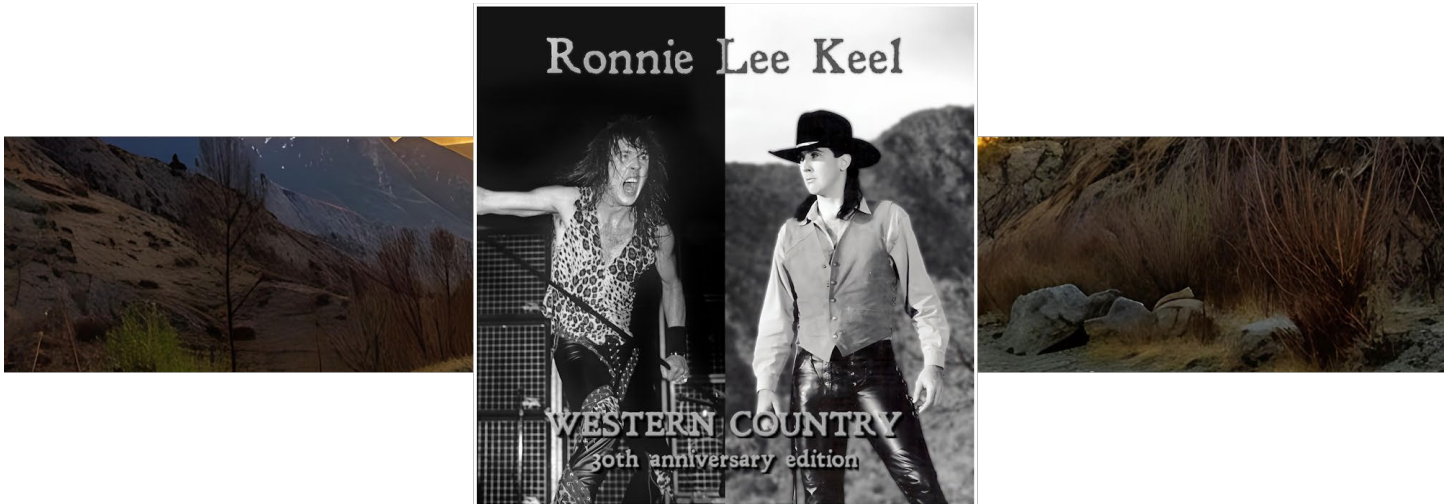




DECEMBER 2025

RFK Media releases 30th Anniversary Remaster of Ronnie Lee Keel's "Western Country" album

"He's like Jekyll & Hyde, this guy..." MARC STRIGL - SiriusXM Radio, formerly with VH1/MTV

"These are songs of alienation, remorse, defiance, and a whisper of vulnerability. This is good stuff, intelligent and real. The man can write a song and pick a guitar, and he has an emotional well he knows how to tap." SANDY LOVEJOY – KNIX 102.5 Country Spirit

RFK Media has announced the 30th anniversary remastered reissue of the album that shocked both worlds – Ronnie Lee Keel's debut, "Western Country."

In 1995, long before any of his 80s peers ventured into country music, Keel was the subject of the highly rated MTV program "Where Are They Now," and the now-infamous declaration of his commitment to country music created a dust storm of dissent in the rock and metal community.

"Western Country," the album he released that summer, was a shameless statement that reinforced that commitment in words and music. This is pure 90s radio country in the tradition of George Strait, Garth Brooks, Brooks & Dunn and other chart-topping icons; the songs were inspired by Keel's roadhouse and rodeo experiences as he embraced a relentless schedule of over 250 shows per year during that decade, including opening slots for Chris LeDoux, Jo Dee Messina and others.

Many of these tracks found their way onto major TV shows ("X Files," "Desperate Housewives," "Touched By An Angel," "King Of The Hill"), movies ("Where The Money Is" starring Paul Newman, "1000 Acres" starring Michelle Pfeiffer, "Chill Factor" starring Cuba Gooding Jr.) sports broadcasts for NASCAR and the Daytona 500, and the background music for the "CMT Insider" series.

"Western Country" won the Best Album award from the Phoenix chapter of the Country Music Clubs of America and earned the artist a Lifetime Achievement Award from the same organization.

While alienating a legion of metal fans who just didn't understand, this album broke down many barricades between the two genres and gave birth to Keel's modern identity as the "Metal Cowboy." Pristine digital production compliments the traditional country instrumentation; the songs are laced with the brilliant country guitar picking of

Hal Michael Monti, beautiful pedal steel guitar work by Ralph Borchert, honky-tonk piano from Wayne Holland, masterful fiddle tracks by Craig Delphia, drumming by Joe Morris, and tied together with bass lines by Mike Wood.

Ron's 2024 album KEELWORLD includes great new rock and metal from his bands Steeler, Keel, Ron Keel Band, and Emerald Sabbath; but it also features a couple of brand-new "Ronnie Lee Keel" songs, proving that this "Jekyll & Hyde" is still proud of his redneck roots as well. Visit "Western Country" to hear where it all began.

Ronnie is available for interviews to discuss this and all RFK Media ventures – contact Jody Best, bestbetpromo@yahoo.com.



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Rocker puts down roots in country

By Salvatore Caputo
Staff writer

"While I was married to rock and roll, country music was the mistress that always made me feel good," Ronnie Lee Keel says, explaining his switch from rock star to country-music hopeful.



To hear samples from Ronnie Lee Keel's CD, call **PRESSLINE** at 271-5656 and push 2241.

Keel led a band that bore his name and rode the wave of big-hair rock through the '80s. His band sold a million records, produced three chart hits, landed seven videos on MTV and toured worldwide, playing to a crowd of 86,000 with Van Halen at the Texas Jam concert.

Like most of its contemporaries, Keel the band didn't have the staying power of Van Halen. In 1989, Keel the man was at a crossroads.

"My rock career fell apart," he says, and family problems intruded at the same time.

"So I was really left with nothing — no money, no career, no band, a lot of my family was in shreds. When I picked up the pieces and reinvented myself, this is who I was."

And who he is now is a Peoria-based singer-songwriter performing the rocked-out country style of today.

"I was born country," he says.

"My father played with Hank (Williams) Sr., Ernest Tubb and some people in the '40s and '50s, always had a guitar sitting in the corner of the house and always had Hank Williams and Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash on the turntable, dropping one record after another."

So it was only natural that in the late '70s, young Keel would lean toward the country-rock of The Eagles — "stuff that you'll now hear played in the country bars but back then was considered too edgy or rock and roll."

Keel led a band that bore his name and rode the wave of big-hair rock through the '80s. His band sold a million records, produced three chart hits, landed



Mona Reeder/Staff photographer

After Ronnie Lee Keel walked away from a career in rock music in the 1980s, he came back to the desert to concentrate on country and Western. "I can sing loud out there and nobody can hear me, or I can sing soft and the whole world will hear me."

Silhouette

A native of Georgia, Keel moved with his family moved to the Valley in 1969. He left in 1979 at age 18 for a Texas construction job that his construction-worker dad had set up. He made \$12,000 in four months, which for a teen-ager was a license to indulge most material whims.

In Texas, Keel met a representative of MCA Records, who was impressed with his off-the-construction-site music. He invited Keel to Nashville.

However, things didn't work out, because country-music executives thought Keel's music was too aggressive.

Yet Keel stayed in Nashville, learning the trade and looking for a break like thousands of hopefuls. Enter a rock band that needed a lead

singer.

"I ended up joining a rock band at the time because I was the only guy in town with long hair," he says with a laugh.

By age 23, he had a major-label rock album and proceeded to put out five more before it was over.

With all the rock success, though, part of him went unfulfilled. He returned to Arizona often, so that he could head out into the desert with a guitar, build a campfire and play country music.

So when the bottom dropped out of his rock world, he decided to take his "mistress" seriously. He began working on country music in 1989, and moved back to the Valley three years ago, fed up with the land of earthquakes.

With his family set up, he pursued country with renewed vigor, writing songs in the desert.

"I can sing loud out there and nobody can hear me, or I can sing soft and the whole world will hear me."

However, he hid his identity when

he started playing country.

"I wanted to be able to develop myself and my voice and my persona and my songs anonymously without the judgment of 'Look at the ex-rock star! Look what he's doing now.'"

So he played as Ronnie Lee in the "very smallest, dirtiest, scariest clubs in Phoenix," working up to the honky-tonk circuit.

Years later, he's put the last name back on for his independently released album, *Western Country*, which has helped get the word out. (Available by phone at 494-1070.)

Silhouette is a regular feature focusing on the arts-and-entertainment community in Arizona.



'Round Town

Time to Fly

He's been a patient man, **Ronnie Lee Keel**. Press packets, videos, invitations, Christmas cards, phone calls, a thank you note for the smallest of mentions. To read the old rock and roll press, one might expect a hint of frustration by now.

Keel always seemed in transition; a story not ready to be told. There were personnel changes in his band. His Cave Creek gig was secure, then it wasn't (now it seems to be). He repositioned himself as Ronnie Lee Keel (formerly Ronnie Lee). His bio says he embraced country music several years ago as "the

first step on the road to my true destiny" after "my personal life was devastated by tragedy and dreams shot down in flames." If ever there were a wait-and-see act, it was this one.

Now comes the CD, **WESTERN COUNTRY**, an all-Arizona project, recorded at Apache Tracks. Almost everything on it is written or co-written by Keel. There are songs of alienation, remorse, defiance, and a whisper of vulnerability. This is good stuff, intelligent and real. The man can write a song and pick a guitar, and he has an emotional well he knows how to tap. He's also street wise, having had a publishing deal with Famous Music for ten years. Now he's pushing for the next level.

You can check out Ronnie Lee Keel at **The Buffalo Chip** in Cave Creek Thur. - Sun. Current lineup in his band: **Hal Monti**, guitar and vocals; **Joe Morris**, percussion; **Ralph Borchert**, steel and vocals; **Mike Wood**, bass and vocals; and **Wayne Holland**, keyboards and vocals.

Sandy Lovejoy



Ronnie Lee Keel: rock and roll attitude redirected.

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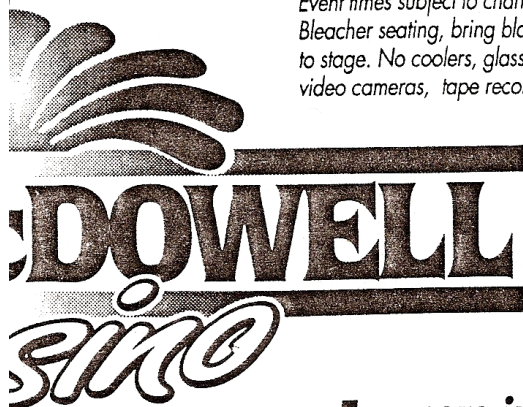
Noon-12:30	Native American Dancers
1:30-3:30	Karaoke
4:00-5:00	Music
5:00-6:00	Native American Hoop Dancers
6:00-7:00	Line Dance Lessons
7:00-8:00	Ronnie Lee Keel Band
8:00-9:00	Highway 101
9:00-10:00	Jo Dee Messina

Sunday, April 20

Noon-12:30	Native American Dancers
1:00-2:30	Karaoke
3:00-4:00	Music
4:00-5:00	Native American Hoop Dancers
5:00-6:00	Line Dance Lessons
6:00-7:00	Young Country
7:00-8:00	Diamond Rio

Event times subject to change. Parking \$5 per vehicle. Bleacher seating, bring blankets for festival seating closer to stage. No coolers, glass containers, alcohol, pets, video cameras, tape recorders and weapons.

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Rocker redefined

Ronnie Lee Keel trades hard rock for heartland

By Bonnie Holmes

As a young, carefree rocker, Ron Keel had it made—fast cars, beach homes, MTV videos, radio play and buds like Van Halen and Bon Jovi. Then about as fast as it all came, it all left. Gone was his big-time rock 'n roll stature. Gone were the record deals, and gone were the riches of his personal life, which he now chooses not to discuss.

WHAT: Ronnie Lee Keel
WHEN: April 22-27
WHERE: Museum Club

Like Moses, Ron Keel turned to the desert to find meaning in it all, and what he found was that the Arizona desert helped him think and write. And it turned him onto the acoustic guitar. Put a broken-hearted musician alone in the desert with a guitar, a tent and a campfire, and you are just begging for country music. In fact, the life of Ronnie Lee Keel, as he now calls himself, could well be a country song.

"Country music was always there for me. Even when I'd play Madison Square Garden, I'd put on a cowboy hat and go down to the local honky tonk and play for free," says Keel. "There's something about a guy in your face yellin' 'eight-ball in the corner' that keeps you grounded."

Keel's roller coaster-ride to stardom started clicking straight up when he was 18. "My friends wanted me to sing in a *Battle of the Bands* competition with them because I had long hair," he says. Failing to commit until just three days before the competition, he wrote some lyrics, attended a few practices and won. His band signed a record deal with a Los Angeles rock label in '84 and called themselves *Keel*.

The group released three albums and

sold more than a million copies of each—long-time rockers might remember the ballad "Tears of Fire." Perhaps the most popular Keel tunes were commonly heard between Michael Jackson and Madonna hits on Top 40 radio stations. Back then, screaming about sex and drugs and rock 'n roll seemed to be the ticket for the ride to the top. But that was the old Keel.

The new, revised Ronnie Lee is older, more introspective, and deeply weathered by life's pains and pleasures. His emotional well runs deep—poetic phrases now pour from the soul that was reawakened by the Southwestern moonlight. Here's a sample:

"From out of the Arizona badlands, a hot desert wind whistles through the trees and echoes through the canyons, carrying music to those who will listen. Welcome to Western Country."

And that's not even part of a song!

But he's got a corral full of thoughts just like that, many of them playing in the background of television shows and movies. Coming up April 28 on NBC, a program called *On the Edge* will be using Keel's "My Horse is a Harley." The song has been used on the soap opera *The Guiding Light* and John Grisham's television program, *The Client*, both on CBS. Other Keel songs such as "Girls, Bars & Steel Guitars," "I Want a New Job," "Born To Be Lonely," and "Say No More" are being used in television and film productions as well.

All of these tunes are on his latest recording *Western Country*, which was selected Album of the Year by the Phoenix chapter of the Country Music Clubs of America. "Almost every week somebody calls wanting to use my music for television or a movie," says Keel.

You can almost hear the clicking of the roller coaster moving back up another major hill. You can at the Museum Club, April 22-27.

"Country music was always there for me. Even when I'd play Madison Square Garden, I'd put on a cowboy hat and go down to the local honky tonk and play for free."
—Ronnie Lee Keel

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