

Ian Parker - Where I Belong

‘Where I Belong’, the new studio album by Ian Parker, marks a defining moment in the career of one of Britain’s best loved contemporary blues artists.

For the last decade Ian has been on a journey of discovery, a journey which although far from over, has already provided the young artist with a vast array of experiences which have shaped his musical identity.

The recording of the ‘project’ album, ‘Pilgrimage’ in 2005, for which Parker was sent to the deep south of America with Ruf stable-mates Aynsley Lister and Erja Lyytinen, began a process of consolidation for the artist. During this monumental trip, he reconnected with his blues roots, and immediately felt at ‘home’ in the place where his first true musical love was born. On his return to Europe, Parker set about re-examining in great detail, the work of his blues and soul heroes. Assimilating the lessons learnt from his less bluesy influences, his task now was to bring all of these forces together, in order to truly find himself.

‘Where I Belong’ is the result of this lengthy artistic process. If he was ever in any doubt, Ian Parker certainly knows who he is now. Unquestionably, a relevant 21st century blues man, Ian is acutely aware of the heritage of his music, as is evident on the passionate ‘Love So Cold’. Equally he is aware of the music of the modern age, as is apparent in the eerie ‘Don’t Hold Back’ and the tortured ‘Told My Girl To Go Away’, and is able to incorporate those ingredients into his own blues stew – an essential factor in the long term preservation of the genre. ‘Until You Show Me’, ‘Sweet Singing Sirens’, and ‘Before Our Eyes’ are perfect examples of this amalgamation of styles, and of Parker’s unique approach to writing.

‘Where I Belong’ has plenty for guitar lovers, the emotional soloing, which enthralled fans at Ian’s live shows, has at long last been captured in the studio. However there is so much more on offer here than mere instrumentalism. A distinctly expressive voice and meaningful, heartfelt songs permeate this landscape, covering familiar Parker topics as well as pastures new. His ongoing search for a sense of belonging is the subject of the album’s title track, and further self-analysis can be heard on the hard-hitting blues rocker ‘You Could Say’. The trials and tribulations of romantic relations are covered in the yearning blues-ballad ‘Coming Home’, and the ‘R&B’/Soul workout ‘Your Love Is My Home’. Parker’s song-writing is not entirely focused around his personal life on this record. On ‘Waste My Days’ for example, he reflects on the common human failing that is, the inability to ‘live in the moment’.

Recorded analogue to tape, the album has the rich and warm sonic characteristics associated with the pre-digital age, but there is nothing retro about this release. ‘Where I Belong’ has something for all blues fans, purists and progressives alike. It catalogues the pronounced growth and self-discovery of a contemporary blues artist who is here to stay.