

Ponte Vedra based bluesman Kevin Marcus Dillon rocked the Blues Festival as George's Music's featured artist

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the recorder

The Springing the Blues Festival celebrated its 20th anniversary last weekend. The long running free music festival has been recognized by local and national publications and continues to draw well known performers. This year's lineup was no exception and featured more than 20 acts on two stages at the Seawalk Pavillion.

Each year the festival sponsor, George's Music, selects an artist to feature on the west stage. This year's artist was Kevin Marcus Dillon, a Ponte Vedra resident. With a black hat and dark sunglasses Dillon with his classic Fender guitar and the swagger of a seasoned performer took to the stage and wowed the audience with live renditions of tracks from his latest album "Where I Was Born".

Dillon who was born in Detroit and grew up during the height of the Motown era was immersed in the music of Motown greats such as the Temptations, the Supremes and Marvin Gaye.

This helped form Dillon's early musical foundation and as an adolescent he began to play guitar and banjo. At the age of 13 he picked up his first electric guitar.

"After I heard Jimmy Reed and Jimi Hendrix that was it, I got my 1962 Fender Stratocaster and I am still playing the same guitar today," said Dillon. "We combine R&B, Blues and Gospel and throw it all into the mix. Ry Cooder and Mavis Staples are a couple of my major musical influences."

Along with his 62 Strat, Dillon carries onto the stage a host of other vintage guitars and an original 1968 Marshall Tube amplifier, an assortment that musicians and guitar aficionados can appreciate.

Dillon, who resides in Sawgrass, splits his time between his Ponte Vedra home and a home in Toronto spending seven months of the year enjoying beach life in Ponte Vedra when he is not touring.

"We try to get the best of both worlds. Up north they have their music festivals in the summer and here they have them in the winter and spring."

Dillon who writes, arranges and produces his own music has participated in the evolution of the local live music scene on the First Coast for the last 15 years.

"There has been growing support for local musicians. I find that the music scene is alive and well and getting better all the time. Locally I have played at the Amphitheater in St. Augustine and Mojo's Kitchen. I do play solo events and am hoping to play in the Beaches Unplugged Series. I am excited about the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall opening; I look forward to playing there as well."

Dillon is also happy to see the spread of local open-mic nights and events like the Beaches Unplugged Series.

"The open-mics and the Unplugged Series are giving local musicians the opportunity to perform their original work. Songwriters and musicians need a place to express themselves and the scene here is growing. The more that people support the original music scene here will help set this area apart from other places in the south. This area has a great fledgling original art and music market that deserves to be seen and heard. The whole art and music scene here is really exploding."

Dillon next local scheduled appearance will be at the 22nd Annual Blue Crab Festival in Palatka Memorial Day weekend. For more information visit www.kevinmarcusdillon.com



Kevin Marcus Dillon with his classic Fender Stratocaster.

Photos by jesse s. jones



Kevin Marcus Dillon (center) performed with Ms. Brittany Westcott, Corliss Smith, drummer Don Ringhofer and bassist Steve Switkin.



Crowds cover the Seawalk Pavillion during the Springing the Blues Festival.



Offering activities for all ages the Springing the Blues Festival is more than just great music.

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