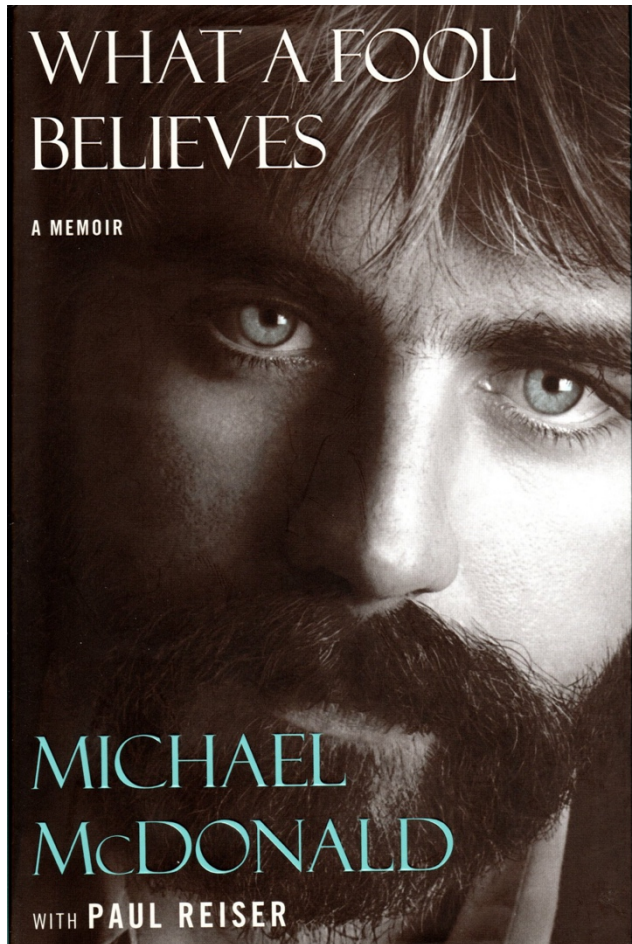




Ferguson Has a History Museum

Ferguson has a Historical Society and a History Museum. We encourage any people reading this article to join in the conversation and become a member.



A couple months ago we did two pieces on the Ferguson Walk of Fame, located between the firehouse and the police department. One of the people on that Wall is Michael McDonald, singer and instrumentalist from the 1970's until today. McDonald has just written an autobiography, shown at the left.

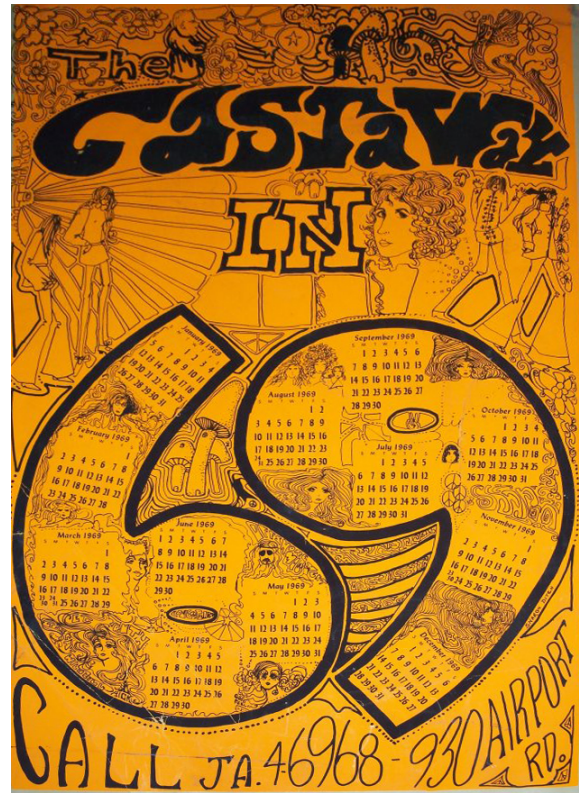
We are not here to write a review of the book. However, since McDonald grew up in Ferguson, he has many memories of Ferguson and of the local music scene in the late 60's and 70's. It is that aspect of "What a Fool Believes" that we will look at in this article.

Michael was born on February 12, 1952 – he is currently 73 years old. He grew up on Highmont in Ferguson. He attended St. John and James school through the 8th grade (a patrol Boy and Altar Boy) – with

fond memories of Mr. Bosey (band), then attended McCluer High until he dropped out in 1968. He did later earn a GED. His father, a streetcar operator for St. Louis Public Service, was a singer – a trait that McDonald obviously picked up. His mother worked for S&H Green Stamps in Jennings. In his early youth, he began taking piano lessons and later started taking up the banjo and guitar. He had early musical abilities which has served him well as a singer, keyboardist and song writer.

For those of us who remember the music scene in the late 60's and 70's, the book has much interesting history. Locally, McDonald talks about some friends from McCluer and some of the local bands – *Mike and the Majestics*, *Jerry Jay and the Sheratons* to name just two. McDonald

played with the *Sheratons* during some of his very early music years. He also mentions some of the places where they play, especially the local hangout- **The Castaway** – located on airport Road. To the right is a poster from the Castaway



around the time Michael would have been performing. Above is a photo of the *Sheratons* performing at **The Castaway**. Michael is probably in the photo, but we don't know for certain. **The Castaway** was located at 930 Airport Rd. The building still stands today.

McDonalds first gig, at 12 or 13 was at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, a performance which the minister cut short. He mentions some of the people he played with: Bob Bortz, Pat Molloy, Steve Scorfina (*Mike and the Majestics*)



along with a couple of girlfriends (Amy and Diane). Maybe some of the readers may know these people. His first band was a Dixieland style band, the *Mound City 3* with friends Tim Fizell and Bob Bortz, showing the variety of music in which McDonald was involved, as he progressed into the many forms of the Rock Music of his adult days. In his Ferguson music days he also played with *Jay and*

the Sheratons – where he was hired as a vocalist. The *Sheratons* often performed at the **Club Imperial**. The **Imperial** was located along West Florissant in Jennings. The building still exists, but is in poor shape. The owner of the **Imperial** was a man named George Edick – well known for his

talent searches (including the likes of *Ike and Tina Turner* and the local band, *The In-Men*). McDonald expanded his talents beyond the Ferguson scene as he eventually became a vocalist and keyboard player for *Steeley Dan* and eventually the *Doobie Brothers* before moving to a solo career.

In the early chapters in his biography McDonald talks about many areas and businesses in the Ferguson area – like in Northland Shopping Center – The Northland Music Center with its record listening booths (you could actually listen to the record before you bought it). In the same area was/is the Velvet Freeze in Jennings (still operating). At 3003 Dunn Road was the 270 Drive In. In downtown Cool Valley was the E.J. Corvette store (which had a great collection of records at discount prices). He also talks of other local bands; *Joe Mannino's Band*, *Klassman*, *Head East*, *Aardvarks*, *Reeb Toors* (root Beer backwards), *Del Rays* and *Sweet Young Things* (girl band).

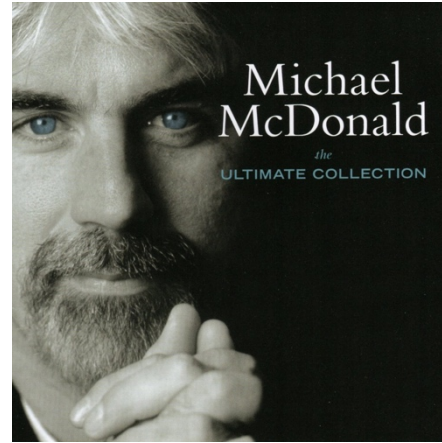
By August of 1970, McDonald left for Los Angeles and other than visits home, spent the rest of his life in the LA area. In 1983 he married Amy Holland (also a musician).



Michael McDonald is a wonderful musician. He has often been described as a “Blue-eyed Soul” artist. A white man who Black artists accept as authentic. He has also been classified as a R&B, Pop, Rock, and Yacht Rock musician. It was his rich baritone voice (with a great high register) that won him early fame. He is an expert keyboardist (goes back to his early piano lessons) – but much of his fame came from his song writing and collaboration with other

musicians (Kenny Loggins and Christopher Cross). McDonald has won 5 Grammys, been elected to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (as a Doobie Brother) and has nine studio albums and singles to his name. It is probably his voice and keyboarding coming from that Soul and Jazz roots that make him a unique and powerful musician. He remains active in the music seen

While this is not a book review, we can say that the book is a good read – covering McDonald’s lows and highs (literally). For people over 65 and with a Ferguson background, the early chapters will bring back many memories. The later chapters are also interesting if you are a lover of the many gentle rock groups of the late 60’s thru the early 80’s. It is an inside view of these groups and the many musicians who rotated groups during this time period. The music of *Seals & Croft*, *Doobie Brothers*, *Steeley Dan*, *Christopher Cross*, and others. If you are interested in sampling McDonald’s solo career, the CD to the right is a good place to begin. A copy of the book is in the History House. McDonald’s website is ***michaelmcdonald.com***



Membership in the Ferguson Historical Society is open to anyone – membership levels range from \$20.00 to \$50.00 a year. If you are interested in joining or have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact Jerry Benner at fjbenner@mindspring.com. You are also welcome to visit the History Museum at 1064 Smith (behind the Community Center) by e-mailing the above address. Note: we will need to schedule a date for you, so ask well in advance

“The Ferguson Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Ferguson Missouri. Membership is open to all sharing our interest.”