

State of balance

Ian Moore discusses his desire for the art of balancing energy, inspiration, and his music
by Jackie Don Loe

AS THE STORY IS BEING WRITTEN THE tale is being told. The artist invites the muse down for a visit and then the magic happens. Words become lyrics and notes become melodies, simple ideas become major themes and a song is born. One task of a songwriter is to find a way to carry them on to a new generation for study and discovery.

Some people can write songs while others can only sing them. Some people perform songs in lonely rooms with sparse awareness while others fashion anthems of a movement that remain in our hearts for a lifetime.

After thirty years in the music business Ian Moore has figured out a way to do all these things and to stay relevant without compromise or comparison. He is in the middle of a nationwide tour supporting his latest release *Toronto* following *Strange Days* and *The Noble Art*. Bursting on the scene at nineteen as a hot shot guitarist and soulful singer out of Austin in the early '90s, he has evolved into a master singer/songwriter and storyteller residing in Seattle.

Yet he still can burn the guitar up with precision, prowess and power. Success came early, opening for the Rolling Stones, ZZ Top, and Bob Dylan but the sudden fame and fortune did not dissuade his vision. His Texas roots still define his diversified approach to music and life. He is still buzzing like a bee, the sizzle is still steaming and the groove ship is still sailing. It is a beautiful thing when your a'role to take charge of your own career, follow your heart and find new paths to creativity that otherwise would have never been found. They say a rolling stone gathers no moss if it rolls hard enough, it will never fade away, it just keeps on rocking.

Energy

IAN'S ABILITY TO SWAY THE audience's mood and to make them feel his music is a gift many musicians fail to attend to, or even have the essence to accomplish, his soul is on display and he really cares about the crowd. "Yeah, it's my job!" says Ian. "It's all about perspective and growing and seeing things from a new angle." Sure you can turn up the amps and get loud, give a great show, but with Ian it is much more than just showing up and playing the gig. He exclaims, "I want to see that person's soul and feeling the emotion of it all." That is the best part of the show and it is all about how the performer feels. "Sometimes I'm

feeling a little more sultry and funky and slow. Sometimes I want to rock it out!"

With 14 records to choose from, and a wide variety of music the set lists never get boring. "We are pretty damn good most nights."

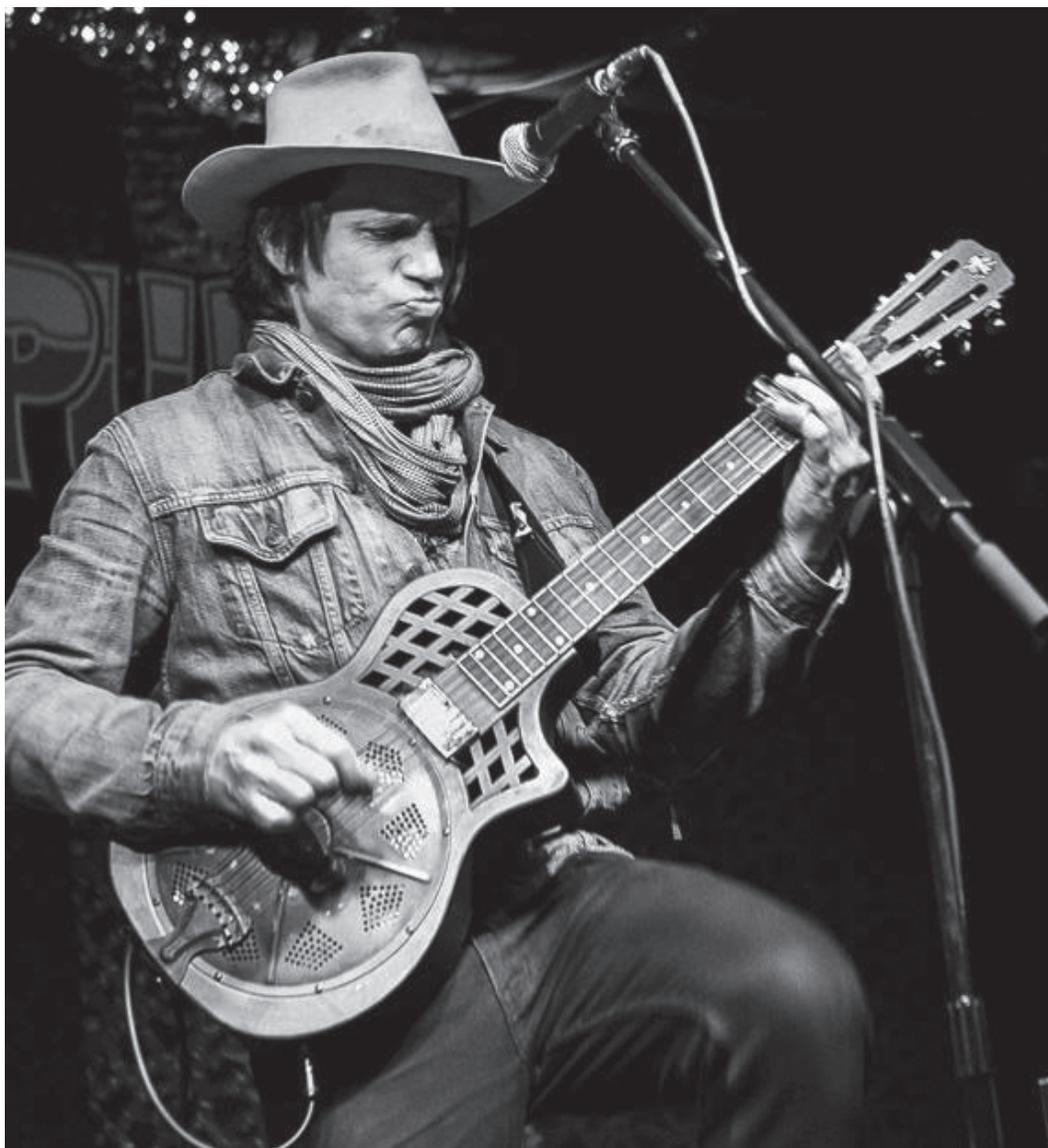
Playing well, connecting to the crowd and leaving space for the magic to happen is imperative to Ian. It is important for the band to be together before the show and to fine tune the little things that can make a big difference. The inclusion of the audience to feel special is also a secret truth, Ian states, "Creating an environment where everybody in the room feels like they are in the inside circle." That is very important yet some crowds need further validation, "You might not like everything I do and you might even be mad at me at times. But one thing you're going to know is that I am not a puppet. You know that my soul is into it, I'm not phoning it in, I'm showing up trying to do something with soul, because I care about my audience."

Commanding the energy of the room and moving it can be tricky, "If people come to the show and don't hear the songs they know, even if it's amazing, it's not really going to work." It can be like pushing a boulder up a hill and the room isn't budging, "But you have to give yourself the best chance for success." When the crowd is on your side dancing and singing along to every word of your songs then you have created a space of joy and the few songs that they have never heard before may be their new favorite song. Ian realizes his blessings, "I love the fact that people have supported me and believed in my music and I don't take that for granted."

Inspiration

"EVERY SINGLE DAY THAT WE live, is an opportunity for inspiration and change," Ian Moore told me.

As a kid, Ian was raised on Soul and Blues music, his Dad would take him see Bobby "Blue" Bland and he must of seen Doug Sahm at least 400 times before he began to play the guitar. Six-



He was inducted as a Buddy Texas Tornado in 1991: Ian Moore

ties pop and the Beatles were in rotation along with the local Austin scene; soaking up the vibes and hanging with Blues royalty such as Derek O'Brian, Denny Freeman, the Vaughan brothers, Doyle Bramhall, and Bugs Henderson, he quickly gained prominence and respect. After touring with Joe Ely, it opened Ian's ears up to other artists such as Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock, Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle, Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt. Songwriters don't care about how fast you can play cool riffs on the guitar, it is all about the song and the story you tell.

So when he met Bob Dylan it totally turned his career on its head, but he was ready. "The real heavy musicians see the bigger picture of the lineage of the way we pass on that conversation, and each generation is part of a longer thread."

All those years of practice paid off and it was time to grow, "I always had a vision with my records" says Ian. "I always ap-

proached music as a legacy, it is my birthright." To connect with musicians from Willie Nelson to Roky Erickson and continue that Texas tradition. From the brilliance of recreating a Hound Dog Taylor tune or practicing the minutia of a Freddie King bend or how Otis Rush would make the guitar sound like a crying woman, it was always the guitar leading the way.

Not just the guitar solos but rhythm guitar too, Ian told me that he was a big fan of Al Green's guitar player Mabon "Teenie" Hodges, "I've learned so many Teenie Hodges guitar parts in my life; a lot of my rhythm playing is based on his playing." Ian also takes a lot of influence from Jimi Hendrix and not necessarily from his guitar playing style but just to pick up the guitar and make it happen.

Ian has been studying music his whole life, but at times feels like a beginner. "The journey of music is the awesome part, the best thing is when you find something that blows your mind, that's

what makes life worth living." He is not offended if people have not heard of him, "That's my favorite thing in the world, you might become one of my biggest fans." People that grew up with his music are now bringing their kids and a new generation is becoming *satisfied* and finding new music.

Music

IAN'S NEW RECORD *Toronto* will be released on May 25, and could be an instant mini greatest hits! He nails the feel of the songs in a high fashion of pop, rock and soul and effortlessly blends clever songwriting skills and hot guitar riffs into one. Ian imagines people getting into their car and turning up the music, a quintessential American experience.

"I have a radio station in my head" says Ian. He crafts his music to fit the lyrics and by framing up lyrics inside a sonic structure it gives the song more meaning. With a big picture concept, the theme will shape the lyrical con-

tent and drive the melody. Songs such as "Satellite," "You Gotta Know," and "Rock and Roll" totally rock and capture the '70s radio sound. "Lords of the Levee" has a political twist to it and Ian says, "It's about righteousness and it is important to know who you are and where you come from, but you should never let that get in front of what is right. It's one of my favorite songs that I've ever written, I feel so happy when I sing it." The new record captures Ian in fine form, he is at the top of his game yet he states, "I got a lot more left to do exploring a lot of new things. I've been playing slide a lot and alternative tunings which is bringing out different kinds of music."

Balance

THERE ARE SO many layers of things going on in Ian's career these days that it is basically a never ending flow of creativity. Between tours, songwriting workshops, and recording sessions, he runs a non-profit organization called SMASH that helps local musicians attain affordable health care. His hobbies include bee keeping, cooking, and restoring boats and family time is very important to him.

"I love the guitar and that world, but it is really important for my own sanity to have balance to that, something rooted in the earth. I'm trying to be powerful, I want to show up and play the guitar and sing from a real deep place and in order to do that I got to get out of the hustle and out of the party." After thirty years it is still fun for Ian Moore and the enthusiasm and love for music has not dwindled a bit. He tells the young musicians, "You can be whatever you want to be, you just have to know what it is and you have to be consistent with that. Every path is great, just know what you want to be."

Ian keeps the tradition of music while constantly pushing new boundaries, "I just want to provide something that is going to hit people where they are going to hear it, be open to it, be cool to them and they are going to dig it."