

Michael Cook

Michael Cook was born in London, England, in 1947, and raised in St.Albans, Hertfordshire, where his father was a baker and his mother a schoolteacher. Both parents came from coal-mining families on the East coast of Scotland.

Michael's father Thomas sang and played the violin, and his mother Elspeth played the piano. Michael never learned much piano because it was always in use by somebody else. He bought his first guitar, a cheap Russian model, when he was seventeen.

Michael spent a lot of time listening to artists such as Martin Carthy, the Watsons, and Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. In London, at Les Cousins club in Soho, other particular influences were Davey Graham, Bert Jansch, and John Renbourn. Michael also listened to a lot of jazz records, blues artists like Mississippi Fred McDowell and John Hurt, and many popular singer-songwriters including Tom Paxton, Paul Simon, and Tim Hardin.

Michael learned to play the guitar with local musicians including John Lamont, Chris Robbins, and Johnny Taylor. Michael sang and played harmonica in a folk club duo with Steve Jenkins (later known as Steve Forrest of the band Silver Bullet), and one of Michael's songs, "Spudwagon", was recorded for radio by Adrian Grigg in the early seventies.

Michael traveled in the Middle East and Europe, singing and playing solo guitar, and occasionally singing and playing harmonica with a rock band. Upon returning to England, he played at various London folk clubs including City University and St.Martin's-in-the-Fields. Michael moved to the Portsmouth area in 1975, and took guitar lessons from Stevie Smith in Chichester. In 1984 Michael moved to Sweden, and in 1987 he moved from there to Canada, settling in Toronto.

Michael's friends encouraged him to develop his music, and in 1997 he recorded his first CD, "[North York Skyline](#)", in Toronto (independent, [Skyline Productions](#)). Two more CDs followed, "[Orangeville and the Crowded Night](#)" in 2000, and "[Glass Half Full](#)" in 2001, both recorded by [Karen Kane](#). Michael played various folk clubs and song stages in Toronto before moving to Winnipeg in November 2002.

Michael's music is an eclectic mix of folk, blues, country, some rock, and a little jazz. His distinctive songs cover diverse "slices of life", supported by dexterous guitar playing, and sung with a raw intensity. Michael also brings a dry humor to the proceedings on stage, so that his presentation and performances are always something to look forward to.

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