

## **Doc Watson.**

Arthel Lane "Doc" Watson (1923 – 2012) was an American guitarist, songwriter and singer of bluegrass, folk, country, blues and gospel music. Watson won seven Grammy awards as well as a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Watson's flatpicking skills and knowledge of traditional American music are highly regarded. He performed with his son Merle for over 15 years until Merle's death in 1985 in an accident on the family farm. Ecoutons le dans quelques unes de ses interprétations de morceaux traditionnels :

« Omie Wise » : <http://www.musicalitis-ressources.com/node/172>

« Little Sadie » : <http://www.musicalitis-ressources.com/node/174>

« Goin' down the road » : <http://www.musicalitis-ressources.com/node/171>

« Freight train boogie » : <http://www.musicalitis-ressources.com/node/170>

« Weary blues » : <http://www.musicalitis-ressources.com/node/169>

Watson was born in Deep Gap, North Carolina. According to Watson on his three-CD biographical recording *Legacy*, he got the nickname "Doc" during a live radio broadcast when the announcer remarked that his given name Arthel was odd and he needed an easy nickname. A fan in the crowd shouted "Call him Doc!" presumably in reference to the literary character Sherlock Holmes's sidekick Doctor Watson. The name stuck ever since. An eye infection caused Doc Watson to lose his vision before his first birthday. Despite this, he was taught by his parents to work hard and care for himself. He attended North Carolina's school for the visually impaired, The Governor Morehead School, in Raleigh, North Carolina. In a 1989 radio interview with host Terry Gross on the Fresh Air show of National Public Radio (NPR), Watson explains how he got his first guitar. His father told him that if he and his brother (David Watson) chopped down all the small, dead, chestnut trees along the edge of their field, he could sell the wood to the tannery and make money. The brothers did the work and Watson bought a \$10 Stella guitar from Sears Roebuck while his brother bought a new suit.<sup>[6]</sup> Later in that same interview, Watson explained that his first high quality guitar was a Martin Guitar D-18. Watson's earliest influences were country roots musicians and groups such as the Carter Family and Jimmy Rodgers. The first song he learned to play on the guitar was "When Roses Bloom in Dixieland", first recorded by the Carter Family in 1930. Watson stated in an interview with American Songwriter that, "Jimmy Rodgers was the first man that I started to claim as my favorite."<sup>[8]</sup> Watson proved to be a natural musical talent and within months was performing on local street corners playing songs from the Delmore Brothers, Louvin Brothers, and Monroe Brothers alongside his brother Linny. By the time Watson reached adulthood, he had become a proficient acoustic and electric guitar player. In 1953, Watson joined the Johnson City, Tennessee-based Jack Williams' country and western swing band on electric guitar. The band seldom had a fiddle player, but was often asked to play at square dances. Following the example of country guitarists Grady Martin and Hank Garland, Watson taught himself to play fiddle tunes on his Les Paul electric guitar. He later transferred the technique to acoustic guitar, and playing fiddle tunes became part of his signature sound. During his time with Jack Williams, Doc also supported his family as a piano tuner. In 1960, as the American folk music revival grew, Watson took the advice of folk musicologist Ralph Rinzler and began playing acoustic guitar and banjo exclusively. That move ignited Watson's career when he played on his first recording, *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's*. Also of pivotal importance for his career was his February 11, 1961 appearance at P.S. 41 in Greenwich Village. He subsequently began to tour as a solo performer and appeared at universities and clubs like the Ash Grove in Los Angeles. Watson would eventually get his big break and rave reviews for his performance at the renowned Newport Folk Festival in Newport, Rhode Island in 1963. Watson recorded his first solo album in 1964 and began performing with his son Merle the same year. After the folk revival waned during the late 1960s, Watson's career

was sustained by his performance of "Tennessee Stud" on the 1972 live album recording *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*. As popular as ever, Doc and Merle began playing as a trio, with T. Michael Coleman on bass guitar, in 1974. The trio toured the globe during the late seventies and early eighties, recorded nearly fifteen albums between 1973 and 1985, and brought Doc and Merle's unique blend of acoustic music to millions of new fans. In 1985, Merle died in a tractor accident. Watson played guitar in both flatpicking and fingerpicking style, but is best known for his flatpick work. His guitar playing skills, combined with his authenticity as a mountain musician, made him a highly influential figure during the folk music revival. Watson pioneered a fast and flashy bluegrass lead guitar style including fiddle tunes and crosspicking techniques which were adopted and extended by Clarence White, Tony Rice and many others. Watson was also an accomplished banjo player and sometimes accompanied himself on harmonica as well. Known also for his distinctive and rich baritone voice, Watson over the years developed a vast repertoire of mountain ballads, which he learned via the oral tradition of his home area in Deep Gap, North Carolina. His affable manner, humble nature and delightful wit endeared him to his fans nearly as much as his musical talent. Watson played a Martin model D-18 guitar on his earliest recordings. In 1968, Watson began a relationship with Gallagher Guitars when he started playing their G-50 model. His first Gallagher, which Watson refers to as "Old Hoss", is on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1974, Gallagher created a customized G-50 line to meet Watson's preferred specifications, which bears the Doc Watson name. In 1991, Gallagher customized a personal cutaway guitar for Watson that he played until his death and which he referred to as "Donald" in honor of Gallagher guitar's second generation proprietor and builder, Don Gallagher. For the last few years, Doc had been playing a Dana Bourgeois dreadnought given to him by Ricky Skaggs for his 80th birthday. In 1986, Watson received the North Carolina Award and in 1994 he received a North Carolina Folk Heritage Award. Also in 1994, Watson teamed up with musicians Randy Scruggs and Earl Scruggs to contribute the classic song "Keep on the Sunny Side" to the AIDS benefit album *Red Hot + Country* produced by the Red Hot Organization. In 2000, Watson was inducted into the International Bluegrass Music Hall of Honor in Owensboro, Kentucky. In 1997, Watson received the National Medal of Arts from U.S. president Bill Clinton. In 2010, he was awarded an honorary doctor of music degree from Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. In his later life, Watson scaled back his touring schedule. Watson was generally joined onstage by his grandson (Merle's son) Richard, as well as longtime musical partners David Holt or Jack Lawrence. On one occasion, Watson was accompanied by Australian guitar player Tommy Emmanuel at a concert at the Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth, Texas. Watson also performed, accompanied by Holt and Richard, at the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass festival in San Francisco, California in 2009, as he had done in several previous years. Watson hosted the annual MerleFest music festival held every April at Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. The festival features a vast array of acoustic style music focusing on the folk, bluegrass, blues and old-time music genres. It was named in honor of Merle Watson and is one of the most popular acoustic music festivals in the world, drawing over 70,000 music fans each year. Watson was inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame in 2010. In 1947, Doc married Rosa Lee Carlton, the daughter of popular fiddle player Gaither Carlton. Watson and Rosa Lee had two children — Eddy Merle (named after country music legends Eddy Arnold and Merle Travis) in 1949 and Nancy Ellen in 1951. In late May 2012, Watson was listed in critical condition but was responsive at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, after undergoing colon surgery. Watson fell at his home earlier in the week, after which he was sent to Watauga Medical Center in nearby Boone, NC. Watson was not seriously injured in the fall, but an underlying medical condition prompted the surgery which required him to be airlifted to

Winston-Salem. Watson died on May 29, 2012 at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center at the age of 89.

Adaptation, impressions : Jérôme Huet/Information, principaux faits : Wikipedia