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Artist: Linden, Colin

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**Success falls in bluesman's lap**

By DENIS ARMSTRONG

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Colin Linden probably has every right to live up to the title of his latest album: Big Mouth.

The Toronto blues guitarist, singer-songwriter and producer has amassed enough accolades to warrant bragging rights. Winner of multiple Juno Awards, a Maple Blues Award, a Toronto Arts Award, even a Grammy nomination, Linden also has a list of musical pals that far exceeds his eight-albums-in-20-years career.

"I didn't go looking for success, I simply wanted to make the best music," the 41-year-old Linden says by phone from his Toronto studio. "Success just dropped into my lap."

"I spend half my time producing records for artists like Bruce Cockburn, Stephen Fearing and Lucinda Williams. So I don't have to record and tour to earn a living. There's no place I love more than the studio and a great place to play."

Wakefield's Black Sheep Inn will serve that very purpose when Linden and keyboardist friend Richard Bell stop by tomorrow night.

Big Mouth is turning out to be an unexpected breakthrough for Linden, known for his black-hat, black-suit attire which became a staple of his image with roots-rock supergroup Blackie and the Rodeo Kings (Linden, Fearing and Tom Wilson).

A true roots record with a pop personality, offbeat arrangements, wit-filled lyrics and a sparser recording than his previous polished efforts, Big Mouth should take Linden from the musical fringes into the headlights of celebrity.

Co-produced by veteran producer John Whynot in Los Angeles, Nashville (where he'll soon call home), Toronto and The Tragically Hip's Bathhouse Studio in Bath, Ont., in a lightning-quick 11 days, it's a record that, while less polished compared to previous efforts, has a lot going on.

Ingenious tunesmith

Like his hero Robbie Robertson, Linden is an ingenious tunesmith, looking for interesting textures and timbres, finding a "definitive sound" for each song.

Also like Robertson, he likes to share the microphone. On Big Mouth, he vocalizes with some of the best voices in roots music: Bruce Cockburn, Lucinda Williams, Lee Roy Parnell and Jonnell Mosser.

"We had an extraordinary intense time working on this album," he says. "I started off writing a solo album when something happened and Big Mouth just came out with its own personality."

"All these ideas get bottled up inside you and you carry them around with you like a road map, pointing you in this direction even though you don't know what you're going to do when you get there."



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