

Keith Green Music and Message Aimed at New Generation

Nearly three decades after Christian rock pioneer Keith Green died in a plane crash, his widow hopes his music and “no compromise” message will inspire a new generation to live revolutionary lives of faith.

On Wednesday, the 28th anniversary of his death, Melody Green is hosting a live webcast

featuring preaching and music clips from the piano-pumping powerhouse, who helped supercharge the Jesus movement with his buoyant music and lyrics. Churches nationwide are expected to participate in the event, which begins at 7:30 p.m. Eastern.

Often described as a fiery young prophet, Green was known for inspiring people to go “bananas for Jesus” and challenging lukewarm Christians to repent of their hypocrisy.

“We are using this day as a ‘divine excuse’ for the Lord to grip the hearts of believers of all ages, everywhere, in all denominations. And hopefully bring many prodigals home, too,” said Melody Green, an author, songwriter and speaker who now leads Last Days Ministries out of Kansas City, Mo.

“We want it to motivate, challenge and inspire all who watch to a deeper walk with Jesus,” she added.

The webcast event is just one of the many ways Green is re-introducing her husband’s music and message to contemporary audiences. A film project about the Greens’ love story and radical spiritual journey is expected to release in theaters next year.

Mike Leahy, who has made more than 25 films including *The Prophecy* with Christopher Walken and the critically acclaimed

Infinity directed by Matthew Broderick, said he feels compelled to make a film that speaks to a “generation longing to see the authentic.”

“Keith was a fascinating mix of prophet, preacher and performer,” said Craig Detweiler, the director of the Center for Entertainment, Media and Culture at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. “He could command people’s attention, not unlike Bono from U2. He moved audiences with his uncompromised music and message. I think this film will capture the current generation’s attention.”

Many of today’s contemporary Christian artists already count Green among their influences. Musicians such as Jason Upton, Switchfoot, Kutless, Delirious, Chris Tomlin and Michael W. Smith say they were inspired by his heart for the poor and lost, that he gave away his last two albums for whatever people could afford and lived what he was preaching by taking care of broken people and bringing them into his home.

“Growing up and reading *No Compromise: The Life Story of Keith Green*, I decided I wanted to have his standards and ideals as I entered music ministry,” said worship leader Vicky Beeching. “A movie on his life would ignite many more hearts to love Jesus with abandon. Young people desperately need to know his story and be impacted by his testimony.”

The son of a big-band singer and math teacher, Green was born in Sheepshead Bay, N.Y., but his family soon moved to the San Fernando Valley in Southern California, where his grandfather taught him to play piano. At age 11, he made his first album. It had some success, but big breakthrough he hoped for did not materialize.

In his teenage years, his search for “spiritual truth” led him through Buddhism, astral projection and eastern mysticism. He met Melody in 1973. They got married a year later and landed jobs as staff songwriters at CBS.Â

Their journey eventually led to Jesus, and they accepted Christ in 1975. Sparrow Records offered Green a record deal in 1977. The album, *For Him Who Has Ears to Hear*, soon became the biggest debut album in the history of Christian recording.

His second album in 1978, *No Compromise*, also went to the top of the charts. Looking for a more central location, the couple relocated their ministry in 1979 to a 140-acre ranch in Lindale, Texas.

Green passionately believed his music was his ministry and rented his own venues to do free concerts so people without money would not be turned away. He also negotiated a release from his contract at Sparrow and decided to give his albums away for whatever people could afford, even for free.

The first one was 1980's *So You Want to Go Back to Egypt*, which featured a guest appearance by Bob Dylan. He also offered his final album, *Songs for the Shepherd*, in the same way.

On July 28, 1982, a couple with six children stopped by the ranch for a visit. Green asked their pilot to take them up in their leased airplane for a bird's-eye view of the area. Shortly after takeoff, the airplane crashed, killing all 12 people, including Green, 28, and two of his children, 3-year-old Josiah and 2-year-old Bethany.

Melody was at home with 1-year-old Rebekah and six weeks pregnant with their fourth child, Rachel. Rebekah LeBeau, who had two of her songs used on MTV's *The Hills* and is working on her debut album, said her dad was "honest and real."

"I think that's why his music has had such a lasting impression," said LeBeau, who lives in Hollywood, Calif. "Whether you agree with his message or not, you know for sure that this man was totally consumed by his love for God and his dedication to helping people-and you believe him."

Last Days Ministries recently released *The Live Experience* DVD and CD of Green's concerts. Melody Green keeps their controversial articles from *The Last Days Newsletter* on the website.