



David Hutchins performs at the Highland Potbelly's. He makes his living as a professional musician, playing gigs in the South Bend/Michigan area and Northwest Indiana.

David Hutchins follows path he's meant to be on

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It's noon on a Tuesday, and hungry folks are waiting for their sub sandwiches to roll out the other side of the toaster at Potbelly in Highland. As they mentally prepare to answer the question: "Mayo, mustard, hot peppers?" — a scratchy, folksy voice grows louder in the background.

"You were always on my mind," the voice sings.

It's not a piped-in CD but live music coming from a small ornate stage in a corner of the eatery. At the microphone is musician David "Hutch" Hutchins, a Portage resident who makes a living stringing together gig after gig as a full-time musician.

"I was the class clown, and music allows me to do what I do best and that's to have fun in life," he said.

"You get to a point in your life that you realize you're on this path you're

Bio

NAME: David "Hutch" Hutchins

AGE: 62

LIVES: Portage

WORKS: Various gigs in Indiana and Michigan

JOB: Musician, singer

EDUCATION: Graduated from Hobart High School and attended Career Academy in Milwaukee.

HOBBIES: Sports fan, spending time with family

supposed to be on," he said. "Not everybody is designed to work for somebody."

Raised in Hobart, Hutchins started in a garage band and worked his way up. Equipped with a guitar and harmonica, he's played regularly at Potbelly for 10 years and during the fall at County Line Orchard, among other gigs.

He has two "markets." His summer market is in the South Bend/Michigan area and the winter market focuses more



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in the Region. He has a mental library of more than 300 memorized songs, and he can transition from one to the next as the makeup of the crowd changes.

At a sandwich shop midday, he's safe with middle-of-the-road songs that don't offend and are crowd pleasers.

As Hutchins sat on a break from the Potbelly stage, local attorney Rhett Tauber paused on his way out to compliment the musician.

"He's the man," Tauber said. "He plays the best Cat Stevens that I've seen, other

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JOHN J. WATKINS

David Hutchins performs at the Highland Potbelly's. He makes his living as a professional musician and has a CD coming out in the near future called, "It Keeps Me Grounded."

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Job

than Cat Stevens."

They chuckled and Tauber added, "He's genuinely very good."

Hutchins loves the playful interaction with his audience. He asks trivia questions and gently pokes fun at them.

"I knew that when I came in here that this was the spot for me because of the market that I cut out for myself, which is 'family,'" he said. "It's the strangest business to me because I have a following at a sandwich shop."

Hutchins performs less often these days under the stage name Khaki Lymon, who mostly plays Jimmy Buffet music.

"I still go by Khaki Lymon some places," he said. "I'm always reinventing myself."

He has a CD coming out in the near future, which he will discuss at 7:30 a.m. Oct. 6 on local radio station WJOB. Called, "It Keeps Me Grounded," the music is original material about growing up in a small neighborhood with a big family when life was more simple.

He weaves in his own songs at performances.

"A lot of times people come up to me and say, 'Who wrote that song? Is that a Cat Stevens song?'" he said.

Making a living as a full-time musician takes hard work and a strong work ethic. Hutchins credits his wife for being supportive and having a great job, which helps make it possible for him to perform full time.

He encourages aspiring musicians to get an education and develop their skills.

"Be a business person," he said. "Understand your talent and find your niche. Through the course of being in the business, you're always cutting out a niche for yourself."

Pay varies wildly, depending on the location and frequency of bookings. He estimated a working musician who performs four nights a week can earn between \$20,000 and \$85,000.

"Many people have a tendency of expecting more from this business than is realistic," he said. "If you really love what you do, you always seem to find a way of making just enough. I appreciate the fact that every day I get up and someone literally is paying me to do it. I do have a blended life. At 62 years old, I'm doing it and it's all because I love it."

You can find some comments about Hutchins' performances and other information at his Facebook page "HUTCH, aka David Hutchins — Khakilymon."

How I got the job: "Anybody wanting to get into this business full-time, there's no one way to do it. At my age, as many people as I've played for, most of my gigs come from referrals from all different types of directions."

What the job pays: The median pay for musicians and singers in 2012 was \$23.50 per hour, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Job growth: The U.S. Department of Labor predicted employment of musicians and singers would grow by 5 percent, which is slower than the average profession, between 2012 and 2022.

