

## Ten Reasons Neil Young Guitarist Ben Keith Was Cool

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Longtime Neil Young guitarist and collaborator **Ben Keith** has died.

The 73-year-old had been staying at Young's Woodside, Calif. ranch working on new material with Young when he passed away of a heart attack on Monday.

Young acknowledged his longtime friend during his performance on Monday night at his show in Winnipeg, dedicating the classic and fan favourite "Old Man" to him.

Rather than dwell on the sadness of this man's passing, we here at CHARTattack want to celebrate the many ways Keith was awesome.

Here are 10 reasons why Ben Keith was cool:

1. Keith was not just a guitarist. The multi-instrumentalist was also known for his skills on the piano, alto saxophone and pedal steel. In fact, Young said in director Jonathan Demme's Neil Young Trunk Show documentary that the reason he opted not to tour with all of Crazy Horse was because "I can do more variety this way because Ben plays so many instruments."

2. Keith worked as a session musician in Nashville before meeting Young, and is best known during this time for his work on Patsy Cline's "I Fall To Pieces." He played steel guitar on the track, which was Cline's first #1 hit on the country charts and her second cross-over pop hit.

3. Young and Keith met through Tim Drummond in 1971. Drummond was to play bass on Young's 1972 *Harvest* album, and convinced Young to bring Keith in to play steel guitar on the record. In a 2006 interview, Keith said in their first session together, he and the band played five songs that appeared on *Harvest* before they stopped and he introduced himself.

4. Keith's steel guitar on "Old Man," which eventually became Young's signature sound. Although Young's experimented with many different styles throughout his career (with some even calling him the "Godfather Of

Grunge" due to the downtuned sounds on 1989's *Freedom* and the grungy sounds of "Hey Hey, My My (Into The Black)"), most people know him for the sound on *Harvest*, which Keith helped create.

5. *Harvest* was not the only classic Young album on which Keith appeared. He also performed on *On The Beach* and *Tonight's The Night*, along with *Comes A Time*, *Prairie Wind* and *Chrome Dreams II*. He's also played on such well-known Young standards as "Heart Of Gold," "Word On A String" and "Rockin' In The Free World." Young and Keith's collaboration spanned more than 40 years.

6. Keith was more than just a musician; he produced Jewel's diamond-selling *Pieces Of You*, which is one of the best-selling albums of all time.

7. Keith also toured and recorded with Pegi Young, Neil Young's wife, and did so up until earlier this year.

8. Ringo Starr, The Band, Emmylou Harris, Ian & Sylvia, Waylon Jennings and Warren Zevon are also among those who benefited from Keith's musical skills in the studio.

9. Keith released two solo albums, one of which was a set of Christmas songs featuring guest appearances from the likes of Johnny Cash and J.J. Cale.

10. You might also recognize Keith as Grandpa Green from Young's *Greendale*. He also appears in Demme's *Heart Of Gold* documentary, on which he also served as music director.