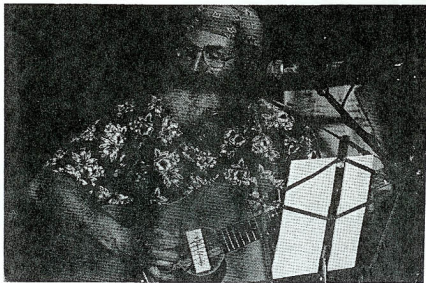


The Mountain Times

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Michael Mulvaney will perform songs from his exciting new blues based album *Road* on Tuesday, February 24, at the Caribbean Cafe in Boone.

Michael Mulvaney Returns To Caribbean

By Jeff Eason

Charlottesville, Virginia's Michael Mulvaney knows a thing or two about the road. He has performed from Van Buren, Maine to Key West Florida and from the Atlantic coast to the mountains of New England south into Georgia, and west into Ohio during his 30 years as a traveling troubadour. During this time he has opened for such national acts as B.B. King, Willie Dixon, Koko Taylor, John Hammond, David Bromberg, The Sun Rhythm Section, Junior Walker and the Allstars, Nils Lofgren and the late, great Townes Van Zandt. It is no wonder, then, that Mulvaney would name his latest CD release *Road*.

Road is a perfect showcase for Mulvaney's great songwriting and earthy bluesy vocals. The album is divided into two sections. The first eight songs are all original compositions that Mulvaney plays and sings with a full studio band. The last eight tunes are a mix of Mulvaney originals and blues classics recorded in a more immediate setting with Mulvaney's voice, guitar and harmonica taking center stage. The nakedness of these last eight cuts are a good indicator of Mulvaney's live shows. He did a great job of selecting cover tunes on these cuts by choosing classic blues tunes by Bukka White, Willie Dixon, Chester Burnette, Huddie Ledbetter and Leon Russell.

Mulvaney began his career as a songwriter when he was quite young and has been writing professionally since 1960. He joined the band Wide Load in 1968 as lead singer and continued with that band until about 15 years ago when he struck out on his own. Since then he has been a regular on the East Coast playing gigs in coffee houses, clubs, ski resorts and restaurants when not opening for larger acts. For *Road* Mulvaney recruited the help of some longtime friends and polished studio musicians. The recording features John D'earth, trumpet player for Bruce Hornsby and the Range; Richard Stickle, drummer for Lynne Anderson and Brenda Lee; Art Wheeler, pianist from the movie *Big Sky*, and Tim Reynolds, guitarist from the Dave Matthews acoustic tours. It is some of his less known friends, however, who really shine on *Road*. Eric Van Brocklin adds tasty lead guitar work throughout the "big band" portions of the album and Paul Brier handles a variety of wind instruments including clarinet, slide trombone, saxophone and trumpet in addition to playing bass guitar.

One of the best songs on *Road* is the blues-rock number "I Must Have Been A Fool (To Believe In Love)". It would be easy to imagine an established artist like Eric Clapton or Bonnie Raitt turning it into a bona fide hit. Backing vocalist Dornin Formwalt compliments Mulvaney's voice expertly. It would have been tempting to use the trio of female backing vocalists that is so common these days in rock and roll but Mulvaney gets a lot more mileage out of just one.

The original songs on *Road* represent the last twelve years of Mulvaney's constant touring. Whereas the thank-you list on most albums these days mention labels, publicists and producers, Mulvaney's thank-you list mentions drivers, luthiers, restaurateurs, mechanics and "those who provided lodging."

The star of both *Road* and Mulvaney's live shows is his voice. He can go from silky smooth to rough and ready in a heartbeat as the song demands. On the gritty front porch blues numbers he sounds a little like a saner Captain Beefheart. On the jazzier ballads his voice is reminiscent of J.J. Cale.

Michael Mulvaney will appear at the Caribbean Cafe on Tuesday, February 24, at 10 p.m. There will be no cover charge and Michael will have plenty of copies of *Road* for sale.