

Michael Burks – Biography



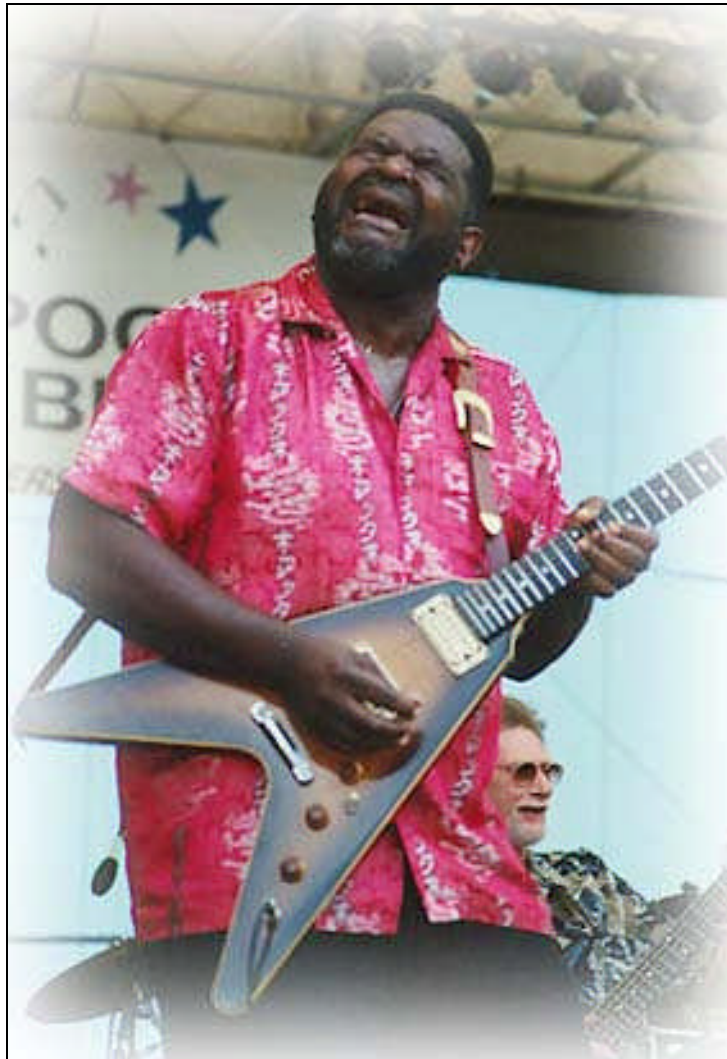
Born in Milwaukee in 1957, blues guitarist Michael Burks began learning his instrument at an early age – inspired by his musical family (his father played bass and often performed alongside harmonica legend Sonny Boy Williamson II, while his grandfather was a Delta-style bluesman from Camden, AR).

By the age of five, he was playing along with his father, and picked up a thing or two from his parent's record collection – his father would often give his young son incentive to learn songs by offering him a dollar for each tune he could successfully figure out from beginning to end (a year later he made his performance debut in front of an audience, when he joined a cousin's band on stage).

In the early '70s, Burks' father moved his family to Arkansas, and opened up the Bradley Ferry Country Club (a 300-seat juke joint), as Burks was hired as

the leader of the house band, backing numerous blues and R&B greats that played the venue.

By the time the club closed in the mid-'80s, Burks briefly put his love of blues on the backburner, as he supported himself by taking a job as a mechanical technician for Lockheed Martin, although he still managed to play clubs and regional festivals.



In 1997, Burks issued his very first album, *From the Inside Out*, producing the entire record himself, which immediately racked up impressive reviews from several esteemed blues publications (Blues Access raved the debut was "the most impressive indie in

recent memory," while Living Blues named it one of "the best debut discs of the year").

2001 saw Burks' debut recording for the Alligator label, *Make It Rain*, produced in Memphis by Jim Gaines (Santana, Stevie Ray Vaughan) and Bruce Iglauer (Albert Collins, Johnny Winter). Two years later, *I Smell Smoke* was released followed by *Iron Man* in 2008, both on Alligator. *(by Greg Prato/www.allmusic.com)*