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You regularly go and stomp along with The Whistlepigs String Band's hot old bluegrass (www.whistlepigs.com). You swung and grooved with Catskinner or danced in the pubs until they closed the doors when The Banshees owned the stage. Maybe you even caught Fred by himself at the Renaissance Festival. After sixteen years of playing with bands, Fred Keller returns to where it all began: solo, but with mandolin instead of a guitar.

Review From "Sing Out!" Magazine, Summer 2008

There are a great number of fine regional bluegrass bands out there playing at the clubs and festivals nationwide. The Whistlepigs String Band is one of the best. They hail from the upper Midwest, and Fenceline includes a number of classic and self composed songs and tunes. Best among them are the instrumental "Fred Digs Up A Hornet's Nest" and "Sarah Jane" both written by mandolinist Fred Keller. Catch the 'Pigs at a festival near you this Summer.

Fred is lining up shows for the 2010 season, ready to play a repertoire loaded with hillbilly songs, Appalachian fiddle tunes, pre-war string band blues, and a host of new originals written especially for his solo act. He's been woodshedding and writing all winter and playing locally near Sandstone all spring. The debut recording nears completion so it's time to line up a lot more shows featuring not only the eclectic old and new music but the three mandolins.

Keith M., picker and Mandolin Cafe (www.mandolincafe.com) member

The most enjoyable for me though was Fred playing that Brentrup. He has that Monroe/Compton style down. Go check them out if you get a chance or get a CD and no, I'm not their agent.

Fred's played and taught mandolin professionally for over ten years. He's studied with Grammy-winner Mike Compton (of "O Brother..." and Elvis Costello fame) for three. During that time he figured out how best to use the vastly different voices of his three mandolins: the snarly Brentrup F-style, a gorgeous 1929 Gibson A, and a metal beast called the Commodium made by Keith Cary, a luthier and musician with, among others, R. Crumb and the Cheap Suit Serenaders. The last must be seen and heard. To say it is a resonator mandolin made from a bedpan doesn't begin to describe it.



Review From "Bluegrass Now," Sept., 2008, by Tim Walsh

...The members of The Whistlepigs String Band drank "a fair amount of beer" and "just the right amount of whiskey" before recording their sophomore release. Between the requisite bathroom breaks, the Minnesota quartet managed to cut 18 loose and lively tracks in a series of single takes...Yet "Engineer Best," "That Water," and "Fred Digs Up a Hornet's Nest" ...are among nine originals that most exemplify the tandem's talents...These are friendly folks simply having a good time playing good music.

A "Fenceline" (Whistlepigs String Band) Recording Review published in "Inside Bluegrass" April, 2008, By Jerry Barney

Dang, I like this CD. It's got spirit, creativity, variety, all-around instrumental expertise, supercharged singing by four lead vocalists, excellent original songs (and tunes) of several types, a good selection of "cover jobs" of well-known and lesser-known songs, and a whopping 17 tracks...To me, though, what really stands out is the top-quality original songwriting and the variety shown in the song selection.

Yes, Fred's played bluegrass for the past 8 years but he harbors an abiding love of the music that prefigured bluegrass: oldtime Appalachian music, early American folk and parlor music, blues, rags, and hollers from before instruments were amplified. And he's added a great deal of original--and locally flavored--tunes and songs to an already strong repertoire which includes perennial favorites "Box Elder Bug Blues," the Hinckley Fire song "Engineer Best," and "Fred Digs Up A Hornet's Nest."

The new material features personal songs set in diverse styles. You'll hear songs set in a folk tradition like "Zumbro Valley Waltz" and "Mama Had A Baby" (which Mike Compton will be covering on his next solo tour). Fred's penned some great, get-your-body-moving fiddle tunes like "Waiting To See Your Smile" and "Wake Up CJ" as well as a number of the tongue-in-cheek stompers he's well known for such as "Walking With My Baby" and his newest "Cafe Au Lust."

Fred's showcasing his new act with a new website. Go check out www.fredkellermendo.com. You'll find his blog there, audio samples, a video montage of a show performed at the Pine Medical Senior Center in Sandstone, MN, and an ever growing number of other pages. In addition, Fred's connection with social media grows stronger every day with pages on Facebook, Reverbnation, Twitter, and probably a few more by the time you read this.

Contact Fred by phone (320-245-6799, cell 218-251-2163) or by email (fkeller@scicable.net). Shows are booking fast. He's got coffeehouse gigs, house concert gigs, recording dates, and some music camp work already lined up but Fred wants to do the work he loves as much as he can so call or write. He'll find the time.