

When a Man Loves a Woman

(Percy Sledge)

When a man loves a woman
Can't keep his mind on nothin'
else
He'd change the world for the
good thing he's found
If she is bad, he can't see it
She can do no wrong
Turn his back on his best friend
if he put her down

When a man loves a woman
He'll spend his very last dime
Tryin' to hold on to what he
needs
He'd give up all his comforts
And sleep out in the rain
If she said that's the way
It ought to be

Well, this man loves you,
woman
I gave you everything I had

Tryin' to hold on to your
heartless love
Baby, please don't treat me bad

When a man loves a woman
Down deep in his soul
She can bring him such misery
If she is playin' him for a fool
He's the last one to know
Lovin' eyes can never see

When a man loves a woman
He can do her no wrong
He can never want
Some other girl

Yes when a man loves a woman
I know exactly how he feels
Cause baby, baby, you're my
world

When a man loves a woman...

"When a Man Loves a Woman" is a song written by Calvin Lewis and Andrew Wright and first recorded by Percy Sledge in 1966 at Norala Sound Studio in Sheffield, Alabama. It made number one on both the Billboard Hot 100 and R&B singles charts. Singer and actress Bette Midler recorded the song 14 years later and had a Top 40 hit with her version in 1980. In 1991, Michael Bolton recorded the song and his version peaked at number one on both the Billboard Hot 100 chart and the Billboard Adult Contemporary Singles chart.

The song was initially recorded by Percy Sledge at Rick Hall's FAME Studios at Muscle Shoals, before being re-recorded at the nearby Norala Studios owned by Quin Ivy. The sidemen for the recording included Spooner Oldham, Farfisa organ; Marlin Greene, guitar; Albert "Junior" Lowe, double bass and Roger Hawkins, drums. Andrew Wright and Calvin Lewis did not play on the record. Rick Hall arranged a distribution deal with Atlantic Records, but Jerry Wexler asked that the song be re-recorded because the horns were out of tune. According to musician David Hood, "They went back in the studio and changed the horns, got different horn players to play on it. But then the tapes got mixed up and Atlantic put out their original version. So that's the hit."

Released by Atlantic Records in April 1966, Sledge's recording reached number one on both the Billboard Hot 100 and R&B singles charts, becoming the first number 1 hit recorded in Muscle Shoals. It is also one of seven number 1 hits to debut on the Billboard Hot 100 at number 100. The single was also a top ten hit in the UK reaching number four on its initial release and ultimately peaking at number two in 1987 on the UK Singles Chart after it was featured in a Levi's Jeans commercial. The Percy Sledge version is listed 53rd in Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. Also in 1987, it was reissued in the US to promote the soundtrack album for Oliver Stone's film Platoon.

Calvin Lewis and Andrew Wright were members of the Esquires, a band in Sheffield, Alabama fronted by singer Percy Sledge. According to Wright, "We were set to play a Friday night dance, and we were practicing ... I was messing around on the organ when this riff came up out of nowhere. There was no one in the club but us. I told Calvin to go home and write some words." The next night, they rehearsed the emerging song with Sledge, changed it around, and soon afterwards auditioned the song for local businessman and radio DJ Quin Ivy. He liked the song but suggested that some of the words be changed to give a more positive message. Wright said, "We kept some of the phrases, worked on it for several weeks, and spent quite a bit of time in the studio."

Although the writing of the song is credited to Lewis and Wright, Sledge later said that he should have received a co-writing credit. In one story, Sledge said that one night he was upset over a broken relationship and asked Lewis and Wright to play a slow blues over which he improvised lyrics describing his emotions; Quin Ivy was at the show and asked the band to refine the lyrics so that it could be recorded. Sledge said that he allowed Lewis and Wright to take the writing credits because they gave him the opportunity "to sing his heart out".