

# Road Warrior Dana Cooper to perform in Cedaredge

By Don Benjamin, Staff Writer

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**D**ana Cooper is a road-warrior. Not the Mad Max kind, although in his youth he was a bit of a hellion. He's the touring musician kind who has traveled America and the world from the Midwest to California and Ireland to Denmark. The self-described "song poet" is home in Nashville right now but on Friday, July 27, he'll be taking the stage at the Grand Mesa Arts & Events Center (GMAEC) in downtown Cedaredge.

The reasons that Cooper, an award-winning artist who has 20 albums to his credit, is coming to Delta County to perform are simple ones: he has a strong affection for the Grand Mesa, Cedaredge, and David Starr, not necessarily in that order.

He's known Cedaredge resident David Starr for going on 20 years. Cooper first performed in Starr's club in Little Rock and then a fellow musician introduced them and the friendship flourished. The two have penned a couple of songs together. Last year Starr invited Cooper to perform at Cedaredge's annual AppleFest and so the invitation to perform at the GMAEC was a natural one.

This isn't Cooper's first Colorado rodeo. In 1973, when he was under contract with Electra Records, he played in Denver at Ebbets Field, a famous nightclub on 15th Street. Ebbets is closed now but it once hosted a diverse pantheon of musical stars from Asleep at the Wheel to Willie Nelson to Sugarloaf.

The Colorado duo Bittersweet Highway will open for the upcoming Cedaredge concert. Then Cooper will perform a mixture of his insightful songs, accompanying his rich voice with legendary guitar picking. And he'll include songs from his new album "Incendiary Kid."

Asked in a telephone interview about the title, Cooper described the "Kid" as a character based upon his own youthful exploits.

"I was a bit of a hooligan as a kid. At 13 my dad had to bail me out of jail for throwing a cherry bomb on Harry Truman's porch. I was upset about the A-bomb but I got a history lesson that night."

In addition to bedeviling his famous neighbor in their shared hometown of Independence, Mo., Cooper picked up the guitar and drums at age 12. "I couldn't decide whether to be George or Ringo," he recalls.

But the inspiration for his musical career came much earlier at age three when his father took him for a train ride to Kansas City to see Ernest Tubb perform. They rode both ways in the caboose.

"You could do that in those days," he said, "Buy a ticket to ride in the caboose."

That same year, Cooper saw two movies: "Blackboard Jungle" and "On the Waterfront." The iconic rock and roll group, Bill Haley and Comets and their song "Rock Around the Clock" were featured in the former film and Leonard Bernstein's symphonic score enhanced the latter. And this cascade of diverse music inspired the impressionable boy.

"They say folks can't remember that far back (to age three). But I compared notes with my dad and he agreed that from that time on I've always loved music," he said.

What does he think about playing the GMAEC's 175-seat theater?

He has played smaller venues including intimate house concerts and cramped pubs. "Wherever people gather, I'll play there," he said. "And I'm particularly excited to perform for the folks in Cedaredge at the new Grand Mesa Arts & Events Center."

Tickets for Cooper's July 27, 7 p.m. concert are still available at Starr's Guitars, 250 West Main Street, Cedaredge, or call 970-856-2331. The GMAEC is located at 195 West Main Street and the center's phone number is 970-856-9195. For the latest information on upcoming performances, classes, and events, visit the Grand Mesa Arts & Events Center's Facebook page.



Prolific songwriter Dana Cooper will perform at the Grand Mesa Arts & Events Center on Friday, July 27. He appeared at Cedaredge's gigantic AppleFest celebration last year and the popular touring musician is looking forward to returning to the Surface Creek area. Photo by Jeff Thorneycroft