

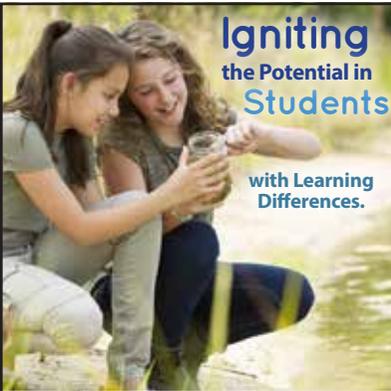
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NITE

Slide on Saturday

Blues rocker plays monthly Salisbury residency

By Michael Witthaus
news@seacoastscene.net

Since he picked up the guitar over four decades ago, Charlie Keating's been compared to plenty of other players, and favorably so.

"Clapton and Buddy Guy; yes, he's that good," one critic said a few weeks ago, while others liken his slide technique and ability to be both backbone and flash point to Stevie Ray Vaughan or Johnny Winter.

There's one label Keating doesn't like, however, and it's an odd one.

"Anyone serious does not refer to themselves as a lead guitar player," he said in a recent phone interview. "If you call yourself just lead, you obviously can't play chords too well. Don't ever call me a lead guitarist."

What, then, to call a someone who, like Hendrix or Stevie Ray, handles all the guitar duties in his band, accompanied by just bass, drums and occasionally keyboards? Powerhouse is one word that comes to mind watching his Keating hand's fly across a Stratocaster or Les Paul guitar. In a recent YouTube video, he sounded better playing one-handed than most do with two, while shooting the video as he played. Keating hardly needs a second guitarist.

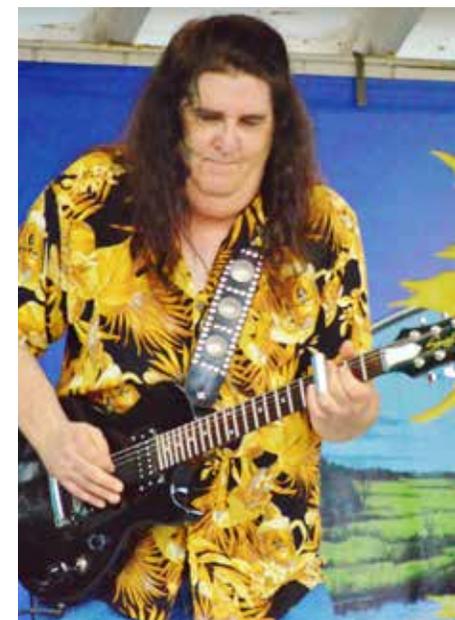
Regulars at Gracie's Bar & Grill in Salisbury, Mass., enthusiastically agree. The Charlie Keating Band — Keating, Lenny Turnquist on bass, drummer Tim Sweeney and recently added keyboard player Dave Dexter — are a constant attraction there, playing the first Saturday of every month since a few months after it opened in Spring 2014.

At Gracie's, the band mixes cover and original songs, including selections from their 2011 album *Slide On Over*.

"We're very eclectic — rock, jazz, some Allman Brothers type stuff," said Keating. "We keep the door open and people will peek in and get up and dance. They really like the stuff; that is why we are always there."

While childhood influences like Hank Williams, James Brown and Wes Montgomery pop up in sets, make no mistake about Keating's wheelhouse.

"I don't play the blues, I have the blues," he said to *Metro* a few years back, adding later, "I can't write if I'm in a good mood



Courtesy photo.

... the songs are too sweet. It's better when I'm pissed off."

Apart from its namesake, Turnquist is the only original band member; how she came to join is a funny story. Keating posted a handwritten ad in his favorite music shop, which Turnquist spotted and pocketed. Too shy to call Keating, she had friends talk up her bass skills until she got the gig.

"A lot of guys won't play with a female," Keating said. "But I have since my third band, so to me it's no big deal."

The two have remained solid musical partners since.

He learned of her deception a year later when he found his flier in a pile of papers.

"The excuse was she didn't have a pen and her cell phone wasn't charged," Keating said. "I told her, 'I understand you're devious; I just wondered why I wasn't getting any calls.'"

Turns out Turnquist is skill at subterfuge is the reason *Slide On Over* has a title song. Keating was riffing at home and asked her to record him.

"I said, this is for your ears only, then one day we're mixing the CD and I hear it blasting over the speakers," he said. "I'm like, what the hell is this? The engineer says, it's really good and we're almost done."

The once shy bass player is a big part of the band's success, acting as manager and art director — she designed the CD cover — along with ample musical skills.

"Lenny's my right hand man, even though she's not a man," Keating said with a laugh. "It takes two of us, and I'm lucky to have her. All the behind-the-scenes stuff stays consistent, and she's a pretty good bass player too!"

Charlie Keating Band

When: Saturday, Oct. 3, 9 p.m.

Where: Gracie's Bar and Grill, 5 Ocean Blvd. Salisbury

More: charliekeatingband.com