

Sally Spring - Full Biography

Sally Spring has enjoyed an incredible life as a musical artist, and the best is yet to come. For some three decades as a performer and independent recording artist, she has enthralled listeners as she traveled across North America and Europe on the strength and charm of her music. Blessed with a "stunning voice and captivating songwriting," as North Carolina's *The Independent* weekly raves, Spring creates music of timeless and boundless appeal. Hailed as a "show stopper" (*Sing Out*) and "captivating performer" (*Variety*), she casts a mesmerizing spell on both record and the stage.

Proof of that can be heard on *Mockingbird* and *Stars*, both seductive albums that reflect both her stylistic breadth and the depth of her talent. Among the musical styles that Spring weaves into her own tapestry on the set are the English folk-rock of Sandy Denny, the bluegrass and old time music of her North Carolina home, the California country-rock of yore and today's alternative country along with touches of everything from New York rock to classic folk to pop. Yet the end results are utterly her own.

The company Spring keeps on all her recordings attests to the quality of her work. Guests contributing their talents to her past recordings include Gene Parsons (*The Byrds*), Marshall Crenshaw, Tift Merritt, Thad Cockrell, Faye Hunter (*Let's Active*), and Caitlin Cary (*Whiskeytown*, *Tres Chicas*). Her current recording, ***Made Of Stars***, includes guests Harvey Gold, Gurf Morlix, Peter Holsapple, and Susan Cowsill, alongside such notable players as James Mastro (*The Bongos*, *Ian Hunter*), Fred Smith (*Television*), Graham Maby (*Joe Jackson*, *Natalie Merchant*), Ted Lyons and others.

Within the star-studded line-up, Spring's talents remain "the heartbeat that keeps the whole enterprise pumping," observes *The Independent*. The allure of her loamy voice and the inspired craftsmanship of her compositions show the mark of a genuine artist and distinctive talent from electric rockers to an "old-as-the-hills" sounding folk song about a civil war battle.

At the same time, Spring makes her mark on Johnny Cash's "I Still Miss Someone," Los Lobos' "Short Side of Nothing" and Willie Dixon's "It Don't Make Sense" (*If We Can't Make Peace*). It is delight to hear her husband, Ted Lyons, perform guitar on Dixon's song. His style is so unpredictable, soulful and rhythmic. Throughout the record he makes his mark as a real innovator both on drums and guitar. The two make a great team.

Made Of Stars is an album that embodies all the musical promise implied in the term Americana, a style Spring perfected many years before it was even named as such.

Sally Spring was born in California and raised in North Carolina, and literally started singing even before she could even speak. "I would wake up singing and go to sleep singing," she recalls. "I sang everywhere I went. Music took me to a special world." Her parents' affection for Ray Charles, Billie Holiday, Harry Belafonte and Frank Sinatra fed her muse from an early age.

The daughter of an inventor/computer trailblazer whose classmates were Hewlett and Packard, Spring grew up thinking outside the box. At 11 years old, she bought her first guitar, figured out open tunings on her own and accompanied herself on a local television appearance a mere six weeks after she started playing. Her teen years were a whirlwind of professional performances at coffeehouses, churches, parties and picnics, singing in the choir, appearing in school musicals, and two years of summer stock theater in "The Lost Colony" in Manteo, NC.

While on a family summer vacation, Spring had a chance encounter with Guitar Shorty, a black street performer who also played guitar using open tunings. "This was an exciting moment for me, she notes. "I suddenly felt comradeship with another guitar player for the first time since I started playing." Artists like Fairport Convention, Buffalo Springfield, It's a Beautiful Day, Bob Dylan, Incredible String Band, The Beatles and Little Feat fed into the development of her own distinctive style, as did classic country acts like Hank Williams, Bill Monroe, Lefty Frizzell and Webb Pierce.

By her college years, Spring was playing clubs and concerts, and also began her troubadour's travels, packing up her guitar and striking out to Los Angeles, New York City, Provincetown and other locales where her talents always found her a stage, new friends and places to stay. In L.A., she landed a regular gig at the famed Barney's Beanery, where she met many famous artists in the audience. Her California sojourn found her rubbing shoulders at private parties with Mama Cass Elliot (The Mamas & The Papas) and members of The Beach Boys and The Monkees as well as meeting talents like newgrass master Peter Rowan. "Music always helped me connect with people and make an unfamiliar community a home," Spring says. Sally traveled the country on a shoestring making friends and sharing her southern Americana folk rock music with people like the Byrds, Doc Watson, Rev. Gary Davis, Taj Mahal, and Nancy Nevins among many others.

Without the backing of record labels or a high-powered manager or agent, Spring played such prestigious venues as L.A.'s Troubadour and New York's Bitter End and Folk City, to name but a few. She's also toured Great Britain, Italy and other European nations while becoming something of a legend in her native Carolinas, regularly appearing at the legendary Pier in Raleigh, packing fans into theaters and wowing thousands at outdoor festivals. Yet she is just as apt to play small town cake walks and family reunions, because for Sally Spring, it's all about making music and touching the hearts and minds of listeners.

Over the years, Spring has shared stages with a diverse roster of acts that includes everyone from John Prine to Papa John Creach to The Kingston Trio to Doc Watson, Reverend Gary Davis, Tracy Nelson, Dave Van Ronk, Leon Redbone, Roger McGuinn, Odetta, and even Frank Sinatra, Jr. With three previous releases to her credit, she has recorded with such varied musicians as veteran jazz-rock bassist Fernando Saunders (Marianne Faithful, Lou Reed, Jeff Beck, Tori Amos, John McLaughlin, Heart), percussionist J.T. Lewis (Sting, Lou Reed, Herbie Hancock, Vanessa Williams) and bluegrass guitar star Jack Lawrence (known for his work with Doc Watson).

The force that has driven her musical journeys and achievements is "that singular ability to touch people's souls with song, to bring the emotion rising from deep inside the listener," notes the Winston-Salem Journal, ascribing to her the same rare and magical appeal found in such legends as Billie Holliday, Edith Piaf and Judy Garland. It's a quality that's etched into the proverbial grooves of her recordings and is sure to win Spring even more devoted listeners and take her music even further than the many places it has already traveled and found a home. "She's a treasure." notes Gene Parsons (The Byrds).