

Spooner Oldham – Bio

Dewey Lyndon Oldham aka "Spooner" Oldham was born and raised in Center Star, Alabama, a town located just north of the city of Birmingham. Oldham began playing piano as a youngster, was the keyboard player in high school bands, and following graduation moved on to study at the University of North Alabama in Florence. Skipping classes he would hang out at Rick Hall's Muscle Shoals recording studio, and eventually became part of the FAME house band. It was Oldham who played the haunting organ on Percy Sledge's 1966 hit "When A Man Loves A Woman," which reached # 1 Pop in the U.S. and # 4 Pop in the U.K. At FAME Spooner met Dan Penn and the pair began a writing partnership.

They composed a number of classic southern soul songs, many of which charted. Among those Oldham/Penn hits were "Let's Do It Over" [Joe Simon # 13, 1965], "It Tears Me Up" [Percy Sledge #7, 1966], "I'm Your Puppet" [James & Bobby Purify # 5, 1966], "Out Of Left Field" [Percy Sledge #25, 1967], "Sweet Inspiration" [The Sweet Inspirations # 5, 1968] and "Cry Like A Baby" [The Box Tops # 2, 1968]. In the role of studio musician and co-writer, during the late sixties, Oldham also worked with Penn at American Recording Studio in Memphis. In 1973 Oldham cut "**Potluck**," his only solo recording to date and it was a Family Productions release [they also, originally, issued Billy Joel's 1971 solo debut album "**Cold Spring Harbour**"]. When the southern soul hits dried up, Oldham went on to work in Nashville where he co-wrote songs with a number of people including Freddy Weller. Weller scored on the Country Chart with the songs "Another Night Of Love" [# 5, 1971], "The Roadmaster" [# 17, 1972], "She Loves Me [Right Out Of My Mind]" [# 11, 1973] and "Love Got In The Way" [# 23, 1978]. Their collaboration "Lonely Women Make Good Lovers" scored on the Country Singles Chart on two occasions. First Bob Luman reached # 4 during 1972, and then Steve Wariner reached the same spot 12 years later. Percy Sledge scored a # 15 single in 1974 with Oldham's "I'll Be Your Everything."

Spooner Oldham was a member of Dylan's band on tv's "Saturday Night Live" in late 1979, and also at the Grammy Awards during February the following year. He toured in Dylan's road band in support of "**Slow Train Coming**" [1979] and "**Saved**" [1980]. Barry Beckett and Jerry Wexler produced both albums, and they were recorded at Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. Muscle Shoals session players played on "**Slow Train Coming**" – but not Oldham, as he was working on another project at the time – while it was Dylan's road band, including Oldham, that recorded "**Saved**." The road band featured Tim Drummond [bass], Jim Keltner [drums], Fred Tackett [guitar], Spooner Oldham [keyboards], Terry Young [keyboards, vocals] and Clydie King, Regina Havis and Mona Lisa Young [vocals].

Oldham has contributed organ/piano/keyboards to recordings by Jackson Browne ["**For Everyman**" 1973], J. J. Cale ["**8**" 1983, "**Special Edition**" 1984, "**Closer To You**" 1994], Bob Dylan ["**Dylan**" 1973], Maria Muldaur ["**Maria Muldaur**" 1974, "**Waitress In A Donut Shop**" 1974], Linda Ronstadt ["**Don't Cry Now**" 1973], John Prine ["**Aimless Love**" 1984], Aretha Franklin ["**Aretha's Jazz**" 1984], the Everly Brothers ["**Stories We Could Tell**" 1972], The Flying Burrito Brothers ["**Flying Again**" 1975], Neil Young ["**Comes A Time**" 1978, "**Old Ways**" 1985, "**Unplugged**" & "**Lucky Thirteen**" 1993], Kate Campbell ["**Moonpie Dreams**" 1997, "**Visions Of Plenty**" 1998, "**Rosaryville**" 1999, "**Wandering Strange**" 2001, "**Monuments**" 2003], Townes Van Zandt ["**Flying Shoes**" 1978], [Irma Thomas "**My Heart's In Memphis: The Songs Of Dan Penn**" 2000], Dan Penn ["**Nobody's Fool**" 1973, "**Do Right Man**" 1994] and countless others. For a time, Spooner also toured extensively with Neil Young. In November 1998, Oldham and Penn undertook a UK concert tour that resulted in the live recording "**Moments From This Theatre**," which was issued by UK based Proper Records the following year. The disc was released in the States in the early fall of 2005.

Discography :

Solo : "**Potluck**" [1973] :

with Spooner Oldham : "**Moments From This Theatre**" [1999/2005] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 10/05

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