

Michael Reno Harrell – Bio

Michael Reno Harrell was born in Tennessee, circa 1948, close to the western North Carolina state line. His family originated from Buncombe County in the latter state, and he grew up travelling back and forth between the two states on the back-roads of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. In terms of musicians in the Harrell bloodline, Michael's father played a little harmonica, but his father's brother, a bass player, worked with the Louvin Brothers and Little Jimmy Dickens. On the maternal side of his family, Michael's grandfather and his brothers were all accomplished hobby musicians. Harrell attended high school in Morristown, Tennessee. His first instrument was a drum kit – he played in a jazz band for a time - but the teenager traded it in for a Kay guitar after hearing a Kingston Trio album. The folk music boom and his love for that genre during the early sixties subsequently led Harrell to fall in love with bluegrass music.

Accompanied by his music loving buddies, David Holt and Steve Keith, and influenced by the music of Clarence Ashley and Bascom Lamar Lunsford, the trio would perform at fiddler's conventions and bluegrass festivals. Inspired by Woody Guthrie's life, Michael eventually hit "the road" and travelled through the South West, the Midwest, and more specifically lived for a time in Memphis, Nashville and elsewhere – for Harrell, as well as performing music, it was a time of listening and learning. During the late 1980's Michael was based in Nashville, and his songs were covered by Doug Stone and Perfect Stranger ["Remember The Ride"].

Tired of the business machinations of Music City, Harrell and, Joan, his wife, relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina during the early nineteen-nineties. For a time he stopped playing music. When approached for advice on how to write songs by Tom Coon, the bass player in the Rank Outsiders, ideas flooded his mind so Harrell began writing again. In time he began performing in public again. **"There Are No Angels Here"** was originally released on cassette only, although it's now available on CD. Harrell was next involved in putting together the Rank Records compilation **"Known On The Underground"** [1997] with fellow Charlotte based 'Americana' artists, David Childers, Rank Outsiders, Gospel Playboys and Lenny Federal. Featuring two Harrell compositions, "Caroline," a song about his adopted home state brought the musician a fair degree of recognition.

"Ways To Travel" was recorded in Nashville, and featured contributions from a coterie of star players including Jerry Douglas [dobro], Stewart Duncan [fiddle], Brent Truitt [mandolin], Byron House [acoustic bass] and Vince Santoro [drums]. The album spent almost six months on the Gavin Americana Chart and peaked at # 16. **"Second Wind,"** another Nashville recording, spent a similar amount of time on the Gavin Chart and peaked at # 11. The guest players on that disc included Douglas, House and Truitt, plus Sam Bush [fiddle, mandolin] and Suzi Ragsdale [harmony vocals].

"Southern Son" was recorded in North Carolina, although work on the album was suspended for a time following 9/11. Harrell won the 2002 Chris Austin Songwriting Competition at Merle Fest with "The Baby's Name" a song from **"Southern Son."** Harrell went on to record the studio set **"Closer Home."** The 2CD live album **"Grit And Wit,"** was recorded at Charlotte venue the Evening Muse on December 7th 2003. In terms of content, it principally featured Harrell telling stories. The one hundred minute long, in-concert DVD **"Hey Y'all,"** a mix of Harrell's songs and stories, was recorded at Cleveland Community College in Shelby, North Carolina. Michael's latest studio recording **"Drive"** was released in early August 2006. In concert, Harrell appears in a solo capacity, with his band No Angels, and as a duo with Jack Lawrence.

Discography : **"There Are No Angels Here"** [1995] ; **"Ways To Travel"** [1997] ; **"Second Wind"** [1999] ; **"Southern Son"** [2002] ; **"Closer Home"** [2003] ; **"Grit And Wit"** [2004] ; **"Drive"** [2006] ;

DVD : **"Hey Y'all"** [2005] :

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