



IT'S COCO TIME!

US blues star Coco Montoya has eight studio albums to his name and a reputation for taking no prisoners on stage, with a blistering guitar style and incendiary vocals to match. He comes across as a man full of self confidence.

But insecurities about his live playing have delayed him making a live album. Until now. The latest in the Ruf Records' series "Songs From The Road," Coco Montoya's double live album is a mighty offering. With Jim Gaines producing, and a crack band by his side, Coco Montoya had absolutely no reason to fear the end results.

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There are 14 songs here which capture that "anything could happen" excitement of a Coco Montoya gig. Recorded on dates in August 2012 and August 2013 at the Triple Door venue in Seattle, Coco revealed that this was not always the plan. "We had already recorded in another place and that didn't work out. We went in there for two nights and it just didn't gel. As a band, it wasn't working."

"That was atrocious because we thought we were going in there to nail it, but it just turned out to be an utter disaster. On top of that, they tried to video tape it and that didn't work either."

"You can't look good and like you are having fun if you are struggling. Thank God for the Triple Door in Seattle; we have always felt comfortable there and played well there." Why such a long wait for a live album? "I have avoided this all these years, as I was just too

self conscious about my live playing. My live show is definitely not perfection. The whole thing for us, was to capture a magic time, where everything is clicking and everything is working."

"It's like any musician, well maybe not any musician, some have no insecurities like I do... I avoided it for many, many years, but people were always asking for it. Basically, I suppose everyone was telling me I got to grow up and be a big boy!"

"While we love the blues and the record is steeped in the blues, we have these other flavours and other things we like to play. At my age, I've kind of lost the fear of worrying about whether it's gonna be accepted, simply because we mess with different genres and different grooves."

"That's what the live album really states; you are gonna hear different things here and there."

"There's a superb cover of the Smokey Robinson-penned, 'The One Who Really Loves You,' from Coco's latest studio album on Ruf, which Keb Mo produced.

"Keb asked me what I was listening to on the road, which was a lot of Doo-Wop and Soul; old Motown and Stax. He said get me a bunch of those tunes you like and we'll check them out. One I have always liked is, 'The One Who Really Loves Me,' by Mary Wells. I have always pictured what it would be like if I did it. Keb was really excited about that, and gave me that whole arrangement we have got there."

Born Henry Montoya, he was nicknamed Coco at 22 by a girlfriend and it stuck. He is left-handed, but plays a left handed guitar with a right handed neck, so the strings are effectively upside down.

Coco spent ten years with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, alongside Walter Trout. He also spent some years on the road with Albert

Collins, as his drummer before switching to guitar. Collins taught Coco his "icy-hot" attacking style of guitar playing. John Mayall plucked him from a bar job in LA in 1984, and put him back onto guitar.

He says today: "I owe my career to John Mayall and Albert Collins. Albert Collins brought me up on the road in 1972, as a drummer. Out on the road with him was very much about education. He introduced me to all the other blues legends I got to play with. Lowell Fulson, Big Joe Turner and people like that. I wouldn't be here, no doubt about it, without that education. "He would always say to me; 'slow down, just take your time son.' I was young, and he would see me in a hurry to do everything, see I was over playing. I am still learning that lesson."

"Every time I get to play it might be the last time"

"If there is anything I am guilty of; I play too many damn notes sometimes. Then Albert's words come into my head, every time I start to do that. He'd stop and grab my shoulder, and say 'take your time son, take your time.'

"With John Mayall, what stands out is him saying just be you. He'd say, 'don't listen to what others say, just do what you are gonna do. Don't listen to negativity. His advice stays with me; 'be yourself and don't let anyone deter you.'"

62-year-old Coco's advice to young guitarists today: Always be humble. "They were words given to me by Albert Collins and BB King. B told me that a long time ago. I remember talking to him at a blues and jazz festival in Canada, and B was saying when you come off stage, be humble.

"I asked him what a guy like him had to be humble about. He said well son, if you play well and the show goes off real well, and you walk off that stage with an attitude, you just diminished whatever you did. Walk off that stage and be humble, and you just multiplied it a thousand fold.

"Wow, what a revelation. I saw it every time B or Albert came off stage. They were humble, smiling, shaking people's hands and it just got bigger."

Grateful and humble are not just hollow words from Coco. "I feel it more than I ever have, in the past 10 years; the humble came back. Every time I get to play it might be the last time. I am 62-years-old, so all bets are off."

"Before I go on stage, I do not want to take it for granted. I want to feel grateful about having one more opportunity to play. That helps keep me grounded and helps me to play better."

"That's another thing I tell young people; you don't get into this for trophies. It's for the love of the music and that is why you should do it. Lose that and you are lost, and better pack it in."

Coco Montoya "Songs From The Road" is out July 8 on Ruf Records

cocomontoya.com

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