

NewMusicBox.Org (October 2000) by Jennifer Undercofler

[Keith Knight](#) is a recording artist, performer, and composer. Knight plays "[fingerstyle](#)" [acoustic guitar](#) and [mandolin](#), and he specializes in [Appalachian](#), [Folk](#), and Blues ([Delta/Ragtime](#)) music. Knight was named one of the "Top Ten Best" at the [Austin Music Awards](#) in 1993. In 1996, he established Bear Claw Music, a private, independent record label in Charleston. Bear Claw released Knight's solo album [Hammer Thru the Silence](#) in 1998 to rave reviews. He has been included in the [North Carolina Arts Council's](#) Touring Artist Directory and in the South Carolina Arts Commission's Artist Roster.

Knight is using the grant money to fund his next recording project, a follow-up album to *Hammer thru the Silence* that will be released on Bear Claw. Knight plays finger-style acoustic guitar, meaning that he doesn't use a pick or plectrum, and rarely strums. He started out as a [rock musician](#), first becoming interested in acoustic guitar when he heard the bluegrass player [Bill Monroe](#). He also cites [Leo Kottke](#), [Ry Cooder](#), and [John Fahey](#) as influences. Lately Knight has been listening to more and more music from the 1920s and 30s, particularly the ragtime of [Blind Blake](#) and the [Delta blues](#) of [Charlie Patton](#). Knight emulates the ability of these players to "make the instrument sing." He also strives for the "raw, visceral feeling" that Patton evoked in his songs.

Knight points out that the audience for acoustic guitar music, quite large in the early 1970s, has all but dried up. He feels that the SC Arts Fellowship represents a tremendous validation of his work. "An artist in my position is sort of an [underdog](#)," he explained. "You specialize yourself into oblivion, and there are a lot of times when you feel like what you're doing is not going to amount to much. When you get recognition [in the form] of a fellowship, it really charges your [batteries](#)." The grant, he explained, is a sign that he is "doing something right."

The CD will go into production in approximately two months, and will take four or five months to finish. Knight likes to plan his albums according to a "driving concept," putting thought into both the material and its ordering in order to arrive at a finished product that "keeps the listener hooked." He confessed that he couldn't yet articulate the concept of the album, but alluded to [Celtic](#), deep blues, and Appalachian strains in the songs he has sketched out.



Keith Knight
photo by Lauren Preller
Chambers