

The News-Gazette

E3 section **Notesworthy:** A chat with **Keith Harden**
Thursday 10/09/2014 by **Paul Wood**

Photo by: **Ty Brando**

This week, **Paul Wood** chats with veteran guitarist **Keith Harden**, who says he's 60-ish and lives in Nashville, Tennessee. Harden spent much of his life here and in New York. He plays at 8 p.m. Saturday at Huber's, 1312 W. Church St., Champaign, Illinois.

What are you most excited about now?

Same as it ever was ... playing, writing and recording music. In the last couple of years I started writing a memoir and a novel of speculative fiction.

You've opened for Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Dr. John, Delbert, McClinton, Roomful of Blues, Jorma Kaukonen (Hot Tuna), Shemekia Copeland and Bobby Blue Bland. Any of them stand out as a favorite?

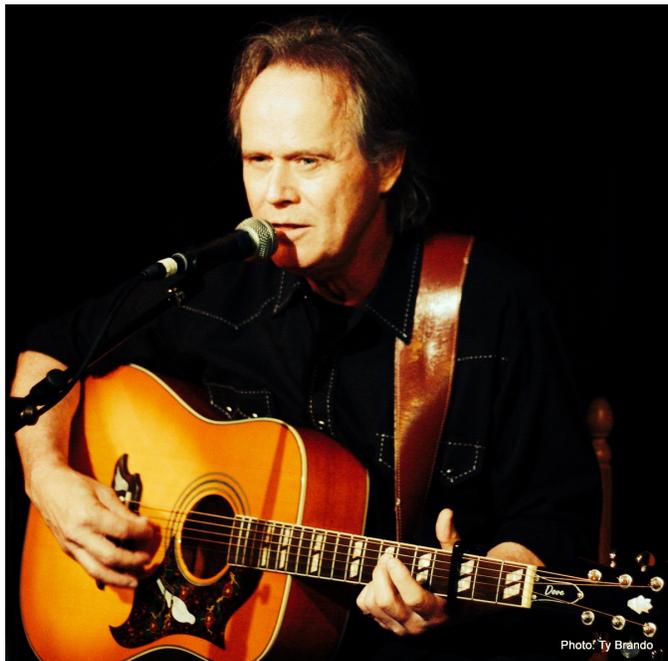
Muddy and John Lee were the high points. Muddy Waters was astounding! They both made the hair stand up the neck of my guitar.

What's the favorite of the bands you've been in?

Back in the '70s I was in a band called The Water Brothers Band. We released a single called "How 'Bout Us," which I sang. Some members of the Water Brothers later formed the group Champaign and had a hit with the same song.

In the 1990s I formed The Keith Harden Band with Andy Burnett and Billy Galt and we played about 300 dates a year for a few years and released three CDs. Technically we're still together 24 years later with a reunion gig once a year that started after I moved to upstate New York in 2001.

Do you still manage to grow in your guitar and mandolin skills?



For many years I felt like I was progressing. Using the "growth" idea it's now more of a "pruning" process that fits what I do especially in the studio. I play fewer notes in general on acoustic solo or duo gigs. Lest you think I have economy as my gold standard let me speak about my electric power trio.

If you hear me at the KH band reunion gigs I will be having so much fun that I pretty much leave restraint in the dust. There are excessive amounts of volume and long Voodoo Childish guitar solos where the guys in the band keep looking over at me and wonder when I'm gonna be through ... At times like that it's good to have the band's name be your name.

What's it like to record with Nashville's Julie and John Pennell?

John and Julie are great friends and we had a wonderful time recording their CD at my home studio. John and I write together and he does stand-up bass on some of my stuff. Julie has played banjo and done lots of backup vocals for me, too.

After all these years, how do you and Kathy (Harden) keep it fresh?

We don't play very much. Probably fewer than 10 duo gigs a year. Kathy sits in with me fairly often on my solo gigs. For little ol' me personally it stays fresh because we have such a large batch of material that we can play plus she sings harmony when I do new original songs.

What is your latest project?

I did a CD in 2013 called "sky songs" of original material in the Americana vein. There are copies for sale at Exile On Main Street and Record Swap in Champaign. I'm writing songs for the next CD project which may or may not be finished at the end of 2014.

How did you first grow interested in music? Does your family have a musical history?

I have three extended bio/essays about my musical history and influences on my website under the heading of "a guitar named Bill," "symposium in blues" and "talkin' blues."

That's keithharden.com with links to my reverbnation page, my youtube channel and my soundcloud page. I'm also on Facebook.