



Submitted photo by Sarah Taft

Michael Hurley will perform at the Sou'Wester Lodge at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1.

Five Minutes With ... MICHAEL HURLEY

By RYAN HUME

Get to know Michael Hurley, local transplant and legendary folk singer, before he takes the stage with Nate Lumbard and Au Dunes at the Sou'Wester Lodge at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1. Not known for settling down, Hurley currently has three albums in the works that he hopes to have completed by the year's end, and he has a standing gig with his band The Croakers at the Laurelhurst Tavern in Portland every third Friday of the month. Find out more about Bad Mr. Mike at snockonews.net

Your debut album, "First Songs," appeared on Folkway Records in 1965. What is your favorite thing about writing and recording these days? Is there anything you miss from that time?

Well, my favorite thing is singing, to answer that question. Things I miss from '65? There wasn't so much law bothering people back then

as there is today. I miss the freer freedom of the American. Today you can't feel so free — unfortunately.

How did you get the nickname Snock? And why has it stuck through the years?

I proclaimed myself to be Snock. To me, it's a sound, a specific sound — similar to claves, you know? Knocking pieces of hardwood together

er to make music. That's a snocky sort of sound. I force a lot of nicknames for myself and others. I sort of have my own language. It's part of that. Sometimes words for things aren't enough for me to describe something, so I throw a few more words at it to describe it for myself. Then there's other words and phrases in the English language that offend me, so I have to avoid the use of those. But I am tired of Snock by now. I've been Snock since '61. So I am going back to Mike — that's what my dad called me. Currently it's Bad Mr. Mike or Big Mike. Snock is old hat now.

Since your song, "Portland Water," was released in 1976, I assume you have passed through Oregon on and off for a number of years. As you are known to have a bit of that wandering spirit, how long have you been around the North Coast?

This is my fourth year in Knappa. Before that I lived in Astoria proper — though there's nothing really proper about it. I started residence here permanently in 2002, but the first time I came here it was 1972. Before '02 I never stayed more than three months at a time. In fact, I only did that once. Usually I was just here touring around for a week or two. In California as well.

Does the landscape and community around here inspire you in any way?

In many ways. I tell my visitors, if they come out here, they have to make a decision. They have to choose between the pinecone and the clamshell. Astoria has it all. Got fresh water, saltwater, fresh fish, crabs, pine — fir trees. I say pine since I am from the East Coast. Got to remember to say fir.

Tortillas and beans, spaghetti, grapefruit juice, wine and spirits: Over the years food and drink has

seemed to be a source of joy in your music — though a recent track, "Bad Monsanto," that you recorded for the food magazine "Lucky Peach," which was released through their record club, finds sorrow in the current state of corporate food production systems, specifically GMOs.

Well, it's a big issue with me. I am against Monsanto's pollution of our food and our land. It's quite a disaster. To me, it's as big as fracking and the oil sands and spilling oil in the ocean. Monsanto is right up there with all these major issues that affect the ecology. I am definitely an activist against GMOs and Monsanto — that's the one I choose to talk about. I have always been in the health food department. I have always tried to eat pure foods, and Monsanto is making that really much harder than it ever has been before.

What draws you to write about food?

Well, I have to live on it and so do my kids. I eat, and I cook; I buy groceries — it's just natural if you think about it.

Does this come out of any particular tradition?

I know a lot of other songs about food that I didn't write. One that comes to mind right away is "Hungry Hash House." Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers have a great version of it. There's other versions too; it's pretty funny. It's all about the gross food that is served in this hotel. Years ago I was performing it and tacked on a few of my own verses. One line was, "The eggs they would not crack, if you tried one it would hatch." So I said, "The eggs they would not crack, because they came from a pterodact."

Speaking of other tracks, on your website, snockonews.net, I have noticed that you are very

gracious about promoting other musicians, friends and things and places that you like — with links to other musicians' web pages and the inclusion of Snox Jook Box, which includes, I presume, some of your favorite tracks by other artists. What do some of these songs in the Jook Box mean to you personally and how important do you think it is in this day and age to create a musical community?

I need to update it. That playlist has been up there for about five years now. I need to refresh it, but I still love all of those songs that are up there. I like it when other people do that. I'll check out what they like, you know? It's nice, and it helps you find stuff. I think it's not really that important, but it's nice if you are looking for new music or different music.

Is that a harder thing to find these days now that there are less record stores?

I'm not suffering too much about that. Seattle, Olympia — there's record stores there. You can go buy records in Astoria. If I wanted a new CD that I know has just been released I would probably have to go to Portland to buy it.

What are you working on now?

I'm working on three albums at the same time. One is we are releasing a tape from 1976. Another is my new Mississippi Records release, which is a current events kind of thing. And then I'm going to do what you call a vanity publishing — put out my own CD. It's on my own label, you might say, but I really don't have a label. Mostly I will handle the distribution myself, but if it starts to sell rapidly I might hook up with a distributor. It's my own merch table project.

NW word nerd

By RYAN HUME

Dulse [dʌls]

noun

1. *Palmaria palmata*: a number of edible, ruby-red seaweeds — most commonly harvested at low tide in the summer — which grow off the northern shores of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Formerly known as *Rhodymenia palmata* prior to a reclassification, this abundant and sustainable red algae is partial to growing on rocks and mussels in shallow intertidal zones and is often dried and eaten raw as a snack, predominately in Ireland, where it is sold as *Dillisk* or *Creathnach*. In Japan, where it is known as *Darusu*, and Iceland, where it is known as *Sól*, it is a common ingredient in soups and is widely considered to be an excellent source of dietary fiber, protein and trace minerals

Origin:

From the Gaelic *duileasg*, meaning "seaweed." First enters English in 1547 as *dylisc*, with the current spelling and pronunciation appearing in the early 17th century and relating specifically to a type of edible red algae popular among the peasantry. Possibly derived from the Latin *dulcis*, meaning "sweet-smelling" or "agreeable."

"Among the most promising foods created were a dulse-based rice cracker and salad dressing. And bacon-tasting strips, which are fried like regular bacon to bring out the flavor."

—Associated Press, "Forget kale, Oregon scientists patent bacon-flavored seaweed," *The Daily Astorian*, July 20, 2015, P. A3