

Michael Kent Smith  
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Michael Kent Smith is a composer who uses acoustic and electric guitars as well as traditional and folk instruments, performing on them and taping the various strands together into vivid, expressive music. His compositions are a blend of Blues, Folk, Celtic, Jazz and Rock influences. He has a relaxed, open rapport with audiences and keeps them engaged in his performances with stories of the origins of the music and anecdotes from his global travels.

Smith has toured Europe, Africa and Latin America and performs regularly around the United States with concerts at such notable venues as the Kennedy Center and the Chicago Cultural Center. He has studied classical guitar with Paul Herrmann, fingerstyle guitar with Martin Simpson and Edward Gehard, jazz improvisation with Richard Medel, composition with Howard Krueger and flamenco with Manuel Lozano in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain. He was the principal composer in Pong Unit, the ensemble fronted by poet Marc Smith, inventor of the Poetry Slam. In addition, Smith has won the Outstanding Soloist award at the prestigious Midwest Jazz festival and was voted Chicago's Best Guitarist in 1990. He has released three CDs, "La Esperanza Sigue" in 2010, "Beauty Without Warning" in 2005 and "After the Harvest" in 2002.

### **Performance and Work History**

Performances in France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain  
Toured Africa in 2007  
National tours of the United States  
Kennedy Center, Washington DC  
Chicago Cultural Center  
International Festival of World Music, Mexico City  
Zihuatanejo International Guitar Festival, Mexico

### **Awards:**

1994 Ensemble "First Circle" named finalist in Musician Magazine's "Best Unsigned Band" competition.  
1990 First place in Illinois Entertainer "Chicago's Best Guitarist" competition.  
1987 Duo with trombonist Dave Gross awarded first prize jazz combo - Elmhurst Jazz Festival.

### **Recordings (as leader):**

2010 "La Esperanza Sigue"  
2005 "Beauty Without Warning"  
2002 "After the Harvest"

### **Education**

1986 BA Music Elmhurst College – focus in composition and orchestration  
Additional Studies:

#### Composition:

University of Illinois  
University of Miami

#### Private Guitar Studies:

Richard Medel in Chicago  
Manuel Lozano in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain  
Martin Simpson in Connecticut  
Paul Herrmann in Chicago

#### Private Dulcimer Studies:

Stephen Siefert  
David Schnauffer