Artist Spotlight: Muddy Waters

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WIDER LISTENING, YEAR 8

Muddy Waters (1913 – 1983) was an American Blues musician who is often cited as the “father of modern Chicago blues”.

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Muddy Waters

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For other uses, see Muddy Waters (disambiguation).

McKinley Morganfield (April 4, 1913 – April 30, 1983),[1][2] known professionally as Muddy Waters, was an American blues singer-songwriter and musician who is often cited as the "father of modern Chicago blues", and an important figure on the post-war blues scene.[3]

Muddy Waters grew up on Stovall Plantation near Clarksdale, Mississippi, and by age 17 was playing the guitar and the harmonica, emulating the local blues artists Son House and Robert Johnson.[4] He was recorded in Mississippi by Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress in 1941.[5][6] In 1943, he moved to Chicago to become a full-time professional musician. In 1946, he recorded his first records for Columbia Records and then for Aristocrat Records, a newly formed label run by the brothers Leonard and Phil Chess.

In the early 1950s, Muddy Waters and his band—Little Walter Jacobs on harmonica, Jimmy Rogers on guitar, Elga Edmonds (also known as Elgin Evans) on drums and Otis Spann on piano—recorded several blues classics, some with the bassist and songwriter Willie Dixon. These songs included "Hoochie Coochie Man", "I Just Want to Make Love to You " and "I'm Ready". In 1958, he traveled to England, laying the foundations of the resurgence of interest in the blues there. His performance at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1960 was recorded and released as his first live album, At Newport 1960.

Muddy Waters' influence is incalculable, on blues as well as other American idioms—such as Rock and roll and Rock music.
Early life

Muddy Waters' birthplace and date are not conclusively known. He stated that he was born in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, in 1915, but other evidence suggests that he was born in Jug's Corner, in neighboring Issaquena County, in 1913.[7] In the 1930s and 1940s, before his rise to fame, the year of his birth was reported as 1913 on his marriage license, recording notes, and musicians' union card. A 1955 interview in the Chicago Defender is the earliest in which he stated 1915 as the year of his birth, and he continued to say this in interviews from that point onward. The 1920 census lists him as five years old as of March 6, 1920, suggesting that his birth year may have been 1914. The Social Security Death Index, relying on the Social Security card application submitted after his move to Chicago in the mid-1940s, lists him as being born April 4, 1913. His gravestone gives his birth year as 1915.[8]

His grandmother, Della Grant, raised him after his mother died shortly after his birth. Grant gave him the nickname "Muddy" at an early age because he loved to play in the muddy water of nearby Deer Creek.[9] "Waters" was added years later, as he began to play harmonica and perform locally in his early teens.[10] The remains of the cabin on Stovall Plantation where he lived in his youth are now at the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi.[11][12]

He had his first introduction to music in church: "I used to belong to church. I was a good Baptist, singing in the church. So I got all of my good moaning and trembling going on for me right out of church,"[13] he recalled. By the time he was 17, he had purchased his first guitar. "I sold the last horse that we had. Made about fifteen dollars for him, gave my grandmother seven dollars and fifty cents, I kept seven-fifty and paid about two-fifty for that guitar. It was a Stella. The people ordered them from Sears-Roebuck in Chicago."

He started playing his songs in joints near his hometown, mostly on a plantation owned by Colonel William Howard Stovall.[14]

Career

Early career, 1941–1948

In August 1941,[6] Alan Lomax went to Stovall, Mississippi, on behalf of the Library of Congress to record various country blues musicians. "He brought his stuff down and recorded me right in my house," Muddy recalled for Rolling Stone magazine, "and when he played back the first song I sounded just like anybody's records. Man, you don't know how I felt that Saturday afternoon when I heard that voice and it was my own voice. Later on he sent me two copies of the pressing and a check for twenty bucks, and I carried that record up to the corner and put it on the jukebox. Just played it and played it and said, 'I can do it, I can do it.'"[5] Lomax came back in July 1942 to record him again. Both sessions were eventually released by Testament Records as Down on Stovall's Plantation.[15] The complete recordings were reissued by Chess Records on CD as Muddy Waters: The Complete Plantation Recordings. The Historic 1941–42 Library of Congress Field Recordings in 1993 and remastered in 1997.[16]

In 1943, Muddy Waters headed to Chicago with the hope of becoming a full-time professional musician. He later recalled arriving in Chicago as the single most momentous event in his life.[17] He lived with a relative for a short period while driving a truck and
Fleetwood Mac, musicians who would later form Chris Barber’s band, were inspired to go in the more modern, electric blues direction. Although his performances alienated the old guard, some younger musicians, including Muddy Waters’ performance, which included his electric artists such as members of Muddy’s band. For example, in 1958, they toured England with Spann in 1958, where they were backed by local Dixieland-style or “trad jazz” musicians, including members of Chris Barber’s band. At the time, English audiences had only been exposed to acoustic folk blues, as performed by artists such as Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and Big Bill Broonzy. Both the musicians and audiences were unprepared for Muddy Waters’ performance, which included his electric slide guitar playing. He recalled:

> They thought I was a Big Bill Broonzy [but] I wasn’t. I had my amplifier and Spann and I was going to do a Chicago thing. We opened up in Leeds, England. I was definitely too loud for them. The next morning we were in the headlines of the paper, ‘Screaming Guitar and Howling Piano’.

Although his performances alienated the old guard, some younger musicians, including Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies from Barber’s band, were inspired to go in the more modern, electric blues direction. Korner and Davies’ own groups included musicians who would later form the Rolling Stones (named after Muddy’s 1950 hit “Rollin’ Stone”), Cream, and the original Fleetwood Mac.
In the 1960s, Muddy Waters' performances continued to introduce a new generation to Chicago blues. At the Newport Jazz Festival, he recorded one of the first live blues albums, At Newport 1960, and his performance of "Got My Mojo Working" was nominated for a Grammy award. In September 1963, in Chess' attempt to connect with folk music audiences, Muddy Waters recorded Folk Singer, which replaced his trademark electric guitar sound with an acoustic band, including a then-unknown Buddy Guy on acoustic guitar. Folk Singer was not a commercial success, but it was lauded by critics, and in 2003 Rolling Stone magazine placed it at number 280 on its list of the 500 greatest albums of all time. In October 1963, Muddy Waters participated in the first of several annual European tours, organized as the American Folk Blues Festival, during which he also performed more acoustic-oriented numbers.

In 1967, he re-recorded several blues standards with Bo Diddley, Little Walter, and Howlin' Wolf, which were marketed as Super Blues and The Super Super Blues Band albums in Chess' attempt to reach a rock audience. In 1968, at the instigation of Marshall Chess, Muddy Waters recorded Electric Mud, an album intended to revive his career by backing him with Rotary Connection, a psychedelic soul band that Chess had put together. The album proved controversial; although it reached number 127 on the Billboard 200 album chart, it was scorned by many critics, and eventually disowned by Muddy himself:

That Electric Mud record I did, that one was dogshit. But when it first came out, it started selling like wild, and then they started sending them back. They said, "This can’t be Muddy Waters with all this shit going on – all this wow-wow and fuzztone.

Nonetheless, six months later Muddy Waters recorded a follow-up album, After the Rain, which had a similar sound and featured many of the same musicians.

Later in 1969, Muddy Waters recorded and released the album Fathers and Sons, which featured a return to his classic Chicago blues sound. Fathers and Sons had an all-star backing band that included Michael Bloomfield and Paul Butterfield, longtime fans whose desire to play with him was the impetus for the album. It was the most successful album of Muddy Waters' career, reaching number 70 on the Billboard 200.

Resurgence and later career, 1971–1982

In 1971, a show at Mister Kelly's, an upmarket Chicago nightclub, was recorded and released, signalling both Muddy's return to form and the completion of his transfer to white audiences.

In 1972, he won his first Grammy Award, for Best Ethnic or Traditional Recording for They Call Me Muddy Waters, a 1971 album of old, but previously unreleased recordings.

Later in 1972, he flew to England to record the album The London Muddy Waters Sessions. The album was a follow-up to the previous year’s The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions. Both albums were the brainchild of Chess Records producer Norman Dayron, and were intended to showcase Chicago blues musicians playing with the younger British rock musicians whom they had inspired. Muddy Waters brought with him two American musicians, harmonica player Carey Bell and guitarist Sammy Lawhorn. The British and Irish musicians who played on the album included Rory Gallagher, Steve Winwood, Rick Grech, and Mitch Mitchell. Muddy Waters was dissatisfied by the results, due to the British musicians' more rock-oriented sound. "These boys are top musicians, they can play with me, put the book before 'em and play it, you know," he told Guralnick. "But that ain't what I need to sell my people, it ain't the Muddy Waters sound. An' if you change my sound, then you gonna change the whole man." He stated, "My blues look so simple, so easy to do, but it’s not. They say my blues is the hardest blues in the world to play."

He won another Grammy for his last LP on Chess Records: The Muddy Waters Woodstock Album, recorded in 1975 with his new guitarist Bob Margolin, Pinetop Perkins, Paul Butterfield, and Levon Helm and Garth Hudson of the Band. In November 1976 he appeared as a featured special guest at The Band's Last Waltz farewell concert, and in the subsequent 1978 feature film documentary of the event.

From 1977 to 1981, blues musician Johnny Winter, who had idolized Muddy Waters since childhood, produced four albums of his, all on the Blue Sky Records label: the studio albums Hard Again (1977), I'm Ready (1978) and King Bee (1981), and the live album...
In 1981, Muddy Waters was invited to perform at ChicagoFest, the city's top outdoor music festival. He was joined onstage by Johnny Winter and Buddy Miles, and played classics like "Mannish Boy", "Trouble No More", and "Mojo Working" to a new generation of fans. The performance was made available on DVD in 2009 by Shout! Factory. On November 22, he performed live with three members of British rock band the Rolling Stones (Mick Jagger, Keith Richards & Ronnie Wood) at the Checkerboard Lounge, a blues club in Bronzeville, on the South Side of Chicago, which was established in 1972 by Buddy Guy and L.C. Thurman. A DVD version of the performance was released in 2012.

In 1982, declining health dramatically stopped his performance schedule. His last public performance took place when he sat in with Eric Clapton's band at a concert in Florida in the summer of 1982.

Personal life

Muddy Waters and his longtime wife, Geneva Wade (a first cousin of R. L. Burnside) were married in Lexington, Mississippi, in 1940. She died of cancer on March 15, 1973. Gaining custody of two of his children, Rosalind and Renee, he moved them into his home, eventually buying a new house in Westmont, Illinois. Years later, he travelled to Florida and met his future wife, 19-year-old Marva Jean Brooks, whom he nicknamed "Sunshine". Eric Clapton served as best man at their wedding in 1979.

His sons, Larry "Mud" Morganfield and Big Bill Morganfield, are also blues singers and musicians. In 2017, his younger son, Joseph "Mojo" Morganfield, began publicly performing the blues, occasionally with his brothers.

Death

Muddy Waters died in his sleep from heart failure, at his home in Westmont, Illinois, on April 30, 1983, from cancer-related complications. He was transported from his Westmont home, which he lived in for the last decade of his life, to Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois. There he was pronounced dead at the age of 70. The funeral service was held on May 4, 1983. Throngs of blues musicians and fans attended his funeral at Restvale Cemetery in Alsip, Illinois. Muddy Waters is buried next to his wife, Geneva.

After his death, a lengthy legal battle ensued between Muddy Waters' heirs and Scott Cameron, his former manager. In 2010, Muddy Waters' heir was petitioning for the courts to appoint Mercy Morganfield, his daughter, as administrator and distribute remaining assets, which mainly consists of copyrights to his music. The petition to reopen the estate was successful. In May 2018, the heirs' lawyer sought to hold Scott Cameron's wife in contempt for diverting royalty income. However, the heirs asked for that citation not to be pursued. The next court date was set for July 10, 2018.

Legacy

Two years after his death, the city of Chicago paid tribute to Muddy Waters by designating the one-block section between 900 and 1000 East 43rd Street near his former home on the south side "Honorary Muddy Waters Drive". In 2017, a ten-stories-mural commissioned as a part of the Chicago Blues Festival and designed by Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra was painted on the side of the building at 17 North State Street, at the corner of State and Washington Streets. The Chicago suburb of Westmont, where Muddy Waters lived the last decade of his life, named a section of Cass Avenue near his home "Honorary Muddy Waters Way". In 2008 a Mississippi Blues Trail marker has been placed in Clarksdale, Mississippi, by the Mississippi Blues Commission designating the site of Muddy Waters' cabin.

Influence

The British band The Rolling Stones named themselves after Muddy Waters' 1950 song "Rollin' Stone". Jimi Hendrix recalled that "the first guitar player I was aware of was Muddy Waters. I first heard him as a little boy and it scared me to death". The band Cream covered "Rollin' and Tumblin'" on their 1966 debut album, Fresh Cream. Eric Clapton was a big fan of Muddy Waters while growing up, and his music influenced Clapton's music career. The song was also covered by Canned Heat at the Monterey Pop Festival and later adapted by Bob Dylan on his album Modern Times. One of Led Zeppelin's biggest hits, "Whole Lotta Love", is based on the Muddy Waters hit "You Need Love" (written by Willie Dixon). "Hoochie Coochie Man", was covered by Allman Brothers Band, Humble Pie, Steppenwolf, Supertramp and Fear. In 1993, Paul Rodgers released the album Muddy Water Blues: A Tribute to Muddy Waters, on which he covered a number of Muddy Waters songs, including "Louisiana Blues", "Rollin' Stone".
The cemetery plot of Muddy Waters, under his real name, McKinley Morganfield, in Restvale Cemetery, Westmont, Illinois.

Angus Young, of the rock group AC/DC, has cited Muddy Waters as one of his influences. The AC/DC song title "You Shook Me All Night Long" came from lyrics of the Muddy Waters song "You Shook Me", written by Willie Dixon and J. B. Lenoir. Earl Hooker first recorded it as an instrumental, which was then overdubbed with vocals by Muddy Waters in 1962. Led Zeppelin also covered it on their debut album. In 1981 ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons went to visit the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale with The Blues magazine founder Jim O'Neal. The museum's director, Sid Graves, brought Gibbons to visit Muddy Waters original house, and encouraged him to pick up a piece of scrap lumber that was originally part of the roof. Gibbons eventually converted the wood into a guitar. Named Muddywood, the instrument is now exhibited at the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale.

Following his death, fellow blues musician B.B. King told Guitar World magazine, "It's going to be years and years before most people realize how greatly he contributed to American music." John P. Hammond told Guitar World magazine, "Muddy was a master of just the right notes. It was profound guitar playing, deep and simple... more country blues transposed to the electric guitar, the kind of playing that enhanced the lyrics, gave profundity to the words themselves."

Muddy Waters' songs have been featured in long-time fan Martin Scorsese's movies, including The Color of Money, Goodfellas, and Casino. Muddy Waters' 1970s recording of his mid-50s hit "Mannish Boy" was used in the films Goodfellas, Better Off Dead, Risky Business, and the rockumentary The Last Waltz. In 1988 "Mannish Boy" was also used in a Levi's 501 commercial and re-released in Europe as a single with "(I'm your) Hoochie Coochie Man" on the flip side.

Awards and recognition

Grammy Awards

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<th>Genre</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Result</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording</td>
<td>They Call Me Muddy Waters</td>
<td>folk</td>
<td>MCA/Chess</td>
<td>winner</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording</td>
<td>The London Muddy Waters Session</td>
<td>folk</td>
<td>MCA/Chess</td>
<td>winner</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording</td>
<td>The Muddy Waters Woodstock Album</td>
<td>folk</td>
<td>MCA/Chess</td>
<td>winner</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording</td>
<td>Hard Again</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording</td>
<td>Muddy &quot;Mississippi&quot; Waters Live</td>
<td>folk</td>
<td>Blue Sky</td>
<td>winner</td>
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Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame listed four songs of Muddy Waters among the 500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll.
### Blues Foundation Awards

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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Reissue Album of the Year</td>
<td>The Complete Plantation Recordings</td>
<td>Winner</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>Winner</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<td>Hoochie Coochie Man: Complete Chess Recordings, Volume 2, 1952–1958</td>
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### Inductions

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<td>1994</td>
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### Discography

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#### Studio albums
- *Muddy Waters Sings Big Bill Broonzy* (1960)
- *Folk Singer* (1964)
- *Brass and the Blues* (1966)
- *Electric Mud* (1968)
- *After the Rain* (1969)
- *Fathers and Sons* (1969)
- *The London Muddy Waters Sessions* (1972)
- *Can't Get No Grindin'* (1973)
- "Unk" in Funk (1974)
- *The Muddy Waters Woodstock Album* (1975)
- *Hard Again* (1977)
- *I'm Ready* (1978)
- *King Bee* (1981)

### Notes
"His thick heavy voice, the dark colouration of his tone, and his firm, almost solid, personality were all clearly derived from House," wrote the music historian Peter Guralnick in *Feel Like Going Home*, "but the embellishments, which he added, the imaginative slide technique and more agile rhythms, were closer to Johnson."


^ Dahl 1996.

^ Palmer 2018, p. 4.

^ Gordon 2002, p. 3.

^ *Muddy Waters at Find a Grave*


^ a b Szatmary 2014, p. 8.


^ Palmer 1982, p. 163.


^ Dahl 1996.

^ a b Whittburn 1988, p. 435.


^ Palmer 1982, p. 103.


^ Parnell, Sean, "The New Checkerboard Lounge", *The Chicago Bar Project*


References


External links

- Muddy Waters at Encyclopædia Britannica
- "Muddy Waters". Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- Muddy Waters at Find A Grave

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<td>Folk Singer</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Super Blues</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Electric Mud</td>
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<td>After the Rain</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Fathers and Sons</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Hard Again</td>
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<td>1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noted singles</td>
<td>1950 &quot;Rollin’ and Tumblin’&quot; · &quot;Rollin’ Stone&quot; · &quot;Walkin’ Blues&quot; · 1951 &quot;Long Distance Call&quot; · 1953 &quot;Baby Please Don’t Go&quot; · 1954 &quot;Hoochie Coochie Man&quot; · &quot;I Just Want to Make Love to You&quot; · &quot;I’m Ready&quot; · 1955 &quot;Mannish Boy&quot; · 1956 &quot;Trouble No More&quot; · &quot;Forty Days and Forty Nights&quot; · &quot;Rock Me&quot; · &quot;Got My Mojo Working&quot; · 1962 &quot;You Shook Me&quot;</td>
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**Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – Class of 1987**

**Performers**
- The Coasters
  - Carl Gardner, Cornell Gunter, Billy Guy, Dub Jones
- Eddie Cochran · Bo Diddley · Aretha Franklin · Marvin Gaye · Bill Haley · B.B. King · Clyde McPhatter · Ricky Nelson · Roy Orbison · Carl Perkins · Smokey Robinson · Big Joe Turner · Muddy Waters · Jackie Wilson

**Early influences**
- Louis Jordan · T-Bone Walker · Hank Williams

**Non-performers**
- Leonard Chess · Ahmet Ertegun
- Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller · Jerry Wexler

source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muddy_Waters
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Muddy Waters was an American blues artist widely considered to be one of the most important figures in post–World War II Chicago blues. As with most postwar blues musicians, his recordings were released as two-song singles until the 1960s, when his record company began focusing on long-playing albums. As a result, his most celebrated recordings from early in his career are issued on various collections and anthologies, often with significant overlap and duplication. Included here are the singles and Muddy Waters was one of the few key players of the postwar Chicago Blues scene who actually influenced the music that influenced him. His swollen, grandiloquent vocals were an instrument unto themselves and his beefy electric slide playing breathed new life into music heavily influenced by the Delta Blues. Waters assembled one of the meanest bands in blues history, the Headhunters, comprised of Little Walter, Baby Face Leroy Foste, and Jimmy Rogers. In 1951, Waters cranked out four hits, "Louisiana Blues," "Long Distance Call," "Honey Bee," and "Still a Fool" which rapidly climbed the charts and prompted Leonard Chess (founder of Chess Records) to play on the 1952 hit, "She Moves Me." Artist Spotlight: Eyvind Earle. Scott Fischer. Tuesday, September 4th, 2018. Feeling stale? Not so fresh? When you start yawning at your own paintings, a sure cure is to look at the act of creating through another artists eyes. Someone who makes you tilt your head like a dog hearing, “Wanna treat?” And if you think you don’t know Mr Earle, you actually probably do. He has been brought up a few times here on Muddy, but he might have imprinted you much earlier in life, with his work on the Disney Classic, ‘Sleeping Beauty’. So hey, maybe we can all say, “Dude, I was into the ‘Eyv’, way before he was cool.” But damn… he is cool.