

BJ BAARTMANS

SHORT BIOGRAPHY – JUNE 2026

BJ Baartmans was born in 1965. He has been writing songs since his teenage years, initially mainly for the bands in which he found his place as a guitarist, writing in both English and Dutch. It was not until around the age of thirty that he began performing his own material. In 1998, he made his debut as a singer-songwriter with the album *The Pawnshop Guitar Chase*, laying the foundation for his distinctive way of crafting and recording narrative songs. By 2005, this naturally evolved into the Dutch-language repertoire that BJ now brings to the forefront.

TEGENBEWEGEN

To date, BJ's songs have been released on around sixteen albums under his own name, BJ's Pawnshop, or BJ's Wild Verband/Verwant. His most recent album is *TEGENBEWEGEN* (June 2026): a Dutch-language family album featuring many contemporary protest songs, with appearances by BJ's children Tom (bass), Anna (vocals/guitar), and Moos (vocals). Socially engaged lyrics are wrapped in sharp, rootsy pop songs. The stories are told from the perspective of a sixty-year-old lifelong musician and songwriter, yet remain timeless in their urgency and emotional resonance. The songs are not without self-irony and a subtle sense of humor.

GUITARIST

BJ Baartmans' guitar playing deserves special mention. Once described as "understated virtuosic," his playing style merges a wide variety of influences. Deeply rooted in the traditions of blues, folk, jazz, and country, it nevertheless avoids any sense of purism. Fingerpicking, colorful chord work and expressive slide licks are recurring elements in his style. Comparisons are often made to renowned guitarists such as Ry Cooder, Buddy Miller, Bill Frisell, and David Lindley. As with these masters of the strings, BJ's guitar work is always in service of the song and its atmosphere. In addition, he is proficient on a variety of other string instruments, including mandolin, mandocello, resonator guitar, lap steel, banjo, bouzouki, and bass. This versatility has made him a highly sought-after session musician for both live performances and studio recordings.

PRODUCER AND SIDEMAN

BJ Baartmans' approach to guitar playing and songwriting has also shaped him as a producer. For him, technique is neither more nor less than a means to create a rich and evocative sonic landscape. In recent years, BJ has produced albums for artists including Iain Matthews, Jack Poels, Jeff Finlin, Frans Pollux, and Marisa Yeaman. Many of these sessions took place in BJ's own Studio Wild Verband. As a sideman, BJ has toured and performed in recent years with artists such as Suzie Ungerleider, Kerri Powers, Rebecca Loebe, Carter Sampson, Cara Luft, and Rod Picott.

Then there is the Americana collective Hidden Agenda Deluxe, of which BJ is a guitarist, singer, and co-songwriter. The large number of performances both in the Netherlands and abroad continues to form an essential part of his life as a musician.

Since mid-2022, BJ has also presented a series of "musical conversations" with leading guitarists rooted in the Dutch music scene. Under the title *Snarenplukkers in Wild Verband*, he acts as host, interviewer, and accompanying musician in a number of local theaters.