



Peter of All-Trades

Burke resident Peter Cooper comes back to perform in Arlington.

By [Rebecca Halik](#)

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East Nashville songwriter and music scribe Peter Cooper returns to Arlington to the IOTA, 2832 Wilson Blvd., on Sunday, May 25 for an 8:30 p.m. show. He'll be sharing the bill with the Karl Straub Combo and Eric Brace. Cooper will have just released his debut CD, "Mission Door", on fellow songwriter Brace's Red Beet Records. For ticket information, call 703-522-8340.

Introduce yourself:

I'm Peter Cooper, a singer-songwriter-journalist-professor-baseball fan.

How did you get your start in music?

Most of my music-making was of the underground variety until an artist named Todd Snider asked if I would go out and open some tour dates for him. Several hundred dominos later, I have an album out and I'm touring the world. Most of the time, my shows on the road don't feature a full band, but for the album, "Mission Door," I formed a group that included Steel Guitar Hall of Famer Lloyd Green, former Jayhawk Jen Gunderman, Jason & The Scorchers leader Jason Ringenberg, Todd Snider, Nanci Griffith and other great players.

How long have you been performing?

I've been performing since I was in high school, which was at Lake Braddock over in Burke. I decided to concentrate on music over sports after watching my Lake Braddock classmate and future NBA star Hubert Davis play ball. I figured Hubert had the sports covered, but I could sing way better than he could.

What is it that you love about performing?

I love the impromptu moments that happen, where something gets communicated in a way that won't likely happen again.

What is your best memory when it comes to music?

Playing Mission Door for Tom T. Hall is the favorite (and most frightening) thing I've done in music. Second favorite, and second most frightening, was opening for Nanci Griffith at The Birchmere, which is the club where I used to go hear Nanci when I was in high school.

Where is your favorite place to play, either publicly or personally?

My favorite place to play is on Todd Snider's rooftop bar.

Best compliment about a performance?

The best compliment is when someone likes the show enough to buy a CD.

What is your favorite piece of music and why?

Some of my favorite songs are "Mission Door" by Eric Taylor (that's why I covered it on this album), "Here Comes That Rainbow Again" by Kris Kristofferson, "Souvenirs" by John Prine, "Homecoming" by Tom T. Hall and "Bells of Odilia" by Chris Richards. These are all examples of brilliant storytelling, and they are songs that use simple words to convey profound things.

Who would you love to play with? Why?

My "sing with your heroes" dance card has been punched enough that I don't want to push my luck. The person I wanted most to play with was steel guitar great Lloyd Green, who wound up co-producing my album and playing more steel on it than most people have heard in a long, long time.

Describe your sound:

Lyle Lovett Meets John Riggins.

Biggest musical influences:

Kris Kristofferson, Tom T. Hall, Bob Dylan, Eric Taylor, Todd Snider and anything Lloyd Green ever played on.

Other influences:

Elks Lodge #299 in Sheboygan, Wisc.

Where have you toured?

In the States, I've done everything from the Nu-Way Lounge in Spartanburg, S.C. to "The Tonight Show." I just got back from touring The Netherlands and Germany.

Anything special about the upcoming show?

It's always special when I get to sing with Eric Brace, who most folks in the D.C. area know from his role as frontman of Last Train Home. Also, my mom will probably be there, so it's always special to try to find some way to pretend to her that all of the songs are just made up and none from real life experience.

Future plans:

Heavy focus on wine, women and song.