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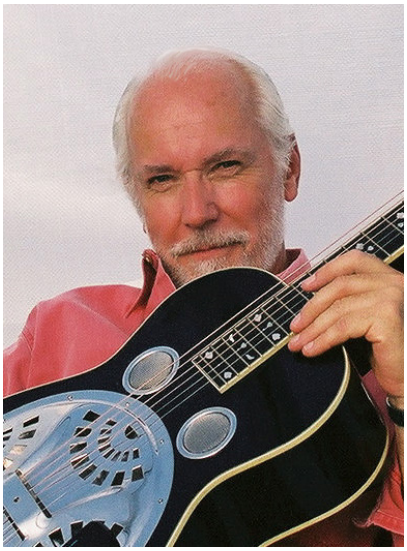
Remembering Mike Auldridge

The bluegrass world was saddened to hear of the passing of legendary Dobro artist Mike Auldridge on December 29, 2012, Called by the *Washington Post* "one of maybe a handful of truly innovative Dobro players in the history of country and bluegrass music," Mike Auldridge's modern approach to the Dobro played an integral role in the development of contemporary bluegrass and country music.



Born in 1938 and raised in Kensington, Maryland, Auldridge began playing guitar and banjo at an early age before settling on the Dobro at age 17. While the Dobro was used by such musicians as Josh Graves, who performed with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Auldridge is credited with bringing the Dobro new recognition. In 2004 NEA National Heritage Fellow Jerry Douglas said, "Mike changed everything. He phrased differently. He was the first guy to use the Dobro in a more modern way, to phrase it more like a saxophone or some other instrument."

?A lot of people talk about Mike Auldridge?s tone on the Dobro,? said WAMU Bluegrass Country ?s Katy Daley, "I hope they'll also remember him for how much grace and elegance there was in his music and stage movements. He was the perfect counterpoint to John Duffey's powerful onstage presence.? Auldridge was also a gifted artist who worked as an illustrator for the *Washington Star*. In fact, he designed three of the four logos used by *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine since the publication began.

After graduating in 1967 from the University of Maryland, Auldridge continued to play in local clubs in the Washington, DC area. In 1969, he joined the band Emerson and Waldron, later called Cliff Waldron and the New Shades of Grass, and in 1971 he co-founded the Seldom Scene, a group he remained with until the mid-1990s. The Seldom Scene, which performed weekly at the Birchmere in Virginia, incorporated elements of jazz, folk and rock into traditional bluegrass harmonies.

Auldridge's first two solo albums, *Dobro* and *Blues & Bluegrass*, demonstrated his versatility; he went on to record six more solo albums as well as doing session work on more than 200 recordings with a diverse array of artists including Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, Patty Loveless, Lyle Lovett, Doc Watson, Ricky Skaggs, Hank Williams, Jr., and Bill Monroe. In addition to the Seldom Scene, Auldridge has performed with a number of other bands, including Chesapeake, the Good Deale Bluegrass Band, John Starling and Carolina Star, and in a trio with Jimmy Gaudreau and Richard Bennett. He has also performed with the touring bands of Lyle Lovett and Emmylou Harris.

In 2007, Auldridge was recognized for his contributions to the development of bluegrass with International Bluegrass Music Association's Distinguished Achievement Award. He was honored with the NEA National Heritage Award in 2012.

Sources: NEA, Katy Daley, Jerry Douglas, *The Washington Post*

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