

Michael Gray

Michael Gray is a critic, writer, public speaker & broadcaster recognised as a world authority on the work of Bob Dylan, and as an expert on rock'n'roll history. He also has a special interest in pre-war blues, and in travel. Born on August 25th, 1946, he grew up on Merseyside, England, went to the Cavern, and graduated from the University of York with a BA in History & English in 1967, having interviewed (as a student journalist) the distinguished British historian A.J.P. Taylor and the distinguished American guitarist Jimi Hendrix.

His pioneering study *Song & Dance Man: The Art of Bob Dylan*, published in the UK in 1972, was the first full-length critical study of Dylan's work. US and Japanese hardback editions, and a UK paperback, were published in 1973. A second, updated edition was published in 1981 in the UK and 1982 in North America. The massive third edition *Song & Dance Man III* - including a 112-page study of Dylan's use of the blues - was published in December 1999 in the UK and early in 2000 in the US. A seventh reprint was issued in 2008, and the book remained in print until late 2010.

In 1977 Michael took a break from freelance writing, moved to London and worked as Head of Press for United Artists Records (UK) Ltd. - a time of punk foment. The label's roster of artists included Buzzcocks, the Stranglers and, er, Shirley Bassey. In 1979, after the runaway success of Gerry Rafferty's single 'Baker Street' and the *City To City* album that included it, Rafferty invited Michael to become his personal manager. He left United Artists, took on this role, and worked with Rafferty until 1982, when they parted company and *The Art of Bob Dylan: Song & Dance Man* was published in the US. At the dawn of the 1980s he also worked briefly as the manager of Rab Noakes, and later in the same capacity for ex-Buzzcock Steve Diggle and his band Flag of Convenience.

1985 he published *Mother! The Story of Frank Zappa*, updated editions of which came out 1986, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2003 and 2007. A collection of pieces on Dylan, *All Across The Telegraph: A Bob Dylan Handbook*, co-edited by Michael with Dylan fanzine editor John Bauldie, was published in 1987 and 1988, and in 1996 he co-authored *The Elvis Atlas: A Journey Through Elvis Presley's America*, published in hardback in New York by Henry Holt. A new edition of *The Elvis Atlas* is due to be published early in 2012.

Michael's vast *Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*, published by Continuum in New York & London in 2006 (paperback 2008) won the International Association of Music Libraries' C.B. Oldman Prize for the year's outstanding work of reference and research. *Hand Me My Travelin' Shoes: In Search of Blind Willie McTell*, published by Bloomsbury UK in 2007 & 2008 and by Chicago Review Press in the US in 2009, was shortlisted for the 2008 James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Biography and was awarded an ARSC Certificate of Merit in 2010 for a work of exceptional quality.

In 2005 Michael was Amelia Cummins Harvey Visiting Fellow Commoner at Girton College, Cambridge, and since 2000 has given over 150 talks at universities, arts festivals, literary festivals, music festivals, theatres, conventions and arts centres - talks that are more like one-man shows than lectures - including at the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame. In 2006 he gave a packed address at the New School in NYC and attracted the largest audience for any outside speaker in over two years when he spoke at the University of Texas at Austin. In March 2007 he gave the closing address at the University of Minnesota's three-day symposium on Dylan's work, at which other speakers included Christopher Ricks and Greil Marcus. In 2009 he gave over 30 talks at theatres, arts centres and universities in Ireland, Canada, the US and UK. In 2011 he delivered talks in Northern California, including at Stanford University, and then in Alabama, Georgia, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York City, the Irish Republic, Vienna and Bristol.

His work has been published in *Rolling Stone*, *The Times*, *Literary Review*, *Independent*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Sunday Times*, *Weekend Telegraph*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Melody Maker*, *Uncut* and more. This work has included a number of travel features, which, along with his own love of travelling, have taken him to places as different as Libya, Guyana, Syria, Finland, Mississippi, the Sudan, Egypt, Mauritius and Scotland. He once spent three months in Kenya and another three in Newfoundland. He has travelled by Ferrari through Central America and by balloon over Yorkshire. He is also a *Guardian* obituarist for major figures in rock'n'roll and tennis.

Michael lives in South-West France with his wife (the food writer Sarah Beattie) and a rescued Griffon Nivernais dog called Mavis.