

Shake Russell – Bio

Shake Russell was born during 1948 in Independence, Missouri a town located on the eastern outskirts of Kansas City. Aged eight he was introduced to the trombone, an instrument Shake went on to play in Junior and High School orchestras. Russell's father was a minister, so it's hardly surprising that from an early age Shake sang in the church choir. For American musicians born during the late forties, early February 1964 was a significant date - The Beatles, made their first US trip. When I interviewed Shake in Kerrville, Texas during 1992 he remarked that the event was *"indelibly stamped in my [musical] psyche."* His 'hobby' now possessed career prospects.

Aged sixteen, Russell joined the local Top 40 covers band Odds and Ends. A short time later, armed only with his acoustic guitar, Russell began performing in Kansas City coffee houses, a move prompted by his desire to pen and perform original songs. It was during this period that Russell met Dana Cooper, another Missouri born songwriter. In 1970 Shake joined the [then] Kansas City based group, Ewing Street Times. Led by John Vandiver, a Dallas born Texan, in the summer of 1972 the band relocated to Houston. Concurrently, many of Vandiver's boyhood musical associates were making their home on the shores of Lake Travis, North West of Austin – sic. Steven Fromholz, Michael (Martin) Murphey and the late B.W. Stevenson [d. 1988]. Ever transient, Vandiver and Co. moved to Austin. During the ensuing years, apart from local gigs, the Times - John Vandiver [guitar], Michael Mashkes [guitar], Billy Bucher [drums] and Shake Russell [bass] - toured on the Mid-West College circuit and also performed in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas.

Russell's tune "Deep In The West" debuted on Vol. 2 of the 1973 Kerrville Folk Festival Live Highlights album. Over the ensuing decades, Russell has been a regular Kerrville performer. According to Shake, *"My songwriting influences at this stage included Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Tim Hardin, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon, Randy Newman and Stephen Stills."* Ewing Street Times split up in 1975. On the recording front, B.W. Stevenson included Russell's "Temper, Temper" on his 1975 Warner Brothers album **"We Be Sailing"**. Subsequent covers include "Deep In The West" by Waylon Jennings [**"Hanging Tough"**], "You've Got A Lover" by Ricky Skaggs [**"Heartaches And Highways"**], "You Wouldn't Know Me" by Gary P. Nunn [**"Nobody But Me"**] and "Hard To Find A Smile" by Bill and Bonnie Hearne [**"Smilin'"**]. Following the demise of the Times, accompanied by Michael Mashkes, Russell headed for Chicago. Based out of *the windy city*, John Prine and the late Steve Goodman were beginning to gain national recognition. The streets of Chicago were not paved with gold and the pair soon moved on to New York.

Breaking into the NYC music scene proved difficult and Russell eventually phoned Vandiver with the news that he was contemplating moving back to Missouri and giving up music. Vandiver invited Shake to join him in Houston, where the former had become an established solo act. Accepting John's invitation, in time Shake also began performing as a solo act in Space City's clubs. When the more progressive local radio stations began playing Russell's demo tapes *on air*, Shake decided to form a band. Concurrent with Shake's decision, Dana Cooper arrived in Houston. During the early seventies based in California, Cooper had scored a record deal with Jac Holzman's Elektra label. Cooper's self-titled, solo debut was released in 1973.

An August 1977 *live* radio performance, on Houston's KLOL FM, by Russell [assisted by Cooper] was included on the eight-song mini album **"Songs On The Radio"** released by the Old No 7 label. The disc featured half a dozen Russell originals, a Cooper composed title cut and the co-write "When Are You Comin' Home ?" Since the mid-seventies Brovsky had guided Jerry Jeff Walker's career and that of the Lost Gonzo Band. Through Nunn, Russell met Michael Brovsky who was in the process of setting up Southcoast Records. Produced by the duo, the eleven cut **"Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band"** album was an early 1981 Southcoast release. Walter Hyatt's "Rollin' My Blues" apart, Cooper and Russell contributed the remaining tunes, solo or as co-writers. Sadly, the label folded soon afterwards.

Later that year, issued by the Twin Dreams label, Shake and Dana put together **"Comin' Home,"** a collection that featured studio tracks by the Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band, the Michael Marcoulier Band and John Vandiver. Released by Austin Records, the debut album by the Shake Russell Band album,

“Time Spent,” appeared in June 1985. The band featured Rusty Burns and Jack Saunders. By the time **“Denim & Pearls”** appeared three years later Shake had formed a friendship with a young Houston musician named Clint Black. Black opened shows for Russell, and the pair also began collaborating as songwriters.

Shake's band broke up toward the close of the 1980's and he began performing as duo with Saunders. Between 1989-1995 the pair cut a quintet of albums for the Jalapeno Record label. In addition to the latter, with the addition of Cooper, **“The Thrill Of Love”** appeared in 1993. Songs featured on the latter found Russell collaborating with Jack Saunders, Clint Black and Chuck Hamrick. Russell's **“Ballad Of Angus Mustang”** memorialized the late John Vandiver [d. 1985]. Dana Cooper's 1992 album **“Stone By Stone”** was also a Jalapeno release to which Shake and Jack contributed, while the same year Shake was a backing vocalist on Melissa Javors' album **“The Real Woman In Me.”**

In 1983 Shake was commissioned by the Texas State University, San Marcos to write **“River of Innocence”** for a documentary produced by the university. Three years later he penned **“Traveling Texas”** as a theme song for the Texas State Sesquicentennial. Russell is a two-time recipient of BMI's **“Million Air”** award for the Clint Black recordings of **“Put Yourself In My Shoes”** and **“One More Payment,”** both co-written with Clint, and a four-time recipient of the BMI Writer's Award. The Texas Music Association named Shake the 2004 Texas Music Awards Entertainer of the Year [and again in 2008] and nominated his song **“Cowboy Coffee”** for the 2007 Texas Music Awards Best New Song.

During the closing years of the twentieth century and into the new millennium, Shake released a series of solo albums, plus the *in concert* set **“Island Night”** with his old buddy Dana. In more recent times he reformed the Shake Russell Band with veteran players Doug Floyd [mandolin] and Mike Roberts [acoustic bass]. The latter aggregation recorded the CD/DVD set **“Live @ Gruene Hall”** during the summer of 2007.

Discography :

with Dana Cooper - **“Songs On The Radio”** reissued on CD 2004 [1978] ; **“Love's Bright Campaign”** [1998] ; **“Island Night - Live From Port Aransas”** [2004] :

Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band - **“Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band”** [1981] :

with Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band, the Michael Marcoulier Band and John Vandiver - **“Comin' Home”** [1981] :

Shake Russell Band - **“Time Spent”** reissued on CD [1985] ; **“Denim & Pearls”** [1988] ; **“Live @ Gruene Hall”** [2007] :

with Jack Saunders - **“Pilgrim's Highway”** [1989] ; **“Before Now”** [1990] ; **“Listen With Your Heart”** [1991] ; **“Letters, Songs & Photographs”** [1994] ; **“McGonigel's Mucky Duck Pub Presents - Live At The Duck”** [1995] :

with Dana Cooper and Jack Saunders - **“The Thrill Of Love”** [1993] :

Solo - **“Collection – Deep In The West”** compilation [1996] ; **“Let Love Be True”** [1998] ; **“Dreaming The Mystery”** [2000] ; **“Love Is Why”** [2006] ; **“Between Your Heart & Mine: Love Songs”** web download only compilation at www.mytexasmusic.com [2008] :

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