

Sally Spring - Early Career

Sally Spring was born in California and spent her early, formative years in Palo Alto. She and her family moved to North Carolina and by the time she was eleven, Sally became interested in playing guitar and making up her own songs. Sally taught herself to play guitar not in the standard tuning of E-A-D-G-B-E but with the instrument tuned to a chord; usually a G or D.

An early influence for young Sally was the eccentric eastern North Carolina street singer "Guitar Shorty" from Wilson. Among many other boasts, "Shorty" claimed to have ghost-written most of James Brown's early hits and taught The Beatles how to play their guitars! Shorty often played his battered, orange guitar for tips on the streets of Morehead City and Atlantic Beach and this is where Sally first encountered him one summer day during the late 1960s.

"He played his guitar tuned to a chord just as I did!" Sally remembers. "I'd never seen anyone else do that. Before then, I thought I was the only one. Shorty was kind of a rough singer and player but I could identify with him because we had the tuning thing in common."

Throughout her high school days Sally began more and more to sing at coffee houses, churches, parties and picnics. She also became very involved with school productions of popular musicals. Thanks to her experience with these school productions, Sally landed a part as an actress with the long-running summerstock outdoor play "The Lost Colony" in Manteo, N.C.

After two summers acting in "The Lost Colony" and the rest of the time performing her music at colleges, festivals, and night clubs around North and South Carolina, Sally decided it was time to check out the musical opportunities for a young folk singer in Los Angeles.

Sally's first gigs in the Los Angeles metropolitan region were the late night rave-ups at Barney's Beanery on Santa Monica Blvd. in West Hollywood. The Beanery was a favorite hangout for Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Dennis Hopper and Dan Hicks among many others. Soon, Sally began playing jobs at places like The Troubadour, a club just down the street from Barney's.

For Sally, Los Angeles started to become a whirlwind of gigs and exciting parties with the likes of The Monkees, The Beach Boys, and Mama Cass. "There was so much excitement. Everyone was creating and learning and music was going on all night, every night. People were wearing brightly colored clothing and speaking about serious issues." Sally recalled.

"One morning around 4 a.m., Kilgor Trout and I accidentally threw a watermelon off the end of the Santa Monica pier. It exploded as soon as it hit the sea. In the dim light from the pier lamps we could see bits of the melon's red flesh floating in the green water. We laughed until we cried!"