

Michael Martin Murphey – Bio

Michael Martin Murphey was born 14th March 1945 in the Oak Cliff suburb of Dallas, Texas. Aged six, Murphey began riding horses on his maternal grandfather's, and uncle's ranches. His paternal grandfather "Spud" Murphey, an ex-naval officer who lived in Hawaii, introduced young Michael to musical instruments when he gave him a plastic ukelele. Aged thirteen, "Spud" gave Michael a Martin D-28 guitar. As for his love of country music Michael that came from his maternal grandfather Ed. By the time he was in junior high school Murphey was performing music in public. Singing at church gatherings and serviceman's clubs gave way, in time, to playing folk music in coffeehouses, in particular Dallas' The Rubiyat on McKinney Avenue. Check out the late John Vandiver's web site, for an old, undated Rubiyat poster that features a boyish looking Michael O'Murphy [note the surname spelling. Go to <http://www.johnvandiver.com/rubaiyat1b.html>].

While attending W. H. Adamson High School in Dallas, Michael formed The Lost River Trio with Owens Castleman and Bob Jacobs. By his senior year, Murphey and Castleman were working as solo acts. By his late teens Michael had appeared on local television, and become well known on the local music scene. Although he initially enrolled at North Texas State College in Denton, Murphey moved on to UCLA where he studied History and Literature. In California he signed a songwriting contract, initially, with Sparrow Music, and formed the band, the New Survivors, which included Castleman, John London [aka John Kuehne, born in Bryan, Texas] and Michael Nesmith [born Houston, Texas]. They cut an unreleased album and went their separate ways.

Murphey and Castleman went on to form the duo Travis & Boomer, and supported by John McEuen's banjo, became the Texas Twosome. In 1967 Murphey and Castleman, formed The Lewis & Clarke Expedition, and cut a self-titled album for The Monkees label, Colgems. The songs, now assigned to Screen Gems, were mostly credited to Lewis [Murphey] & Clarke [Castleman]. The other band members were John London [bass], Johnny Raines [drums] and Ken Bloom [guitar]. The Monkees, featuring Nesmith, recorded Murphey's "What Am I Doing Hangin' Around?" for their late 1967 album "**Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones Ltd.**" During his time in California, it's claimed that Michael penned several hundred songs.

In 1970 Murphey relocated to Texas, and the city of Austin, where he became an integral and influential part of the burgeoning underground songwriter scene. In 1972, A&M released his debut album "**Geronimo's Cadillac**" and from the outset Michael's songs addressed Native American issues. The album was produced by Bob Johnston [b. Fort Worth, Texas] who had first witnessed Murphey, supported by Bob Livingston on bass, perform at the Rubiyat in Dallas. Johnson's track record included producing albums for, or working as a support player with Dylan, Cash, Simon and Garfunkel and Cohen. Also in 1972, with co-writer Larry Cansler, Murphey penned a nineteen song, double album, concept recording for Kenny Rogers and the First Edition set in a California silver mining town, and now a ghost town, titled "**The Ballad Of Calico.**" Michael's sophomore and final A&M album "**Cosmic Cowboy Souvenir,**" was followed by a move to Epic Records where he began his career with "**Michael Murphey.**" All three albums, to date, had been cut in Nashville and produced by Johnson. In 1974 Murphey moved his base to Colorado, and at the nearby Caribou Ranch Studio, with Johnson still in the producer's chair, he cut "**Blue Sky/Night Thunder.**" The album opened with "Wildfire" which scored the Texan a # 3 Pop single. Another single, "Carolina" made # 21. The Native American theme prevalent in the songs in the latter collection, continued on "**Swans Against The Sky,**" "**Flowing Free Forever**" and "**Lone Wolf.**" "**Swans**" yielded a # 39 Pop single in "Renegade," while "Mansion On The Hill" reached # 36 as a Country single. "**Peaks, Valleys, Honky Tonks & Alleys**" was a half live/half studio recording produced by John Boylan. In the early eighties Michael relocated to New Mexico. Murphey and Michael Kane developed the story for the movie "**Hard Country,**" and Michael also appeared in it alongside Jan-Michael Vincent and Kim Basinger.

At the outset of the eighties, to prevent being mistaken for the movie actor, Michael Murphey added Martin as a middle name, and his 1982 self-titled album, produced by Jim Ed Norman, yielded the # 1 Country single "What's Forever For." Penned by Rafe VanHoy, the song also made # 19 Pop. Michael's singles from 1977 through 1982 had failed to break into the Country Top 40, but from '82 and for the ensuing seven years he enjoyed consistent success on that chart. "**Tonight We Ride**" was Murphey's debut album for Warner Bros., and in May 1987 he scored his second # 1 single with the Paul Overstreet/Thom Schuyler tune "A Long Line Of Love" from "**Americana.**" The following year a track

from **"River Of Time,"** "Talkin' To The Wrong Man," a duet with his eldest son, Ryan, made # 4 on the Country chart.

Still a Warner's artist, at the dawn of the nineteen nineties, Michael released the first in what proved to be an ongoing series of *cowboy song* recordings. Murphey's final Country chart single, "Let The Cowboy Dance," from **"Cowboy Songs,"** made # 74 in March 1991. Murphey's final Warner's recording **"The Horse Legends"** was followed by a move to making his own recordings, and releasing them himself or via labels such as Valley Entertainment. **"Playing Favourites"** saw Murphey re-interpret songs from earlier in his career. In 1987 Murphey promoted his first Western cultural festival called Westfest, and it is now an annual event. In the last fifteen years, he has scored numerous Western and Cowboy awards. These days, Michael spends his year in residences in Texas, New Mexico and Wisconsin.

Discography :

Solo : **"Geronimo's Cadillac"** [1972] ; **"Cosmic Cowboy Souvenir"** [1973] ; **"Michael Murphey"** [1974] ; **"Blue Sky / Night Thunder"** [1975] ; **"Swans Against The Sky"** [1975] ; **"Flowing Free Forever"** [1976] ; **"Lone Wolf"** [1978] ; **"Peaks, Valleys, Honky Tonks & Alleys"** [1979] ; **"Hard Country Ost."** [1981] ; **"Michael Martin Murphey"** [1982] ; **"The Heart Never Lies"** [1983] ; **"The Best Of Michael Martin Murphey"** compilation [1984] ; **"Tonight We Ride"** [1986] ; **"Americana"** [1987] ; **"River Of Time"** [1988] ; **"Land Of Enchantment"** [1989] ; **"Cowboy Songs"** [1990] ; **"The Best Of Country"** compilation [1990] ; **"Cowboy Christmas"** [1991] ; **"Cowboy Songs 3"** [1993] ; **"Sagebrush Symphony"** [1995] ; **"The Horse Legends"** [1997] ; **"Cowboy Songs 4"** [1998] ; **"Wildfire 1972 - 1982"** [1998] ; **"Acoustic Christmas Carols"** [1999] ; **"Playing Favourites"** [2001] ; **"Ultimate Collection"** compilation [2001] ; **"Cowboy Classics : Playing Favourites II"** [2002] ; **"Cowboy Christmas III"** [2003] ; **"Live At Billy Bob's"** [2004] :
with Lewis & Clarke : **"The Lewis And Clarke Expedition"** [1967] :

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