

**BBC/London requests hurricane blues song from Hawkeye Herman**

**"Hawkeye" Herman pens hurricane song**

**By David Burke**

**Quad City Times, Davenport, IA**

**Saturday, September 10, 2005**

<http://www.hawkeyeherman.com/news04.htm>

Michael "Hawkeye" Herman says he works best under the pressure of a deadline. It's a good thing. The Davenport, IA, native and nationally acclaimed blues performer was tabbed by the British Broadcasting Corp., or BBC, to write a song about Hurricane Katrina. The request came the day after Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 30 - and his deadline was Sept. 2.

"If I'm given a deadline, it could be a year away and I'm waiting until three or four days away anyway," Herman said in a telephone interview Friday from Kansas City, Mo. "I work better under a tight deadline."

Herman was in Kansas City to perform at a blues festival and a "blues in the schools" program. He was to debut the song, "Katrina, Oh Katrina, (Hurricane Blues)" Friday night on a KC public radio station.

It is scheduled to be performed on BBC Radio's "Today" show sometime next week. The morning news program has an audience of 7 million, Herman has been told, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Herman had written about disasters before, including the Great Flood of '93 that struck the Quad-City (IA & IL) region and beyond.

A BBC producer became acquainted with the musician while researching a book, "Blue Highway," about the musical legacy of U.S. Highway 61. That same producer had 20 minutes' notice to pack his bags and fly from London to Biloxi, Miss., to cover the Katrina devastation, Herman said. "He said it looked like a bomb went off."

The 60-year-old Herman said he came up with much of the lyrics and the tune to the blues song while taking his daily bike ride in S. Oregon, where he now lives with his family. "The first thing I thought of was that Katrina was such a beautiful name to have that attached to a disaster," he said. "That was going to be the hook."

Herman said he is very familiar with Biloxi, including its 14 huge casinos, all of which were destroyed by the hurricane and its aftermath.

Despite seeing the damage on TV, he said it is hard to comprehend. "If the land around the Mississippi was flat and, if you could imagine, everything all the way up to Locust Street (in Davenport, IA) from the river wiped out," he said. And pointing out that it is 70 miles from Biloxi to New Orleans, "If you could imagine a line like that from Dubuque, IA to the Quad-Cities destroyed."

Herman said he becomes reflective after disasters like Katrina and looks at the big picture. "I have a tendency to say, 'OK, what have we learned from this? What can we learn from this? What positive thing can come out of it?' " he said. "It seems that no matter what disasters are thrust upon humanity, we somehow manage to adapt and adjust and rebuild and eventually put the negative aspects aside."

Ellis Kell, a veteran Quad-City blues musician and director of music, programs and operations for the River Music Experience, said Herman's background qualified him to write the song. "Hawkeye's always been sensitive to that because he's from this area," Kell said. "We both shared a sensitivity to that, growing up around the river, and I think all musicians do."

Herman — whose songs about the '93 flood were used in several documentaries — said he hopes the new song can be commercially recorded, either by himself or someone else, with the profits going to relief efforts.

"My artistic and commercial interests are the same. I would feel absolutely guilt-ridden to realize a financial profit from my documenting a disaster," he said. "I can't see myself profiting from the hardships of others."

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*Katrina, Oh Katrina (Hurricane Blues)*

Words & music by Michael "Hawkeye" Herman - ©2005 M. Herman/Topaz Productions - [www.HawkeyeHerman.com](http://www.HawkeyeHerman.com)

Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name  
Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name  
But since Hurricane Katrina  
Things will never be the same

You were born out on the water  
But it was land that you would claim  
You were born out on the water  
But it was the earth that you would claim  
Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name

Your wind it started rising  
Then your mighty waters came  
Yes, your wind it started rising  
Then your mighty waters came  
Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name

So many dead, so many homeless  
It's a sad and crying shame  
So many dead and thousands homeless  
Yes, it's a sad and crying shame  
But Katrina, oh Katrina  
Such a lovely, deadly name

You brought ruin to New Orleans  
The land where blues rose up to fame  
Yes, you brought your devastation  
To where these blues rose up to fame  
But Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name

The lesson you have taught us  
There is no storm that man can tame  
Yes, there's a lesson you have taught us  
There is no storm that we can tame  
Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely, deadly name

We're going to start all over  
All you've destroyed we will reclaim  
Yes, we're going to start all over  
All you've destroyed we will reclaim  
But we won't forget Katrina  
Such a lovely, deadly name

Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name  
Katrina, oh Katrina  
You have such a lovely name  
But since Hurricane Katrina  
Things will never be the same

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**Quad City Times - Michael "Hawkeye" Herman pens hurricane blues song for the BBC:**

You can read the story at this link:

[https://qctimes.com/news/local/hawkeye-herman-pens-hurricane-song/article\\_81d20dd7-f40b-5a35-be47-57364fe2225d.html](https://qctimes.com/news/local/hawkeye-herman-pens-hurricane-song/article_81d20dd7-f40b-5a35-be47-57364fe2225d.html)

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**This from the BBC - September 2005:  
Katrina Blues - Hurricane Katrina and the Blues...  
Michael "Hawkeye" Herman on BBC Today - radio**

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/print/misc/blues\\_20050916.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/print/misc/blues_20050916.shtml)

For the poor black populations of Louisiana and Mississippi at the turn of the last century, jazz and blues developed not just as a way to escape hardship - if only for a few hours on a Saturday night - but as a method of communicating news.

Field workers had very limited access to newspapers - or even, later, to radio - even in the forties and fifties. So the collective back catalogue of American blues musicians is loaded with references to newsworthy events of the time.



From the curse of the boll weevil, which destroyed cotton crops, to the tragic Mississippi flood of 1927, life in the South was recorded in the lyrics of blues songs.

On Today on Saturday 3 September Mark Coles suggested that Hurricane Katrina would, in time, find its way into blues verse. We decided to hasten the process by inviting the American blues musician **Michael 'Hawkeye' Herman** - who's written songs about the 1993 Mississippi floods - to come up with his own 'Hurricane Blues'.

[YOU CAN LISTEN HERE...](#)

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/audio/katrina\\_blues\\_song.ram](https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/audio/katrina_blues_song.ram)

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