

Dave Keller

When you think of soul and blues, what places come to mind? Memphis? Chicago? How about Vermont? No? Well Dave Keller is trying to change that. And with his recent appearance on legendary guitarist Ronnie Earl's new CD, *Living in the Light*, it's obvious that Keller is succeeding.

Currently based in Montpelier, VT, Keller performs solo and with his band. He has paid his dues the old fashioned way -- spending over 1,000 nights singing and playing his heart out. At sweaty, dirt road bars. At swanky ski saloons. At huge summer festivals. At jam-packed dance clubs, city halls, college theaters, prison gymnasiums, and blues cruises. You name it. Chances are Keller has played there. And chances are those audiences still remember dancing like crazy to his deep soul singing, his gritty guitar licks, and his super-tight, super-funky band.

When Keller moved to the Green Mountain state in 1993, he had already spent many years learning his trade. Growing up in Worcester, MA, he picked up guitar in his teens, before falling for the blues and starting his own band in 1988, covering songs by B.B. King, Otis Rush, and the Neville Brothers. Soon after, Keller moved to Boston. Weekend nights found him backing up Reggie Taylor, an older blues/R&B musician who himself had backed up many a blues legend. Weekdays Keller hung out with acoustic blues master Paul Rishell, learning the roots of the blues. Weekend afternoons Keller put his skills to use, sitting in at blues jams throughout the city.

Eventually Keller tired of city life and moved to rural Washington state. There he decided to take up singing and songwriting. With few other blues musicians around, he immersed himself in homemade tapes of Ray Charles, Son House, and gospel quartets from the forties and fifties.

By 1993, when Keller moved to Vermont, his singing and playing had taken on a new depth. He began playing solo shows with his National steel guitar, garnered a loyal following, and released a cassette (*Deep Down in My Soul*) on his own label.

In 1996, he formed an electric trio to play clubs and larger venues, and in 1998 the band released its all-original debut CD, *Faith*. The CD sold very well locally, earning excellent reviews from the three major U.S. blues magazines, and receiving airplay across the U.S., Europe, and even Australia. Of special note, deep soul legend Mighty Sam McClain liked the CD so much that he took Keller on as a protégé, telling the world, "Y'all check him out! He's for REAL!"

In November 2001, Keller released his second CD, *Down at the Aloha*, full of old school soul, horn-driven R&B, and slinky funk. Vermont's largest arts paper, *Seven Days*, called Keller, "a born storyteller", comparing his singing to that of Stevie Wonder, and calling the CD, "as good as it gets on the local music scene."

Since then, Keller has kept up a heavy performance schedule, backing up soul greats such as Fontella Bass ("Rescue Me") and Robert Ward ("Papa Was a Rolling Stone"). His newest CD, *Play for Love*, released in November 2007, is his most personal recording yet, and shows his growth as a songwriter, singer and musician. The CD's thirteen songs are inspired by blues and soul, but don't fit easily into either category. The band on the CD is Keller's seasoned road band: Jan Schultz (Fender bass); Brett Hoffman (drums); and Ira Friedman (Hammond organ). And as Paris' esteemed magazine *Soul Bag* says, "It's going to be necessary to put Vermont on the soul and blues map."