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Artist: Linden, Colin

April 15, 2005

**Colin Linden thrilled with U.S. exposure**

By FISH GRIWKOWSKY -- Edmonton Sun



"As a Canadian artist, it's tough to get any American listeners," Colin Linden says from his cellphone in sunny Vancouver. "But if you get just one, it might as well be the president."

You heard right. In the great cult of personality down south that also stresses that politics tastes better when functioning as entertainment snippets, the microscopic details of George W. Bush's portable music machine have been outed by the media. And among the winners on the rootsy mix of iPod One (besides all the free ads for Apple)? Well, only two Canadian acts help motivate Dubya when he jogs - a slight imbalance in the grand scheme of things, considering our country's lopsided influence on all forms of popular music.



The pair of songs are Joni Mitchell's You're So Square (Baby I Don't Care) - an Elvis cover - and Blackie & the Rodeo Kings' Swinging from the Chains of Love. Technically, only the latter would be a Canadian composition, written in Hamilton, Ont., by slide-playing Linden's bandmates Tom Wilson and Stephen Fearing. Ba da bing!

Linden, who plays the Arden tonight with - it was just announced - his friend of 28 years Colin James replacing a border-stuck Anders Osborne, received the technically trivial news well, knowing that such details can help careers along quite well in the land of partisan cheerleading. Not that he put it quite like that.

"I thought it was really cool, generally. I'm not making any comment on my support or lack thereof for him and his policies," says the Nashville-transplanted singer-producer cautiously. "But who would have thought that three lugheads from Ontario would be listened to by the president of the United States? The thing I've learned about Blackie is the most unusual and unlikely things happen to us. Things seem to really come out great when we just play it for fun and don't worry too much about sales and figures. Good things seem to happen to Blackie all the time. I just try and keep my head down and keep doing what I'm doing."

Concentrating on his Canuck mega-group is a slight disservice, truth be told, but we reporters are helpless creatures when there's a flame to draw to. Still, Linden is here tonight in his Superman form, namely a high-powered bluesman with a history long enough to fill this entire section by highlights alone. Before his career even began, he was such an obsessive fan of Howlin' Wolf's that they became friends, and over his decades-long career, he's traded ideas and shared stages for months on end with David Wilcox, Bruce Cockburn, Amos Garrett, Willie P. Bennett and rode along with the last incarnation of the Band, one of his songs, Remedy, being their highest-charting hit ever. He kick-started Colin James, much as Wolf had with him, and tonight's show in support of the meaty new Southern Jumbo, featuring standout work with the Memphis Horns, as well as his longtime studio band honed to perfection.

Linden and I get talking about limitations, my favourite new thing about the creation of art. "It's

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always a matter of making choices. Some people can't make a record unless they have a \$250,000 studio to work with, and others, if they have a four-track in their bedroom, make their best work.

"Almost always there are certain things about recordings that you can call limitations that I call 'special circumstances,'" says the singer, who turns 45 tomorrow. "Sometimes they're financial or have to be done in a certain period of time, or where you have to work. But those circumstances give you a kind of road map which can make things easier."

Working under duress hones your skills as well. "True," Linden agrees.

And consider the gap Anders Osborne left in tonight's show: "It's me and David Gogo and Colin James. I really couldn't be more happy!"

Me, I'm just happy one of us is making George Bush sweat a little.

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