



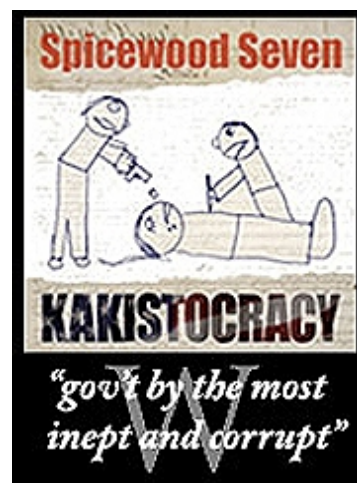
## Luke Powers Biography



Luke Powers was born in Chattanooga, TN. He attended the McCallie School where he graduated as valedictorian and captain of the wrestling team. He received a Morehead Scholarship to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Unlike his other scholars who went into fields such as medicine and law, he chose the more lucrative field of Folklore. Luke received a fellowship to Vanderbilt University, where he studied the work of his hero William Blake, and began a band called "The Four Zoas" in Blake's honor.

At a Zoas' gig Luke met **Brian Ahern**, legendary producer of *Emmylou Harris*, *Johnny Cash* and *George Jones* (among others). Ahern published Luke's songs and introduced him to **Tommy Spurlock**, producer/musician & steel-guitar wizard. Tommy had produced *Rick Danko*, *David Olney* and *Chip Taylor*—and played with groups including *The Band*, *Leon Russell*, *Rodney Crowell*, to name a few. This odd couple—a college professor and a musical “road dawg”—hit it off immediately. Luke helped Tommy with his next project *Burrrito Deluxe* (2004): Luke wrote songs with *Mark Collie* and *Earl Bud Lee* ("Friends in Low Places") and collaborated with the legendary *Sneaky Pete Kleinow* of **The Flying Burrrito Brothers**.



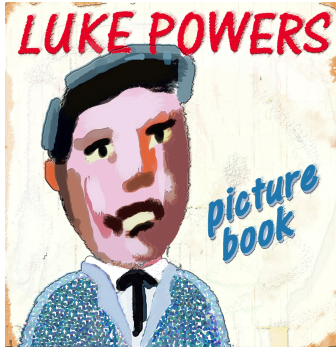
In 2005 Spurlock got the idea of writing a protest album—against the U.S. war in Iraq, George W. Bush and the decaying state of the nation in general: Americana music of an America gone horribly wrong. Luke had already written a number of protest songs for the cause and came up with the name: *Kakistocracy* (meaning government by the least honest or competent). The CD, released on Austin Records, featured Luke and Tommy as *The Spicewood Seven* with **Jamie Oldaker** (*Eric Clapton*, *Leon Russell*), **Rosie Flores**, **Elana James** (*Hot Club of Cow Town*) and **Garth Hudson** (of *The Band*).

The effort received high praise: Kathy Coleman (about.com): “All in all, when it comes to making music, I have to give these guys two thumbs up - when it comes to speaking up about what's wrong, I don't have enough thumbs to give.” Stewart Mason (AMG): “*Kakistocracy* makes Steve Earle look like a milquetoast.”

Luke conjured **Garth Hudson** into recording on Luke debut CD *Picture Book* (2007) on Phoebe Claire

Records. Garth brought a timeless Band-like swirl of sound to songs like “Knoxville Girl” and “Tommy's Going Home to Texas.” The latter song, written about Tommy's decision to move from Nashville to Austin (and saying goodbye to a dream), brought a tear to Garth's eye during the late night/early morning session.

Luke admits, “it's the highest praise I could ever imagine.”



“I Saw John Kennedy Today” reimagines the assassination of JFK with an unlikely twist: Kennedy's double gets killed in Dallas, allowing the freewheeling ex-president to roam the country in a pickup truck. It received world-wide airplay and received over 50,000 mp3 downloads. The song was also recorded by **Ralston Bowles** (produced by **Gurf Morlix**) which won Best Song in Michigan's “Jammie” Awards in February 2009.

**Picture Book** was named CD of the Month for August 2007 by Tom Fahey's Americana OK, syndicated program. Other praise includes: “definitely the CD you want to hear over and over again” (Sue Few, KRBS) “beautiful songs, good sound . . . and a great voice . . . all the ingredients” (Mike Penard, Radio ISA)

Luke decided to follow up his “personal” album with a more abstract concept with his CD *Texasee* (2008), also on Phoebe Claire Records. Luke wanted to evoke a mythic American landscape littered with the remains of love and violence—Sam Peckinpah, the Coen Brothers and a little Cormac McCarthy thrown in for good measure. Since Spurlock had now relocated to Austin and Luke was in Nashville, the name was more than simple geography. The project also began Luke's long-time collaboration with engineer extraordinaire **Bradley Hartman** (*Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson*, just for starters).



The album received high praise. Baron Lane of *Twangnation.com* named it #5 in his top ten list for Americana albums released in the U.S. in 2008.

James Pearson of the BBC praised its “16 GREAT tracks” and Chuck Hoster (KZUM) wrote: “music like this offers an alternative to what passes for music these days.”

The album debuted at #15 on the FAR Americana Chart for November 2008 and was named Album of the Week by AmericanaOK and the UK's CMRNashville. It was nominated for a Grammy in the Category of Folk Album of the Year.

He continued to expand his range and reputation with the well-received albums *Running to Paradise* (2009)--the title borrowed from W. B. Yeats. This was Luke's offbeat “religious album” featuring the song “Johnny Rotten Come to Jesus” which he performed live on Knoxville's WDVX at the invitation of DJ Wayne Bledsoe.

The follow-up *HWY 100* (2010) delved further into Southern Gothic Americana with songs like “The Ballad of the Minie-Ball” (a true story in which a ricochet bullet impregnated a southern belle) and “World's Smallest Confederate Veteran” (a sideshow midget, with uniform and pointed beard, astride on a shetland pony).

Luke's university colleagues think of him as a Blake scholar and little suspect that his music is getting airplay all over the U.S., Europe, Australia and Asia. He's just happy that his music is out there.



Luke's latest release *Memphis Mermaid* (2012) pairs Luke with session guitarist extraordinaire and Nashville neighbor **Chris Leuzinger** (*Garth Brooks, George Strait*) playing truly “electric” guitar well beyond the bounds of the Nashville sound. **Michael Smotherman** (who has played with greats such as *Roger Miller, Glen Campbell* and, yes, *Captain Beefheart*) returns on keys, and **Suzi Ragsdale** (*Guy Clark* and her dad *Ray Stevens*) gives the mermaid a human voice.

The CD is a concept album about Memphis (and the Decline and Fall of the American Dream) and Mermaids (the miracles all around us that transcend that Fall). The mermaids take the form of literal mermaids in the Mississippi to a transgender tween at the brink of puberty to Picasso's "Girl with Mandolin."

There is also a song about the Mayan Calendar ("Last Day of the World (12/21/12)")--hopefully the song will get some listens before the world ends next month, but at least, Luke say, "I'm going out with a bang!"

Finally, “Thank You All (Hope It's Not Too Late)” is a paean to Luke's father, the Honorable John Y. Powers, who passed away in 2012. It will be featured in *Maverick Magazine's* (UK) December 2012 CD release. The CD is dedicated to The Judge, who played a pretty mean Fats Waller for a federal judge and gave Luke whatever musical gifts he possesses.

Luke currently teaches English at Tennessee State University in Nashville, TN. He is a published poet, fiction writer and scholar whose work has appeared in *The Vanderbilt Review, The North Carolina Journal of Folklore* and *Scholars and Rogues*. He is married to Jacqueline O'Keefe and has two children, John and Phoebe Claire.

Luke's music is available available on compact disc and as digital download on CDBaby and I-Tunes. It is promoted and distributed in in the U.S. by Phoebe Claire Publishing, LLC, (BMI), and in Europe by Hemifran Music ([peter.holmstedt@telia.com](mailto:peter.holmstedt@telia.com)).



