Dave's vision and his musicality, he also had the ability to get the very best vocal performance from Marc. Dave was a self-taught musician using the emerging technology of the time to combine his Northern Soul influences with minimal electronic textures to compliment Marc's vocals to create something truly unique. More recently we at Mute were very proud to represent him as a songwriter. Dave was one of the pioneers of electro pop and his influence resonates to the present day, and will continue into the future. We have lost a true original. I'm so glad I had the opportunity to work with him and Marc all those years ago. My love and condolences to Marc, his family and to Chris".

Daniel Miller. Founder and owner of Mute Records

"In recent months, I have never seen Dave so prolific, animated or energised about the future and that's why this news comes as such a shock. He and Marc have both been so excited about the new Soft Cell album, which was only finished a few days ago. They were planning a major tour for 2026, and since they reunited seven years ago to sell out The O2, they have been on such a consistent, upward trajectory. Dave's 'other band', The Grid, had also just signed a new record deal with BMG, and his diary was filled for years ahead with new releases and other activities. Dave was a genial, larger-than-life character and a quiet, understated genius of electronic music with a wicked and unique sense of humour. He was respected by his peers and I will miss him immensely, but I'm also really happy he got to see how loved he was in the most recent stages of his long career."

Chris Smith, Dave Ball and Soft Cell Manager

"Quietly brilliant and endlessly innovative, few artists shaped electronic music like Dave Ball. His work with Soft Cell and The Grid proved that synths could be bold and deeply human. A true pioneer, he proved that emotion and experimentation could coexist – and his sound will live on, inspiring generations for years to come."

Alistair Norbury, President, BMG