

**SPECIAL ISSUE: DAVE'S RETIREMENT**

# **MSC Town Holler**

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SALMON**

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**msc**

**TOWN HALL**  
bringing music to campus.

# IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

BY: JUSTIN HAIRSTON

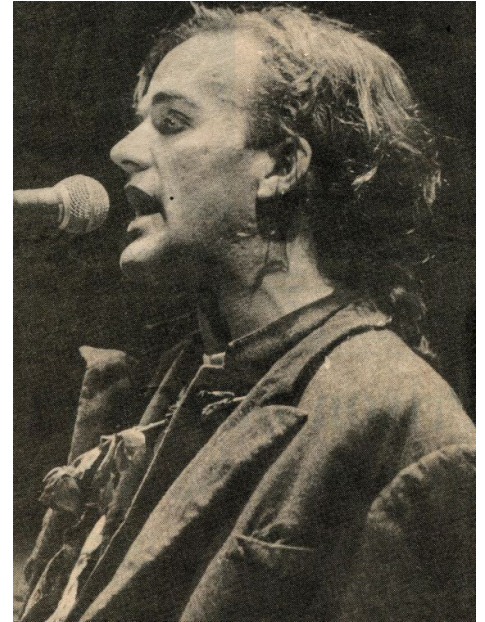
Dave Salmon's impact as MSC Town Hall's advisor has been inimitable, as any current or former Town Hall member could tell you. While it is easy to point to recent Town Hall programming highlights like Kevin Hart, Twenty One Pilots, and Ben Rector, Town Hall has had a long list of impressive headliners under Dave's run as advisor. In fact, back in October of 1989, A&M brought rock legends R.E.M. to G Rollie White, the former home of the A&M basketball and volleyball teams.

R.E.M. formed in 1980, but despite being in the middle of their ascension to worldwide fame in 1989, they gave A&M students a full-force performance. The band played a 30 (Thirty!!!) song set, including 3 multi-song encores. Though criticisms of today's music scene as being "soulless" and "unoriginal" lack universal merit, it is rare to find a concert this thorough and crowd-pleasing with today's more concise concert formats. R.E.M. played hit songs, including "Orange Crush", "The One I Love", and "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)", and the 30 (again, THIRTY) songs spanned seven of the band's albums from throughout the 80's.

In addition to the music, singer Michael Stipe used his platform to open a discourse on politics, openly advocating for support of Greenpeace during the concert. Stipe made his remarks in a self-proclaimed attack on Exxon following their catastrophic Alaskan oil spill in

March of 1989. While politics are far from necessary in order to make an entertaining and engaging concert, it is still neat that A&M was able to host such a thrilling and topical concert in the heart of campus.

Though Town Hall will no doubt continue to bring in big names and socially relevant events (in no small part thanks to Dave's hard work over the years), it is still a huge blow to lose the man who has fearlessly guided Town Hall for decades. His impact can be seen in a captivating show like R.E.M., but it can also be seen in the countless stories and memories of hundreds of Town Hallers. Dave has been more than an advisor; he's been a leader, a mentor, and a friend. We at Town Hall wish Dave the best in all he does, and we know that Town Hall will continue to bring in names that will make Dave proud.



**“We had a few shows but the first G. Rollie White show was back in 1989 in the fall. We actually had R.E.M. come in and perform and that was just an amazing experience for me. I learned a lot, but one of the things that was kinda wild for me was that I was a huge R.E.M. fan in college.”-Dave Salmon**

**DEAR DAVE...**

# CHRISTINE OGILVIE HENDREN

1995-1999

Oh man is this truly impossible. Part of me feels like I should've started writing this like 10 years ago to get it right. But really nothing would do justice to what a big deal Dave turned out to be in my life. Even 20 years down the road from my Town Hall time I still draw on lessons I learned and confidence I have because of Dave. He leads by serving, enabling and championing people. He treats everyone like an equal colleague, like the best, most competent version of themselves. You don't forget that feeling - when you learn what it feels like to be respected and believed in as a professional and also cared about as a person. It imprints on you what you should expect from a leader and how you should lead. He shows that there's no need to separate hard work, fun and real friendship, and in fact that the best (only?) way to build something great is to make sure you don't. He lets people be whoever they are, and he lets you know him as a full, real human. He'll tell you all day long that he's just helping in the background, but in reality it's him creating that magic mix of freedom and stealthy guidance that has shown decades of people what a culture of positivity and teamwork should look like. I guarantee I'm not the only one who has tried to find or create that vibe in every organization I've been a part of since. In 24 years of formal education (yikes) there is not a mentor or educator I've learned more from than good ol' Dave. He's a magical beast - I mean how can anyone be that high energy and that chill at the exact same time?

So much love to you as you make this next transition, Dave. You have always known what was most important in life - and here you are honoring that yet again. Thanks for everything you have given. I so hope you can get a sense of the ripples you've made even beyond what you can see.

Love always, Teeny

# ANGELA RODRIGUEZ FEASTER

1996-1999

I can't remember the names of my Academic Advisors at A&M, because I always went to Dave...or at least asked myself what he would do. It's hard to explain to someone "I want to do what Dave does, or at least have as much fun and be as valuable to people as he is, in my career." I wondered after I graduated if he would even remember me, considering all the amazing Aggies he's worked with over the decades. The way his face lit up when I visited him a few years ago was all I needed to know the answer is "yes"! Town Hall was the highlight of my college experience. Even though Dave would say the students are what makes Town Hall great, he knows damn well he was the reason. Thank you for all you've done for us, your Aggie children!! Peace, Love, and Gig 'Em!

# KELSON ASTLEY

2007-2013

Having been in Town Hall for so long, I got to see it change and evolve. There were some pretty bleak times when the MSC was closed for renovations and I really wasn't sure how things were going to turn out. Dave didn't try to candy coat it, but allowed the group to come up with creative ways to try to mitigate the effects. I think the reason that Town Hall has been able to not only endure, but excel, for so long is that the combined efforts of all the creative and talented students guided by the caring, wise, and devoted hand of Dave Salmon. Of all my time at A&M, Dave has been the one constant. Although I am saddened by his departure, I'm so glad he can finally relax and enjoy his much earned retirement.

“The greatest satisfaction that I get out of my job from the day I started to right now, in this moment is the students.” -Dave Salmon



# METRIC “BIG MET” MANNING

1997-2000

I was chosen as the first African-American to be exec chair over MSC Variety Show. I had only worked, maybe one show prior and had no clue how sacred this event was to Parents Weekend. I knew I wanted to push to bring in more ethnically diverse acts for the show.

I had this crazy idea to have the national anthem played, but with a twist. I wanted the Jimi Hendrix rendition played, and I had the perfect person to play it. I ran it by Dave and he was a bit concerned because of how it could be perceived by many older Aggies, especially those who were veterans. He expressed his concern, and he left the decision in my hands.

Fast forward to the night of Variety Show. Rudder Auditorium is sold out and it's time for the show to start. The PA asks everyone to rise for the national anthem. Out walks this skinny little white guy from Colorado named Derrick who happens to be barefooted. The theater is totally silent. He begins to rip and shred through the rendition playing it nearly identical to Hendrix. I see Dave (behind stage, I believe) and he's on pins and needles! Derrick finally finished and there's dead silence in the auditorium. After about five seconds the audience erupts in applause and cheer.

After the show Dave comes up to me and gives me this big bear hug and with that infamous raspy laugh he tells me an old Aggie veteran came up to him and said the anthem made him tear up and that it was one of the best Variety Shows he'd attended.

Dave believed in a young black kid from the inner city to take on a huge and potentially risky task. He helped so many of us to become the leaders we are today. What I really appreciate about Dave is regardless of what the audience response would have been that night, I know he would've had my back.

# SAVANNAH HELM

2002-2006

Narrowing down fond memories about Dave or Town Hall in general is not an easy task because Dave gave Town Hall his best for 27 years. He taught us to be passionate about the work we do and to stand up for what we believe in. Three Town Hall rules that have served me well in many jobs are 1) Never speak to an artist until you are spoken to, 2) Never go onto a band's tour bus (Except for that night Blind Pilot was singing Tom Petty songs and invited you onto their school bus with goblets of wine, because Dave would have approved. Naturally.), and 3) Shania Twain does not like to be touched.

There's more amazing times at SXSW than I can count, but seeing The Flaming Lips at a "secret" show and Polyphonic Spree with Dave will always be remembered, complete with balloons and choir gowns, respectively.

My favorite memory though has to be the look on Dave's face with his new puppy, Jade. The pictures say it all.

Congratulations, Dave, on a career well spent! You've meant the world to thousands of music lovers.

# JOHNATHON CRAMER

2003-2006

I can say this about Dave Salmon - Of all of the people that have been in and out of my life over the last 33 years, he is the man who has made one of the most marked changes in my life trajectory. I can't say how thankful I am for the man who taught me to chase what I love and to do the things that make me happy. Without him I don't know where I'd be right now, and for that I have to say Thank You and I love You Mr. Salmon. Thanks for putting me on the track I'm on and providing a place where I met the people who have meant the most to me in life. I can't say how much I love and support your every decision. Best of luck in all that life brings you, and I hope it brings our paths across each other again soon.



# NICK AND CLAIRE

## PETREE

2004-2009

Dave has always been more of a friend and mentor to us than simply an advisor. We got to know Dave very well during our respective years as Town Hall Chairs, but his incredible impact on those around him was evident to us well before that. However, sometimes Dave wasn't quite impactful enough, such as his failed stint as "security" during the Soulja Boy concert when he was trampled by hordes of 13 year old girls rushing the Reed Arena floor to be the one true soulja girl. The tween stampede aside, most people who have spent anytime with Dave can tell pretty quickly the kind of person that he is. And we don't just mean the kind of person who requires a "satellite office" to hold all of the truly important meetings, but the kind of person who will spend HOURS with you in either of his offices to talk through difficult times. The character, empathy and compassion that Dave consistently shows for those he cares about has been truly inspiring for both of us, and we often find ourselves asking "WWDD?"

The best illustration we have for how much Dave means to us is our engagement. We were dating long-distance at the time, and Nick proposed to Claire in Houston one Friday night after she flew in from Dallas. We didn't tell ANYONE outside of our immediately family, because we both realized immediately that we had to witness Dave's initial reaction in person. We drove to College Station the next day to have dinner with Dave and Debbie so we could break the news face-to-face, and Dave's expression certainly did not disappoint!

Although we are sad that future students are going to miss out on the Dave experience, we could not be more excited for his long overdue, and well earned, retirement. We wish you the best of luck on your future adventures and concert travels! We love you, Dave!



**“ I’m a firm believer that if you are not continually evolving, you’re dying. And one day, you wake up and you will be old news. So for me, I’ve always been a firm believer that I’ve got as much to learn from the students that I could ever have to offer.” -Dave Salmon**



# JOSH HUNT

2007-2010

Dave has always been more than just an advisor to Town Hall. He has been the guardian, the lifeblood, and the best friend to us all. When I was in Town Hall the MSC got closed down for renovations. Before the MSC got shut down a group of us decided to host a "flash rave" in the MSC flag room to commemorate its closing. While this was not a Town Hall event, we did manage to use the Town Hall PA system. Dave just let that slide. A major consequence to the MSC closing was the loss of our area to do lunch box concerts. This led to some interesting times. We tried multiple locations and Dave supported us through it all, but ultimately we had to discontinue the concerts. Dave fought and fought the powers that be to try and get us a good location but it just could not happen. I admire and respect the amount he worked to try and keep Lunch Box alive at the time.

A more personal story involves the time I went to the hospital. It was my first retreat as a new Town Haller. We had some free time that morphed into a death-metal-circle-pit-pillow-fight, and I managed to dislocate my shoulder. An ambulance was called and Dave was right behind. First time at a major Town Hall event and Dave was there taking care of my stupidly injured self. We were at the Brenham hospital all night and Dave took me back to my dorm. He assured me it was fine and I felt that it really was ok. Dave has always had a way of making everyone feel comfortable around him. At the time I was in Town Hall, a lot of us didn't really fit the "standard" Texas A&M student. Through the magic that Dave had created in Town Hall we all found a safe space to be us and feel comfortable.

Thank you so much for being there with and for us Dave and putting up with all our shenanigans. Enjoy your retirement and know you will be remembered fondly and missed.



**“ I sincerely believe in my 27 years in this position I've learned more from my students than my students have ever learned from me.” - Dave Salmon**

# VALERY (OWEN) ACKLEY

2009-2012

One of the most amazing things about Dave is his ability to be 100% your friend and 100% your advisor - I don't think many people have that skill. He was quick to cut up with us (if the time was right) but also quick to set you straight when you messed up. We knew Dave would keep us accountable. Most people don't have that balance, and Dave really does. I can't even imagine how many students Dave influenced during his time at A&M in Town Hall and otherwise. Surely it must be in the thousands. He will be sorely missed by Town Hallers and I know there will be a void throughout the rest of the MSC as well. Really the only "story" I can think of is one year all of the execs dressed up as different versions of Dave for his end of

the year exec photo. I will NEVER forget the look on his face and how much he laughed when he saw that photo! All I know is, I am really going to miss going to see Dave in his office or, more frequently, in his "remote office."

# STEPHANIE SHARGAL

2008-2013

Dave's impact on my life can't be narrowed down to just one story. His daily advice and encouragement is what got me through those five years of college. He's too humble to admit this, but Dave has not only impacted but molded so many lives through his years at A&M. When I started planning the reunion so many years ago, everyone I spoke to was so quick to help! Why? Because DAVE deserved it. Dave is Town Hall.

# ABBY RODGERS

2014-PRESENT

You've been my biggest mentor and have made such a big impact on my life. I joined Town Hall my first semester in college while I was a BIMS major, just wanting to be involved with music. Being in Town Hall increased my passion for music and helped me realize that I wanted to work with music and programming. I want to go into music festival programming after college, so I can't thank you enough for all your work to help me make The 12th Jam a reality. I have learned so much about programming and the music industry from you over the past year as an exec. "I'm just going to be blunt" was my favorite thing to hear from you because I knew I was about to learn something important. You never beat around the bush, always telling me what you thought was best no matter how "dream crushing" it was, but you also let me explain my own thoughts and decisions first. You helped me be realistic about the shows we can bring and how to program them.

I treat Town Hall as a job, and I know you won't like to hear this, but I prioritize it even above my classes. You and my experiences in Town Hall have taught me more than any class ever could. I will make sure to pass everything I've learned onto the next LSE exec, since you won't be there to crush their dreams of a Reed Arena show, I'll have to do it. I'm just joking about that, I mean everything I say with love and admiration. I look up to you so much, not only as my adviser but as a friend and a mentor. You are one of the nicest and coolest people I have ever met. You care so much about everyone in Town Hall and you show it by always having your door open and talking to us, no matter how many times a day I come in asking questions or just to eat your candy. I can't thank you enough for how much you have impacted my life. I'll never forget the most important thing you told me, and I'll miss hearing you always say "it's all about the money."

# JESSICA TRAN

2015-PRESENT

The first thing that comes to mind when thinking of Dave is his suede jacket, Town Hall tie, and the slight aroma of cigarettes he has when he comes to sit next to you. I'm sad to see him retire but am glad I've been able to gain so much from knowing him.

Dave always pours all his efforts into making sure that we succeed as an organization and as individuals. He's played a part in developing my passions, and has made a positive impact on my life. Dave is not only the best mentor but also a great guy to stop by and talk about life. He has the most real perspective and never fails to make me feel a little less stressed. Town Hall will miss Dave's mentorship and friendship, but it's great to know that it will continue to thrive and be a great organization full of friendships and music because of him.

# BRANDON CASTRO

2013-PRESENT

Trying to pick one Dave story is far too difficult for me. I could speak to his professional side; how he always gave us freedom to grow as leaders, providing support when we needed him and helping us to learn from our mistakes. I could speak to his personal side; about how I always, without fail, looked forward to our Monday meetings because we would inevitably get distracted talking about our lives for the first thirty minutes. Or I could speak to his facetious side, but I don't think this is an appropriate place to do that. Being Town Hall Chair was an incredible experience that helped me develop as a person in many ways, and had a direct hand in helping me land my first professional job out of college, but I'd be lying if I didn't say that Dave's incredible friendship was the best thing I got out of my time serving as chair.

# DARBY LEIBER

2013-PRESENT

I came into A&M my freshman year knowing I wanted to be in Town Hall. My older sister who was an exec during college had told me that the advisor was someone I needed to get to know, and I wish I had taken her up on that sooner. Dave is so much more than an advisor to everyone in Town Hall. He's a friend and a therapist; he gives advice, makes the best jokes, has an infectious laugh, and is always in your corner. Dave is just cool. I'll never forget as a freshman in SPAM I ran sound at MSC Open House in the spring. We were setting up the equipment, and I thought to myself, 'who is that old biker dude and why is he coming over here?' I realized it was Dave, in a do-rag and leathers, just performing his advisor duties on a Sunday when he didn't have to be in dress code. It was the raddest thing I think I've ever seen, and I never looked at him the same way again.

Dave is an extremely empathetic person, and it causes him to be incredible at his job. If an exec is frustrated by something, Dave probably is too. If something good happens, Dave is our loudest cheerleader. He puts his students first and lets us know he's there for us. I actually have a running tally in a notebook with the amount of times I've cried in Dave's office. We are at 5 currently - it's fine, I'm a dramatic person. But each time it happens, Dave calmly listens to what I'm saying, pushes the candy jar in my direction, hands me a tissue, and we figure out a game plan to move forward. I frankly don't know what I'm going to do without him when he's gone. Maya Angelou famously said, "At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel." Well, Dave certainly makes everyone in Town Hall feel cared for and special. Thank you Dave for everything you've done for us. We love you!



# BEN RECTOR

BY: JUSTIN HAIRSTON



On October 8th, 2016, Dave Salmon and Town Hall held what would be Dave's final concert as MSC Town Hall's advisor. The performer was Ben Rector, and though Ben had worked with Town Hall numerous times before, there was a certain finality to this latest show, even as it hinted at the future of a post-Dave Town Hall.

Ben Rector and his band put on a highly energized show, playing songs from several of his albums. They also played some unexpected covers, including "ABC" by the Jackson 5. Ben performed with his usual gusto, and the sold out crowd of nearly 2500 students gave Rudder Auditorium a sound befitting an arena. It seemed apt that Dave's last concert would be one of the biggest and most successful concerts in Town Hall's illustrious history.

I was working backstage at the concert, which afforded me the chance to see Dave working behind the scenes for the last time. I didn't see a man coasting into retirement by cutting corners with a

lackadaisical attitude. Rather, I saw a man whose very passion for music (specifically, live music) compelled him to give his everything to every detail of every show. Even on his last show ever, Dave refused to head home until Ben was safely on his tour bus. When a group of determined fans lined up outside and forced Ben to wait, this meant Dave would be waiting around for hours after the show. But Dave never complained - more than that, his smile never wavered. His energy and optimism gave the rest of us a much-needed jolt of energy.

From his first concert to his last, Dave was an inspiration. Whether he was enjoying the show from the crowd or working diligently to keep it running smoothly from backstage, he was never less than a superstar, and we'll miss him greatly when he's gone. His energy, spirit, and passion will be remembered for a long time, and those characteristics will inspire new generations of Town Hallers for years to come.



# THE FINAL INTERVIEW

BY: COLIN SAUNDERS

The setting of the interview was easy, but I was not prepared for what was to come. As a journalism major, it was easy to convince Dave that I was working on an article for class and needed to conduct an interview, but the problem we faced was timing. Dave is a huge Chicago Cubs fan, which made the scheduling of the interview difficult as they approached their first world series in 108 years.

As game 2 of the World Series approached, Dave graciously sacrificed his time divulging in America's pastime to help me with this 'project.' During our interview, Dave continually expressed that the students were always his main focus. He made it very clear that music and the passion of the students under his leadership fueled his desire to guide us. Dave wants the best from every student he comes in contact with, and he has been more than willing to put forth the effort to make sure everyone succeeds in each endeavor they pursue.

Dave's love of music and college are prevalent in everything he does. He started working at Illinois State doing a similar job to this. He said, "I had already fallen in love with Texas, when we went to Padre for Spring break so I told [a friend] to try and find me a job down in Texas doing this." So, Dave took a job at Texas A&M advising the recreation committee and the Miss Texas A&M pageant. And in 1989, the legend began. After only two weeks here, "the Town Hall advisor quit and I immediately stepped up having the experience and said I will do that job through the interim. I was fortunate enough to get brought into the search and they hired me. So, I've been the Town Hall advisor ever since."

Dave is driven by students, and chose this profession mostly due to that. He said, "I keep growing older, and y'all stay the same age." (Yes, that is a quote from Matthew McConaughey in *Dazed and Confused*). Apart from the students, he said he was motivated by "an unbridled

passion for live music that has never gone away and I don't think ever will." He went on to tell me about his first couple of concert experiences, and how awe inspiring it was to see ACDC live. He said, "all through college I was all about alternative music, I wasn't listening to hard rock." This intense desire to experience live music – even outside of his favorite genre – has led to his immaculate career as the Town Hall advisor.

After learning about his experiences with live music, it was easy to understand why Town Hall was such an easy fit for him. But, his devotion to helping students mature and learn in order to excel at the academic level and eventually a professional level is remarkable. Dave said, "If I ever answer with 'because that's the way we do it,' I'll quit. Call me out and I'll quit that day on the spot, because I hate that answer." This was the perfect illustration of his commitment to us.

Dave has made an unbelievable impact on so many Aggies, especially the ones in Town Hall, and it's hard to see him leave. Unfortunately, the time has come for him to part, but his legacy will carry on through each of us as we pursue our own futures.

Dave, Thank you for your commitment to this organization and to each one of us. You have had a colossal influence on each one of us, and for that, we cannot thank you enough. Go Cubs Go!



**“ My favorite part of my job is helping students realize their potential and positive things they have to offer by the time they graduate.” - Dave Salmon**

MSC Town Hall is a programming committee in the Memorial Student Center within the Division of Student Affairs and is responsible for bringing a wide variety of music and entertainment to campus that appeals to the many diverse students of Texas A&M University. We hope you've enjoyed our 3rd edition of the MSC Town Holler.

**HAVE ANY PICTURES OF PAST TOWN HALL EVENTS?**

**EMAIL THEM TO:**

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**FEATURED IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER!**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

All who were able to submit kind words, memories and photos. We know it means the world to Dave.

Writers: Justin Hairston, Colin Saunders

Editors: Morgan Cockrell, Lindsey Eckert, Justin Hairston, Valerie Hanna, Taylor Harwood, Sam Miller

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