



# STEVE DAWSON

player  
performer  
and  
producer

**“Mr. Dawson is the T-Bone Burnett of Canada”  
No Depression**

**“a veritable one-man roots music factory”  
Toronto Star**

**“maestro of all things strung and fretted”  
Ottawa Xpress**

**“lays it down with charisma and personality”  
Vancouver Province**

**“a roots music renaissance man”  
The Georgia Straight**

**[www.stevedawson.ca](http://www.stevedawson.ca)**



## Biography

Over the past decade or so **Steve Dawson** has become such an indelible fixture on the Canadian musical landscape that it's tempting to take him for granted. One of the drawbacks of being so talented is that Dawson makes everything he does sound so effortless. The music that continually flows out of him is so natural and unforced that it's possible to forget all of the toil that went into producing it. Behind the organic, flowing guitar work, the crisp arrangements and the laconic singing voice, resides one of the brightest, hardest working musicians the country has ever produced.

**Steve Dawson** is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist. Specializing in slide and fingerstyle guitar, pedal steel, lap steel, banjo and other instruments, he is in demand as a performer, session musician and producer. Over the last decade, Steve has performed at major jazz and folk festivals in Canada, the USA and Europe.

In addition to working on his own music, he's kept very busy producing memorable albums by such luminaries as Jim Byrnes, Kelly Joe Phelps, Jenny Whiteley, Old Man Luedecke, The Sojourners, and The Deep Dark Woods, as well as the award winning Mississippi Sheiks Tribute Project. Add to that his session work and touring commitments and it's amazing that this 2-time Juno award winning artist (not to mention 3 other Junos for his production work!) ever finds the time to create any new work under his own name.

Steve grew up in Vancouver. At 18, Steve spent two years at Boston's Berklee College, before returning home to perform in touring original bands for several years. His interest in acoustic music began to take root at this time, as he explored the earliest recordings of blues, jazz, and Hawaiian music from the 20s and 30s.

**The Spirit Merchants** were the most prominent and this band played countless gigs all over North America. Steve's subsequent duo with violinist Jesse Zubot (**Zubot and Dawson**) featured acoustic instruments in genre-stretching original music. They released 3 albums and won many awards, including a Juno in 2002.

**The Great Uncles of the Revolution** teamed Zubot and Dawson with 2 exceptional jazz musicians from Toronto. This band was the winner of a Juno Award in 2003, as well as The Grand Prix de Jazz at the Montreal Jazz Festival in 2003.

Other artists began asking Steve to produce records for them. In between tours and sessions, he started a career as record producer. Steve has produced award-winning albums for Jenny Whiteley, Jim Byrnes, Old Man Luedecke, Kelly Joe Phelps, Ndidi Onukwulu, The Sojourners, John Wort Hannam, and many more. He has been awarded **Producer of the Year** honours twice at the **Canadian Folk Music Awards** and three times at the **Western Canadian Music Awards**.

In 1998, Steve started **Black Hen Music**, an independent record label with the intention of releasing roots, acoustic, jazz and blues music. Over the last 10 years, the label has thrived and now has a roster of almost 20 artists and over 30 releases that are distributed internationally.

Steve began his solo recording career in 2001, releasing **Bug Parade**. 2005 saw the Juno Award nominated **We Belong to the Gold Coast**, which further explored his love of antique and modern sounds, mixing traditional blues and Hawaiian music with originals.

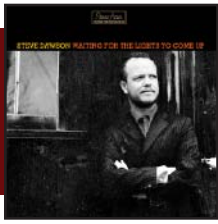
Steve received a grant in 2005 from the Canada Council to study the pedal steel with Greg Leisz, the foremost player of the instrument outside of country music.

2008 saw the release of 2 solo albums: **Waiting For The Lights To Come Up** – a collection of new songs, and a few traditional, and **Telescope** – an all-instrumental album featuring the pedal steel guitar as the main voice. Recorded at the same time, these were 2 different concepts that Steve wanted to record with the same musicians. **Telescope** was nominated for a Juno in 2009.

Steve produced **Things About Comin' My Way: A Tribute to the Mississippi Sheiks** in 2009. It featured Bruce Cockburn, Van Dyke Parks, Danny Barnes, Geoff Muldaur, Bob Brozman, John Hammond, Bill Frisell, Madeleine Peyroux and many more. Several high-profile concerts with various participants took place in 2010, and an award-winning in-concert DVD was released.

**Nightshade** hits the streets on March 29th, 2011. A new solo album from Steve is always something special. Although it continues in the vein of Steve's previous solo recordings, it expands upon the language of his guitar work and offers more complex and fully realized songs than ever before. It represents a significant leap forward and is destined to become one of the most admired albums in an already impressive body of work.

**AWARDS:** Steve Dawson's work as producer and musician has resulted in numerous accolades, including FIVE Juno Awards (16 nominations), TEN Western Canadian Music Awards (22 nominations), TWO Independent Canadian Music Awards for Roots Album Of The Year and ONE Maple Blues Award, among others.



## Waiting For The Lights To Come Up

“An award-winning producer, indefatigable musician, songwriter and maestro of all things strung and fretted, Steve Dawson proves yet again to be every bit as accomplished in front of the boards as behind with *Waiting for the Lights to Come Up*.” - **Steve Baylin, Ottawa Xpress, Hour**

“Our city is home to a variety of six-string specialists, some acclaimed and others obscure, and of the former the most well-rounded might well be Steve Dawson. Dawson is a serious student of his instrument, or perhaps we should say instruments: on his new CD, *Waiting for the Lights to Come Up*, he plays electric guitar, acoustic guitar, baritone guitar, pedal-steel guitar, acoustic and electric lap-steel guitar, and mandatar. He also adds pump organ, Mellotron, glockenspiel, ukulele, and “fun machine”; produced the CD himself; and sings on nine of its 12 tracks. In short, he’s a roots-music renaissance man.” - **Alex Varty, Georgia Straight**

“Inspired musicianship and sound-crafting serves *Waiting*, a well-mannered collection with stick-out tracks that are invariably covers and instrumentals (*Fun Machine One* is a fun one!). It’s a wonderfully coloured record - sliding and resonating guitars, animated pump organs and Wurlitzers, charming ukuleles and deft drumming...”

- **Brad Wheeler, The Globe and Mail**

“Dawson makes impressive use of his own accomplished slide guitar, while riding some excellent percussion work, letting each instrument dance off the other as the fire burns up, slowly, inexorably. “In short, this record sounds great.”

- **Pop Matters (USA)**

“Calling Steve Dawson a superb guitarist is a masterpiece of understatement because, although his virtuosity on that instrument is quite staggering, this mostly instrumental CD proves that he’s equally dazzling with a banjo, dobro, ukulele, or a mandatar in his hands.” - **Hi-Fi News (UK)**

“Quite simply one of a handful of steel-string guitar players who can create magic...with a knack for penning the kind of unhurried folk/pop a’ la Cooder and David Lindley that once ruled in southern California... just to make every home grown string bender feel a bit more inferior. Rating - A” - **The Vancouver Province**

From top to bottom, beginning to end, Steve Dawson’s *Waiting For The Lights To Come Up* is enough to keep us waiting for his next masterpiece, *Telescope*.”

- **Amanda Ash, Exclaim!**



## Telescope

Vancouver, BC, multi-instrumentalist, producer and songwriter Dawson, under a grant from the Canadian Arts Council, has been studying the instrument with the legendary Greg Leisz since 2005. This 10-track, ensemble-based project is the first result - all instrumental with a crack, jazz-oriented band in tow that prove experts at emphasizing melody, cadence and, above all, reciprocity, while displaying alternating amounts of both structure and improvisation. Dawson’s compositions shift moods and atmospherics on a dime - from a haunting, Brian Eno-like serendipitous ambience on ‘Caballero’s Dream’ or ‘The Hunt Is On’ to an aura of edginess in an environment of barely controlled distortion on tracks like ‘Keith Lowe’ or the bluesily raucous ‘Speaker Damage’ ... Wow.” - **Sing Out! (USA)**

This all-instrumental album features his new passion, pedal steel guitar. He has used the same core players as his last release, *Waiting For The Lights To Come Up*, with Keith Lowe on bass, Chris Gestrin on keyboards and Scott Amendola on drums plus a few guests. But it is Steve himself, on pedal steel, guitar, lap guitar, ukulele and various unusual keyboards, who is the star here. ... it is a never-ending variety of styles and sounds, with pedal steel right up front. It is a great CD, and shows the pedal steel is not just a country instrument anymore.

- **Monday Magazine**

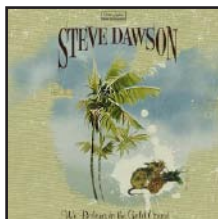
He used the time wisely, learned his lessons well, though most people know the pedal steel as a country music instrument he is using it sonically to create texture and space in his compositions, much like fellow Canadian Daniel Lanois. It is mood shaping by being sound bending and creating interplay between the instruments; it is based both on structure and improvisation. As well as pedal steel he plays all acoustic, electric, baritone, and slide guitars, ukulele, banjo, pump organ, marxophone, piano and glockenspiel. Mr. Dawson also produced and wrote all the songs ... We have here a Canadian that is not getting deserved airplay in the U. S. - **AcousticMusic.com (USA)**

Steve Dawson’s pedal steel guitar flourishes outside the country genre, and much like jazz, sets a mood you can’t relinquish. The deliberative, melancholy, distinctly American yearning of the pedal steel sings hauntingly on each track. Maybe ironically, it’s a song on *Telescope* that has the pedal steel producing a more traditional, recognizable sound that I really admire. ‘The Hunt Is On’ is a beautifully arranged waltz-tempo song in which the pedal steel and acoustic guitar exchange somber melodic licks worthy of Sun Kil Moon. - **Panpot.ca**

# Discography



**Nightshade**  
2011—Black Hen Music  
**Street Date:**  
• March 29th , 2011



**We Belong to the Gold Coast**  
2005 — Black Hen Music  
**Nominee:**  
• 2006 Juno Award (Roots/Traditional Album of the Year — Solo)  
• 2006 Western Canadian Music Award  
• 2006 Canadian Folk Music Award



**Telescope**  
2008—Black Hen Music  
**Nominee:**  
• 2009 Juno Award (Instrumental Album)  
**Winner:**  
• 2009 WCMA Award



**Bug Parade**  
2001—Black Hen Music  
**Winner:**  
• 2002 West Coast Music Award (Best Folk Album)  
• 2002 West Coast Music Award (Best Roots/Traditional Album)



**Waiting for the Lights to Come Up**  
2008—Black Hen Music  
**Nominee:**  
• 2009 Western Canadian Music Award

## Zubot and Dawson

### Chicken Scratch

**Winner:** 2002 Juno Award (Roots/Traditional Album — Group)

### Tractor Parts

**Nominee:** 2000 Juno Award (Roots/Traditional Album — Group)

### Strang

**Nominee:** 1998 Juno Award (Roots/Traditional Album — Group)

## Great Uncles of the Revolution

### Blow the House Down

**Winner:** 2004 Juno Award (Contemporary Jazz Album)

## Selected Producer Credits

**Various** — Things About Comin' My Way: A Tribute to the Music of the Mississippi Sheiks (Black Hen Music - 2010)

**Old Man Luedecke** — Proof of Love (Black Hen Music)  
2008 Juno Award Winner

**Kelly Joe Phelps** — Tunesmith Retrofit (Rounder - 2006)

**Jim Byrnes** — House of Refuge (Black Hen Music)  
2008 Juno Award Winner

**Jenny Whiteley**—Hopetown (Black Hen Music)  
2006 Juno Award Winner

## Contact

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