

MENDING FENCES

DAVID RAMIREZ, ONE OF AMERICANA'S MOST MERCURIAL SONGWRITERS, HAS FINALLY LEARNED TO CHILL OUT

The Texas artist's new album *All the Not So Gentle Reminders* finds him exorcising old demons: "It got a little hairy there for a minute"

By GARRET K. WOODWARD

APRIL 16, 2025



David Ramirez almost got in a fight at karaoke. The Texas songwriter finally learns to chill out.

BLACK SKY CREATIVE*

A few years ago, David Ramirez almost got in a fight at a karaoke bar in Arkansas. The Texas singer-songwriter had just finished a gig down the street and decided to get up and sing a tune. When he didn't get the response he'd hoped for, he was ready to throw fists.

“I was just a very angry, not fun person to be around. It got a little hairy there for a minute,” Ramirez tells *Rolling Stone*. “I lost some friendships because I was not a kind individual. So, in the last year, it’s been working on mending those fences and rebuilding some friendships.”

Though a good portion of the deep emotional pain and sheer irritability bubbled up from a lot of personal, unresolved demons within Ramirez, mostly the Austin-based troubadour was desperately trying to navigate a devastating breakup with a longtime partner.

“What am I doing? Going at people at a karaoke bar?” Ramirez chuckles in recollection. “I was like, ‘Calm the situation, go home, sit with this, grow the fuck up. This is not who you are.’ I was not responding well to the pain.”

Obstacles would appear in Ramirez’s life and he had difficulty figuring out what to do and how to react. Cue therapy. Every session opened up intrinsic conversations within Ramirez as to how to walk outside his front door and into the world with a clearer lens. “I went [to therapy] because things are going to show up and I shouldn’t be navigating it in that way,” Ramirez says. “And it was great. I don’t go religiously. I’ll have sessions for a year and then be like, ‘I’m good. I’ll holler in a couple years or something.’”

With these new tools now properly stored in his mental toolbox, Ramirez is viewing his life and career with a renewed sense of self, which is apparent on his latest album, *All the Not So Gentle Reminders*. To note, it’s been five years since Ramirez’s last record, with the apropos title an ode to vulnerability and change.

“Part of my process in healing is learning that I should never put my full identity onto one thing or onto one person,” Ramirez says. “And to explore all these other fun, little ticks that are inside me.”

Captured at Spectra Studios just outside of Austin, the songs on *All the Not So Gentle Reminders* manifested themselves during a two-week disappearing act by Ramirez to the Standard Deluxe, a music and art compound in the tiny town of Waverly, Alabama (population: 159). Ramirez wanted to escape Austin. “We create to understand ourselves better,” he says.

Reflecting on the core reasons for the breakup with his partner, Ramirez says that when the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, he lost his identity as a live performer. “When that was taken away, I was a shell of a human being because I hadn’t really explored the other things about ‘David,’” Ramirez notes. “And so, this woman in my life was just watching this ghost of a person kind of moping around. It’s hard to watch someone go through that. I’m a songwriter, and if I can’t do this, then who the hell am I?”

Skip ahead five years since the shutdown and there stands Ramirez, now 41. A new platform of possibility and purpose fuels his ambitions, which is heard and felt on *All the Not So Gentle Reminders*. With his baritone voice, the 12-song indie-folk album traverses a sonic landscape of subtle tones and textures that speaks to Ramirez’s lifelong passion for cinema and soundtracks — harkening back to his Houston childhood and watching films with his cinephile family.

“Maybe it was in another life/Maybe it was just a dream,” Ramirez ponders on “Deja Voodoo.” “Was it a memory passed down from another/A cosmic sun flare/Or just déjà vu?”

“I’ve always been fascinated with cinema and how music affects a scene,” Ramirez says. “It’s always been a goal of mine to make records that are cinematic.”



All the Not So Gentle Reminders is also a love letter to himself, with Ramirez probing his heart and soul in search of happiness found within, not at the sake of others. That sense of liberation isn’t lost on him. “I’m not running around all rainbows and puppies, but the freedom I’ve allowed myself to not be completely bound by people’s responses to my work is pretty cool,” he says.

“If we’re having other people’s interpretation of our work at the forefront of our mind, the work’s tainted,” he continues. “The purpose of being creative is gone at that point, ‘cause you’re not allowing yourself to just be fully human and an individual that’s experiencing and changing.”

When asked about where the darkness and heaviness of his music, and perhaps his aura, comes from, Ramirez really isn’t sure. He says his wasn’t a heavy childhood. “I got bullied at school, got picked on quite a lot, but no one really survived middle school,” Ramirez laughs. “There’s something in my DNA that just gravitates towards the heaviness of life, to the melancholy. Maybe it was my father showing me Fiona Apple when I was 14. Melancholy has always been in me.”

Talking with Ramirez, a lyric from Ray Wylie Hubbard's song "Mother Blues" comes to mind: "And the days I keep my gratitude higher than my expectations, well, I have really good days."

"We can't be cruising around expecting things. None of us deserves a thing," Ramirez says. "The fact that we are able to wake up in the morning, breathe air, cruise around and see the world is a really great gift. And when things show up, you can be thankful for it." 📌