

Kevin Greaves

25 Feb 1956 - 30 Dec 2023

Glen Moffatt

Kevin Geoffrey Greaves was born in Weymouth, Auckland on February 25th 1956, the fourth child among Gladys and Rusty Greaves 14 offspring; Bruce, Tony, Colin, Graeme, Michelle, Wayne, Peter, Allan, Corena, Reon, Ngaire, Lex and David. Kevin developed a passion for the guitar at the age of four.



The growing Greaves family found themselves captivated by their parents' extensive record collection which numbered hundreds and included the likes of Hank Williams, Webb Pierce, Lefty Frizzell, Johnny Cash and numerous *Grand Ole Opry* compilations. The records, well-loved and often handled by tiny, dirty hands, didn't always remain in pristine condition due to frequent use. One early public performance by five-year-old Kevin involved him repeatedly delivering a line, mimicking the family record player's track jumping.

Regular attendees at the *Auckland Country Music Club* in the *Mt Roskill War Memorial Hall*, the family frequently participated alongside magician Jon Zealando and *Crunchy the Clown*, entertaining the orphans' Christmas party atop the *Farmer's* building on Hobson Street.

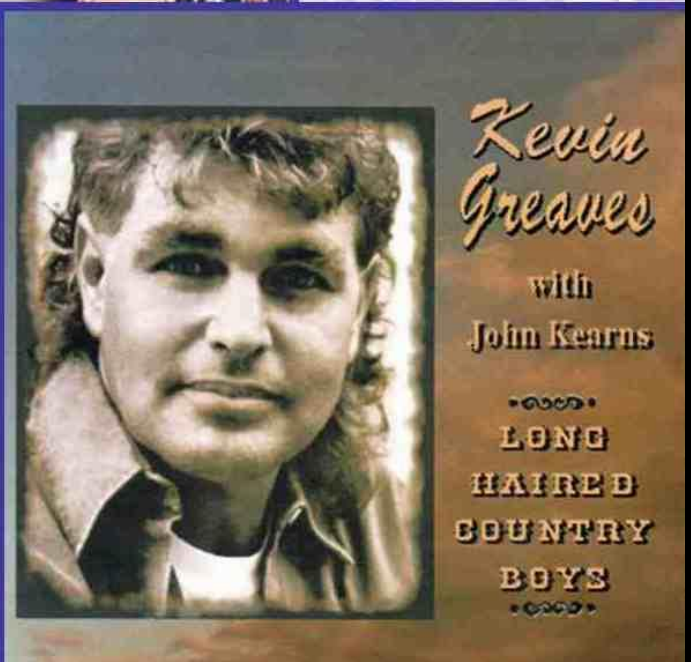
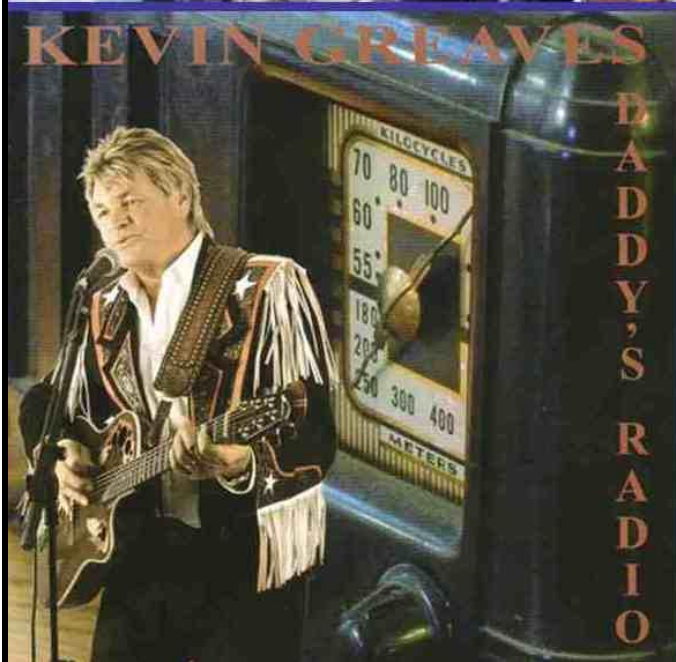
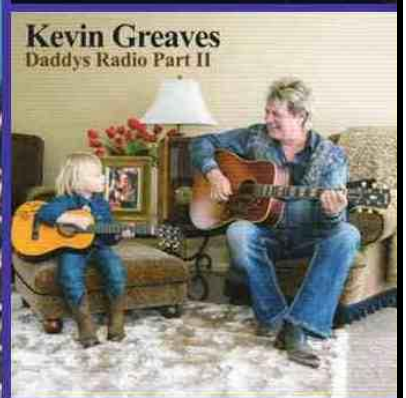
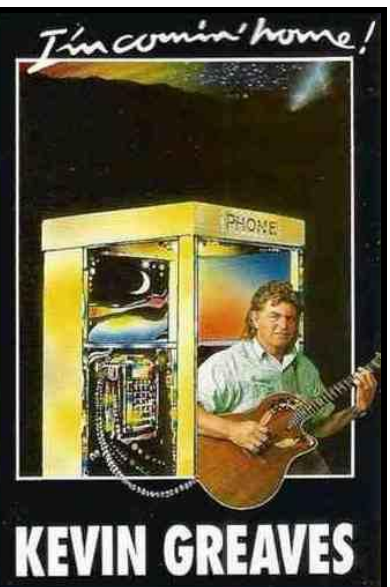
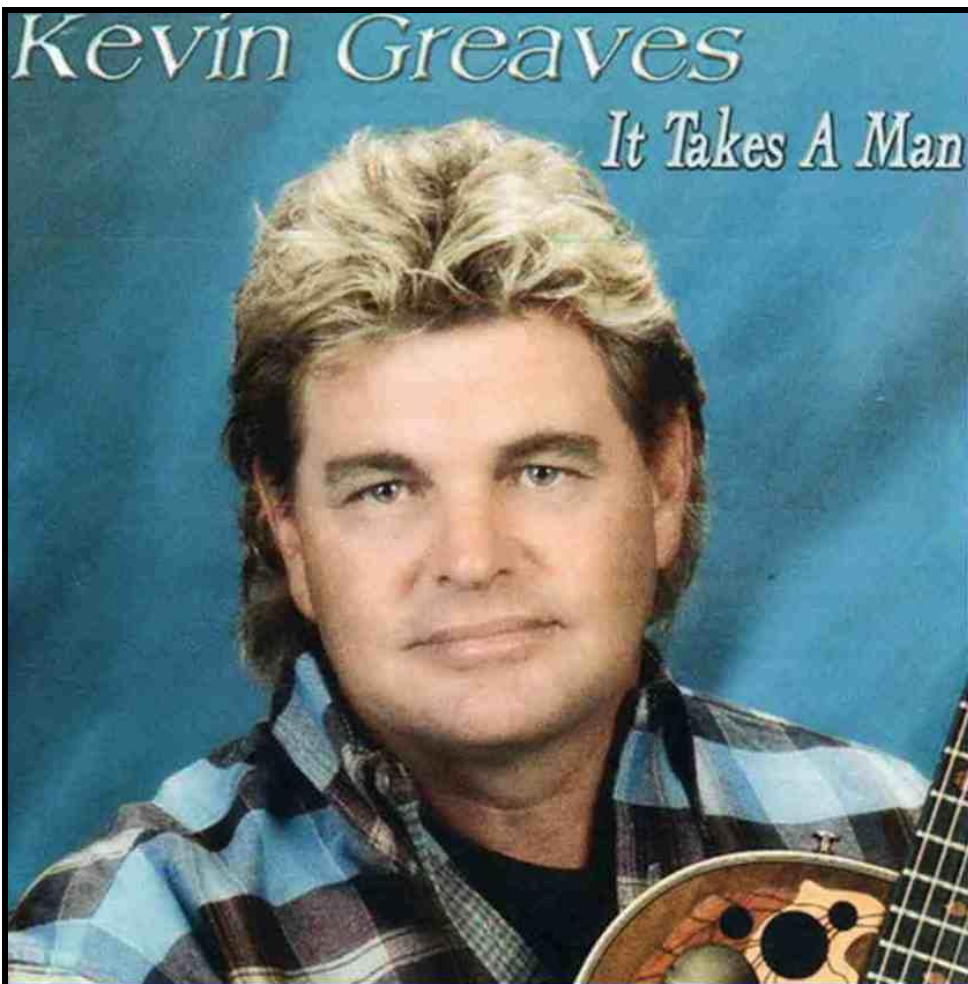


In his teenage years he joined his dad's Christmas show tour, gracing the sound shells of the North Island, and providing support for Tennessee Ernie Ford at the *Auckland Town Hall*. In 1975 Kevin and his sister Michelle performed on the *Grand Ole Opry's International Show* in the *Ryman Auditorium* in Nashville with their father, who sat on the board of the *Country Music Association*. Michelle was 8 years old and Kevin was 19. They had been invited by Tex Ritter's wife Mary Ritter and Hank Snow.

When Rusty Greaves's brother John needed a bass player for his popular dance band, Rusty confidently declared, 'Kevin can play bass,' even though he couldn't. Kevin managed to bluff his way through, with his brother Bruce already in the band. Earning \$25 a night was a significant revelation for Kevin considering the average weekly wage was \$57 at the time.

Shortly afterward, Kevin took on the role of guitarist and musical director for Lou Clauson. During talent quests where Clauson needed a backing band Kevin enlisted his brothers Alan on bass and Peter on drums. The band was playfully named *Good Grief* by Clauson.

Kevin expanded his musical horizons into pop and rock'n'roll while subbing for singer Dave Cowell at solo gigs. Subsequently he embarked on a solo career, performing from Mondays to Saturdays at venues such as the *Potter's Wheel* and the *Portage Trust*.



Over the next 14 years he performed seven nights a week. This included seven years at the *Tiara Restaurant* in Royal Oak and another seven years at the *Airport Inn, Gateway Lodge* in Manukau and the *Sorrento* on One Tree Hill. Even when Kevin broke his arm while playing basketball, he continued playing the guitar while in a cast. This unique style persisted even after the cast was removed.

In 1992 Kevin released a cassette titled *I'm Coming Home*, recorded in a small studio situated behind Peter Van Gent's Greenlane music store. It featured Kevin's restaurant band which included his sister Michelle on backing vocals, Chris Davis on drums, and Tony Cowell on guitar. The cassette served as a platform for showcasing the songs Kevin had collaborated on with Davis and Cowell.

In the audience for one of his *Airport Inn* gigs was Nashville jingle writer Sue Williams. She and Kevin got to talking and the next day Kevin added melodies to a collection of Williams' lyrics. A few weeks later Kevin was woken by a call from *Playback Records* boss Jack Gale in Nashville suggesting he, 'come to Nashville and make a record'. Williams used to work for Gale, whose record company roster included former Nashville hit makers Jeannie C Riley (*Harper Valley PTA*), Sammi Smith (*Help Me Make It Through The Night*) and Grand Ole Opry artists Del Reeves (*Girl On The Billboard*).



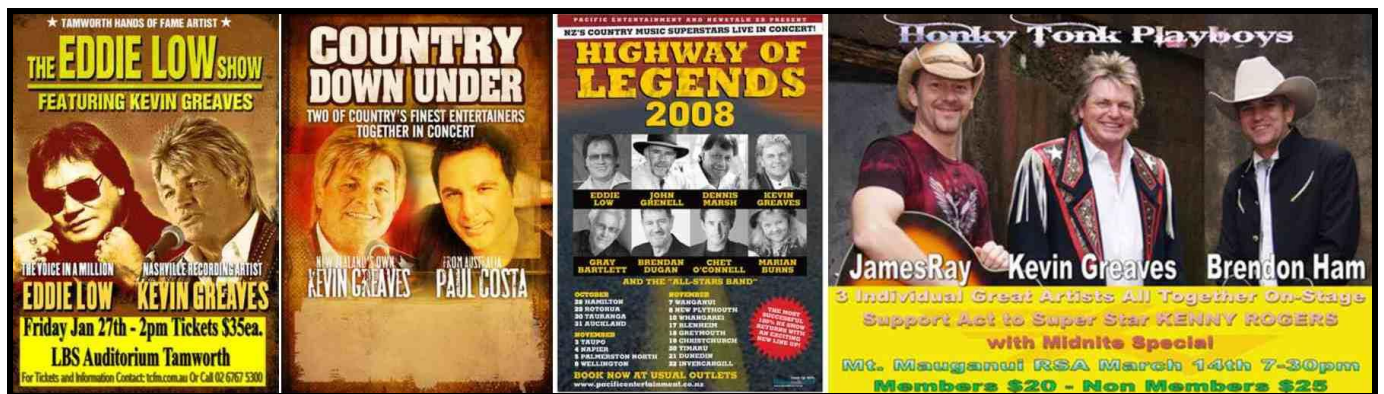
Kevin flew to Nashville in 1993 when he was offered a recording deal with Jack Gale at *Playback Records* and he recorded his first Nashville album called *I'm Not Scared of Women*. The title track reached number 12 on the *Independent Country Music Charts*. He then released a second single *Hurtin' to the Bone* which went to No 4.

His resonant baritone, verging on bass, caught the attention of Nashville's record executives, however at age 37 Kevin was considered too old and his relative obscurity prevented them from committing to a record deal. Despite this setback he opened for artists such as Vern Gosdin, Charlie Walker, and *Sun Records* icon Carl Perkins. Kevin also performed at various clubs and county fairs across the southern states accompanied by his Nashville band.

The next year he gained his green card and moved to Nashville permanently. Kevin found a home base in Virginia. Engaging in construction work off the books he started performing on Friday nights at the *Holiday Inn* in Sterling, earning a decent income through tips.

To cater to American audiences Kevin adjusted the between-songs banter that had been so well-received in Auckland. One night in Nashville during the annual *Fan Fair* Kevin jammed at Tom LeGarde's *Hall Of Fame Lounge*. LeGarde was impressed and invited Kevin to regularly perform there, first on Sundays and then all week at the bar as well as two or three shows a day in his *Country Music Theatre*.

Many of the city's stars met at the bar including the *Bellamy Brothers*, Tanya Tucker and *The Dixie Chicks*. They would end up sitting in with Kevin. After the LeGardes' lease expired in 2001 Kevin worked in downtown Nashville venues like *Tootsie's*, *Robert's Western World*, and *Legends Corner*.



Kevin joined *Gosnell Music Group* as a songwriter and song plugger. He also toured extensively with country star Freddie Hart, renowned for the hit song *Easy Loving*. While in Nashville Kevin recorded two albums; *Over the Storm* and *Long Haired Country Boys*. The latter was a collaboration with multi-instrumentalist John Kearns who Kevin later brought to New Zealand to tour.

Kevin recorded an unreleased R-rated comedy album and released *It Takes a Man* with the title track dedicated to his adult son Kayton, named after Hank Snow's steel player Kayton Roberts. The last 18 months in the United States were spent in California where Bob Gosnell was involved in the opening of Native American casinos. Kevin did opening spots at the 20,000-capacity *Corrs Amphitheatre* in Chula Vista, just south of San Diego.



Returning to New Zealand for his son Kayton's wedding in 2006, Kevin played some shows and realised that home was where he wanted to be. Two years later he returned to Auckland. In 2011 he relocated to Hamilton and took residencies at the *Hamilton Casino* and the *Working Mans Club*, featuring a rotating lineup of guests each week to keep performances fresh.

In recent years Kevin drew inspiration from his parents' record collection to release *Daddy's Radio* (2014) and *Daddy's Radio Part II* (2015) featuring songs co-written with Jodi Vaughan for his two sons as well as classic tunes such as *Saginaw Michigan*, *Sea Of Heartbreak*, and his father's beloved song *Anna*. The band tracks for both albums were recorded in Nashville with the vocals laid down at Peter Van Gent's *South Auckland Studios*.



His star was unveiled on the *Orewa Walk of Fame* on 26 June 2022. The *VAC* September 2023 Showcase was a celebration of Kevin's 50 years in showbiz with his family, including son Lucas, Jodi Vaughan, Kylie Austin, Keith Pereira and Dan Cosgrove.



He received a *VAC Scroll of Honour* in 1999, the 2007 *Rielly Comedy Award*, the *Agnew Award* and *Top Male Vocal Artist* in 2010 and the *Benny* in 2017. His father Rusty received the *Benny Award* in 1976 plus a *Scroll of Honour* in 1994 and life membership in 1996. Between 2008 and 2011 Kevin sat on the *VAC* Committee.

In 1995 he won the *New Zealand Country Music Best Album of the Year* at the *Tui Awards* with *I'm Not Scared Of Women* while Kevin himself won the best male vocalist award. He was also the winner of *Best Overseas Artist* at the *Golden Mic Awards* in Nashville, Tennessee.

In 2021 Kevin was diagnosed with colon cancer which had also metastasized to his liver and lymph nodes. The *VAC* supported him with a grant from our *Benevolent Fund*. Kevin passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on the 30th of December 2023. Husband of Pandora and father of Kayton and Lukas.