



Tom Doughty Biography

Tom Doughty is a unique voice among guitar players. His approach to the instrument and his playing style were developed through years of persistence and hard work as he overcame the physical limitations imposed by an accident. This is encapsulated in his belief that the pleasure of making music must be available to everyone, whatever their restrictions.

Tom is an acclaimed musician, performer, songwriter, recording artist and teacher who has toured both the UK and internationally. Today he is acknowledged as one of the world's finest lap steel guitar players.

Self-taught, Tom began learning as a child by watching and interpreting musicians such as Renbourn and Jansch, Martin Carthy, Nic Jones, Big Bill Broonzy and Led Zeppelin. He received his first guitar at the age of seven – a second-hand instrument brought for 50p from a jumble sale. His older brother showed him a few basic chords and before long Tom

was playing the riff from 'Money' with The Beatles. At 17, Tom was considered by his peers to be an accomplished fingerstyle guitarist. He played every day.

Everything changed in 1974, when Tom was involved in a motorcycle accident. The resulting spinal injury affected his legs and hands, leaving him in a wheelchair and with little movement left in his hands. Tom thought he would never play his beloved guitar again. But, in time, profoundly, his impairment became the catalyst to a world of different opportunities. One pivotal moment was hearing the album 'Greenhouse' by Leo Kottke at a friend's house. As soon as he heard 'Louise', the first track on the album, Tom knew he had to somehow learn to play again.

He took a previously redundant guitar off the wall and placed it on his lap. To depress the strings, he used a tube on his forefinger. Soon he began adapting picks, making twists and turns so he could hit the strings at the correct angle, raising the nut, and put extra weight into the tube to make it more effective. For Tom, this was a wholly new approach to guitar playing.

In 1999, following his attendance at a guitar seminar at Columbia University, NY, Tom took the plunge into full-time musicianship, taking early retirement from his job as a social worker.

Today, Tom is writing and producing music that blends pop, jazz, folk and blues, allowing him to create his own unique acoustic sound. He has released four critically acclaimed albums: 2003's 'The Bell', 2006's 'Running Free', and 2008's 'Have a Taste of This'. His most recent album, 'Can't Teach an Old Dog' was released in 2016.



Tom's music has taken him around the world, including playing in many of the UK's most famous venues. In 2019, Tom played on the hallowed stage of [Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club](#). He mostly performs

solo but has played with orchestras, including the [British Paraorchestra](#) and [City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra](#).

Alongside his work as a professional musician, Tom is a keen advocate of playing music as a form of release. He believes physical impairment should not be a restriction for anyone. Tom is currently touring hospital spinal injuries units across the UK to inspire patients through his teaching workshops and concerts. He shows how creating music is possible even with limited mobility in your limbs. This tour is funded primarily through the [Bridgewater Hall](#), Manchester, and is in partnership with [Korg UK](#), The British Paraorchestra, [Creative United \(Take it away\)](#) and [Music For All](#). Tom completed a similar tour in 2012 when he was supported by Arts Council England.

Tom's style and approach have become instantly recognisable, with a playing style that is unlike anyone else. Exploiting his song writing and continuing to push boundaries, he has re-invented slide playing to suit his needs, finding voicing and chord structures that are unique to him.

Tom explains: "My disability forces me to be a more creative and resourceful and I believe it strengthens my musicianship. When I play the guitar well, the experience feels emotional, sensual, technical, controlled, yet spontaneous. Most people who hear me on the radio, buy tickets to see me in concert, or even buy my CDs are unaware of my physical limitations; they just like my music – job done!

"I feel the actual impact of my disability, which imposes masses of restrictions but has made me more creative and more interested in the world than had I not experienced it. It's directly linked to what happened to me and I think that's a fantastic thing. I have no desire to go back to the 'able' me and I'm at one. My creativity is linked to my impairment and I think that makes me a better musician. The very thing that limits me is the very thing that gives my music individuality and strength.

After his accident Tom was determined to live as 'normal' a life as possible. He went to university, became a social worker and competed internationally at sport – representing his country at table tennis in the 1988 Paralympics in Korea and winning a silver medal. While he no longer plays table tennis, Tom still likes to keep active and rides his hand-cycle most days around the lanes of Cheshire. Tom's story was recently featured in 'Changing Lives,' a book about spinal injury victims who are an inspiration to others.

Testimonial

Tom's original mentor, [Woody Mann](#), describes his music as "*coming from that natural place great music comes from – personal expression, honest and right from the heart. The music just flows. He uses his unique set of circumstances as an opportunity to explore the limitless possibilities of making music.*"

Tom lives in Cheshire but is happy to travel for media appearances anywhere in the UK and play live on air.

www.tomdoughty.com

