

Murry Hammond – Bio

Murry Hammond was born on 2nd July 1964 in Fort Worth, Texas to Doris Beam Hammond and Donald Hammond, a mechanical engineer who was born and raised in the Chicago area. When Murry was aged six the Hammond family moved to the town of Boyd, which is located some 35 miles North West of Fort Worth, and he graduated from the local high school during 1982. Through his pre-teen and teen years Murry pretty much kept to himself and eventually came under the spell of left-wing politics and punk music, a love affair that eventually manifested itself in a Xeroxed fanzine he produced featuring genre acts such as The Dead Kennedys, M.D.C., Minor Threat, Husker Du, Meat Puppets and more. When his interest in punk music become all consuming Hammond quit college and moved to Dallas where he took a job with a phone answering service. His political interest in punk music waned when Ronald Reagan was re-elected in November 1984.

The same year Murry formed his first band, The Peyote Cowboys and they became part of the city's Deep Ellum music scene and opened for band such as Redd Kross, Butthole Surfers and the Flaming Lips. By the time they broke up three years later, Hammond had met Rhett Miller [born 1970] and they began collaborating together as songwriters. The pair also performed on occasions in Alan Wooley's band Killbilly, and in 1989 Murry produced **"Mythologies"** a 'homemade' Rhett Miller solo album. The following year the pair formed Sleepy Heroes, an alt. rock band that included Benjamin Warrenfells [drums], but three years on having released one album **"Under The Radio Sun"** and made no progress in the local music scene Hammond suggested to Miller that they break-up – but immediately reform as The Old 97's, with the proviso that they only perform music they liked in local coffee houses, beer joints and such, and that they never make a dime from their musical efforts. The band's name was taken from the Fred Jackson Lewey/Charles Noell song "Wreck Of The Old 97" popularized by Johnny Cash and others.

Miller agreed to the suggestion and so Rhett Miller [rhythm guitar, vocals], Murry Hammond [bass, vocals], Ken Bethea [lead guitar] and Philip Peeples [drums] became The Old 97's. The downside, if you could call it that, is that the band soon developed a local following. Then they began touring further afield and developed a national following, and the 'dimes' came rolling in. **"Hitchhike To Rhome,"** released by Big Iron Records, was their sixteen song debut collection, while on Dallas based Idol Records, **"Stoned/Garage Sale"** was an EP that the band shared with another local combo, Funland. The Old 97's were then signed by the Chicago based Alt. Country imprint, Bloodshot Records, and **"Wreck Your Life"** was produced by Chuck Uchida. Four additional songs from the **"Wreck Your Life"** sessions plus two non-album singles turned up later on the Bloodshot EP **"Early Tracks."**

Produced by Wall Gagel, **"Too Far To Care"** was the first of three albums the band made for Elektra Records. While the band retained its country roots on the latter disc, **"Fight Songs"** and **"Satellite Rides"** [which initially included a five song live bonus disc] proved to be more experimental pop sounding affairs. When Time Warner merged with America Online, in a shake-up The Old 97's were dropped from the Elektra roster, and the band went on to sign with New West Records for whom they have made the albums **"Drag It Up,"** the recorded at Gruene Hall, Texas 2CD in-concert set **"Alive & Wired,"** and their 2008 release **"Blame It On Gravity."** Although the band was dropped by Elektra, Rhett Miller was quickly resigned by the label as a solo artist and, to date, he has cut two albums **"The Instigator"** [2002] and **"The Believer"** [2006].

In 2001 Hammond relocated from his beloved Texas to California having fallen in love with animation voice actress/musician Grey DeLisle [birth name, Erin Grey Van Oosbree]. They were married the following year and were featured in an episode of tv's **"A Wedding Story."** Murry contributed to the recording sessions for his wife's Sugar Hill releases **"Graceful Ghost"** [2004] and **"Iron Flowers"** [2005]. On 31st January 2007, Grey gave birth to their first child, Jefferson Texas "Tex" Hammond. A committed Christian for almost two decades, these days Hammond is an active fund raiser for Project Mercy which builds accommodation for the poor in Tijuana, Mexico. Murry's solo debut **"I Don't Know Where I'm Going But I'm On My Way,"** a collection of seventeen songs about God, death, loss, trains and hope, was released during late August 2008.

Discography :

with Old 97's - **"Hitchhike To Rhome"** [1994] ; **"Stoned/Garage Sale"** [1995] ; **"Wreck Your Life"** [1995] ; **"Too Far To Care"** [1997] ; **"Fight Songs"** [1999] ; **"Early Tracks"** [2000] ; **"Satellite Rides"**

[2001] ; **“Drag It Up”** [2004] ; **“Alive & Wired”** [2005] ; **“Hit By A Train: The Best Of Old 97's”** [2006] ; **“Blame It On Gravity”** [2008] :

Solo - **“I Don’t Know Where I’m Going But I’m On My Way”** [2008] :

DVD - **“Old 97's Live”** [2005] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 09/08

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