

Keith "Keef" Hartley (8 April 1944 – 26 November 2011) was an English drummer and bandleader. He fronted his own eponymous band, known as the Keef Hartley Band or the Keef Hartley Big Band, and played at Woodstock. He was later a member of Dog Soldier, and variously worked with Rory Storm, The Artwoods and John Mayall.

Keith Hartley was born in Preston, Lancashire. He studied drumming under Lloyd Ryan, who also taught Phil Collins the drum rudiments. His career began as the replacement for Ringo Starr as a drummer for Rory Storm and the Hurricanes, a Liverpool-based band. Subsequently he played and recorded with The Artwoods, then achieved some notability as John Mayall's drummer (including his role as the only musician, other than Mayall, to play on Mayall's 1967 "solo" record *The Blues Alone*). He then formed The Keef Hartley (Big) Band, mixing elements of jazz, blues, and rock and roll; the group played at Woodstock in 1969. However, the band was the only artist that played at the festival whose set was never included on any officially released album, nor on the soundtrack of the film.

They released five albums, including *Halfbreed* and *The Battle of North West Six* (characterised by a reviewer for the *Vancouver Sun* as "an amazing display of virtuosity").

Halfbreed's opening track "Hearts And Flowers" has the voice of Mayall on the telephone officially sacking Hartley, while the closing track "Sacked" has Hartley dismissing Mayall! The music in-between features some of the best ever late 60s jazz-influenced blues, and the album remains an undiscovered classic. The band for the first album comprised: Miller Anderson, guitar and vocals, the late Gary Thain (b. New Zealand d. 19 March 1976; bass), later with Uriah Heep; Peter Dines (organ) and Spit James (guitar). Later members to join Hartley's fluid lineup included Mick Weaver (aka Wynder K. Frog) organ, Henry Lowther (b. 11 July 1941, Leicester, England; trumpet/violin), Jimmy Jewell (saxophone), Johnny Almond (flute), Jon Hiseman and Harry Beckett. Hartley, often dressed as an American Indian sometimes in full head-dress and war-paint, was a popular attraction on the small club scene. His was one of the few British bands to play the Woodstock Festival, where his critics compared him favourably with Blood Sweat And Tears. "The Battle Of NW6" in 1969 further enhanced his club reputation, although chart success still eluded him. By the time of the third album both Lowther and Jewell had departed, although Hartley always maintained that his band was like a jazz band, in that musicians would come and go and be free to play with other aggregations.

After that Hartley released a 'solo' album (*Lancashire Hustler*, 1973) and then he formed Dog Soldier with Miller Anderson (guitar), Paul Bliss (bass), Derek Griffiths (guitar) and Mel Simpson (keyboards). They released an eponymous album in 1975, which had a remastered release in early 2011 on CD on the Esoteric label.

In 2007, Hartley released a ghostwritten autobiography, *Halfbreed (A Rock and Roll Journey That Happened Against All the Odds)*. Hartley wrote about his life growing up in Preston, and his career as a drummer and bandleader, including the Keef Hartley Band's appearance at Woodstock.

Hartley died on 26 November 2011, aged 67, at Royal Preston Hospital in Preston.