

# Music That Matters

By Jeff O'Kelley

For this month's column, I decided to profile a local boy done good! David Muse grew up in the Tampa area and got his musical feet wet playing local clubs as a teenager. As a multi-talented musician, he was able to move on up the ladder of success to become an original member of the 70's supergroup Firefall, playing flute, sax and keyboards. David helped craft the unique Firefall sound that produced gold and platinum albums, as well as numerous chart-topping singles. This success took them around the world on tours with acts such as Leon and Mary Russell, The Doobie Brothers, The Band (on their final tour before making their farewell documentary movie, 'The Last Waltz'), Fleetwood Mac during their Rumors Tour, Chicago, The Marshall Tucker Band, The Beach Boys and Lynyrd Skynyrd (frequently playing with them right up to Skynyrd's terrible plane crash). As often happens to a lot of great bands, the early 80's witnessed the unfortunate demise of the original band. After the breakup, David was in high demand and played in several national touring bands, eventually landing a permanent spot on the roster of southern-rock icon, The Marshall Tucker Band.

David still lives in the area and recently sat down to discuss his career. The following is from that interview.

## When did you know that you wanted to be a musician?

*"I started when I was real young, living in Tarpon Springs. My mom bought me a toy clarinet for Christmas and it was one of those things that I was drawn to and I just couldn't put it down. For a lot of years, we would go to my grandmother's house and she had a piano that I would get up and bang on, so I guess that I had it in my blood pretty early. As far as the idea of becoming a musician, I never really thought about it, I just sort of fell into it."*

## Didn't you go to college to study music?

*"Yeah, I went to St. Petersburg Junior College for a couple of years and was going to be a high school band director. I went back to my old junior high school and realized that I couldn't do this because you just couldn't control the kids. They were all too rowdy!"*

*I did have a band in college that actually got a record deal with a label in New York. Unfortunately, they wanted us to play a song that had the same chord structure as 'Puff, The Magic Dragon', so that didn't last long."*

## So what happened after college?

*"After a brief trip to California, I came back to Florida and*

*joined a band called 'Too Much Boogie'. We toured around the southeast and northeast, playing clubs for two weeks at a stretch and then move on. We were clearing \$200-\$300 per week each and thought we were rich. It got a little old after a while, but I got some good experience. After that, I moved to Atlanta and played in a band in the original Underground Atlanta."*

## How did you hook up with the guys in Firefall?

*"I got a call from my buddy Rick Roberts that I played with during my early days in Florida. So, I left Atlanta for Colorado and joined the band. They had just got their first record deal and I was there from the beginning. I went from playing clubs in Atlanta, to a couple of months later recording an album in Miami and then on the road with Fleetwood Mac."*

## Do you have any favorite memories from that era?

*"Probably the first time that we played with The Doobie Brothers, they asked us to come up and do 'Listen To The Music' for an encore. That was quite exciting, you know, it's like I've been playing that song for years in clubs and all of the sudden I'm up with The Doobie Brothers singing it. I thought, yeah this will work."*

*There have been some others. We played Carnegie Hall with Roy Buchanan and we were like the second or third real rock act to play there. We really felt out of place. You walk the halls and see pictures of all these classical artists that have played there and you think what am I doing here?"*

## How did you end up with The Marshall Tucker Band?

*"Well, you know like I said, when I was in Firefall we played with lots of different people and Marshall Tucker happened to be one them. As a matter of fact, the first time that they played Madison Square Garden in New York, we split the bill with them. Jerry Eubanks basically played the same instruments that I did and when it came to the point in time that he wasn't going to be in the band anymore, I got a call from Doug Gray asking if I wanted to step in. It kind of worked out and I've been with them off and on for the last eight years."*

## What about the future?

*"Well, we'll see what the future holds. I've got some solo projects, a jazz CD and another project that I call 'Space Music'. I did one of those way back in the eighties and I'm doing another one now and trying to get it finished. But being the procrastinator that I am, and being on the road as much as I am, I'm only about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through it. Hopefully I'll finish it up this winter."*

To read more about David or his solo projects, check out his website at [www.davidmuse.com](http://www.davidmuse.com).