



Rock Messenger

Ian Blurton behind the board and in front of the mic

By Keith Carman

Photo : Paula Wilson

C'Mon : Katie Lynn, Ian, Randy

The air is thick with the sweat of a night's passion. A sea of cables wrap around the room at Toronto's Chemical Sound recording studio like some sort of electronic jungle. Various instruments in questionable states of repair lie about, abused by efforts to wring that special take from their mangled bodies.

This is just another day in the life of Ian Blurton, legendary CanRock singer/guitarist/producer. The scenario could either be for his own power rock trio C'Mon, kickin' out a rousing set of MC5-meets-The Who rawk 'n' roll or behind the board as producer for one of the many indie acts that seek out his talents.

After a solid 22 years at this, Blurton is comfortable in either setting. Yes, 22 years, an endless lifetime commitment to the pursuit of the perfect song that has made the bearded, jean-jacket sporting, enigmatic Blurton one of The Great White North's more enduring, respected and golden-haired messengers of rock 'n' roll.

From his earliest years ("half of my life, 16 to 32," he sighs) fronting independent rock heroes Change Of Heart to blasting lead guitar for Montreal-based aggro-rockers Bionic, spearheading namesake Blurtonia's melodic output, and, most recently, forming C'Mon, Blurton has paid more than enough dues. But he's been up for it since day one.

"I always knew what I was gonna do," Blurton says, fresh out of a recording session with Montreal punks Le Nombre. "I just got caught up in that energy of early Alice Cooper, KISS and The Stooges. The further I got into music, the more I real-

ized that there are a lot of amazing people out there that support great bands. Today, I feel totally honoured by the people that stand behind me. There are so many people that do this for the absolute love of it. That's a beautiful thing (and) I feel honoured to be a part of that."

Even more beautiful is watching C'Mon flail about the stage and hurl musical and verbal abuse at capacity club crowds. Quickly becoming one of the country's strongest bands, C'Mon is the culmination of 20-plus years experience. Powerful and bold without being brash or confrontational, this is a fresh side of Blurton, accented by C'Mon's strong connection with and talent of his girlfriend, bassist Katie Lynn Campbell (Nashville Pussy) and drummer Randy Curnew (The Swallows/Cash Brothers). The band's independent debut, *Midnight Is The Answer*, confirms all expectations of high-octane, rock 'n' roll might.

"C'Mon is a combination of trying to get better individually with honing our craft down to a point (and) all of the elements of things we like," says Blurton. "That's why I started playing in the first place, to create music I'd want to hear, and I get that from C'Mon. I really love playing in this band. It's given me a renewed sense of joy in my playing. There are childlike qualities in the way I enjoy playing in this band. I always wished I was doing things like that, but now it's the ability to take everything I've always wanted to do and put it into one package. It's exciting."

Strange that Blurton would wind up

becoming one of Canada's unsung underground rock heroes, considering he was initially turned down for the drum seat in a pre-major label Cowboy Junkies because of his age. Unfazed, the teenager formed Change Of Heart, which put out 10 independently-recorded albums. Two were licensed to Virgin Music Canada, including the final one, 1997's *Steel Teeth*. It also spawned his production career. He has since helmed recordings for such acts as Tricky Woo, The Weakerthans, Skydiggers, The Illuminati, Amy Milan (Stars), Nefarious and MC Collision.

"(Recording) has always gone hand-in-hand as far back as Change Of Heart and recording us on portable machines," he relates. "Curious, eventually I just started bugging bands to let me record them. We tried stuff and it went from there."

Yet despite the notoriety which has gone so far as to see him dubbed "Sir" Ian Blurton by Tricky Woo frontman Andrew Dickson, Blurton still maintains his humble outlook.

"I feel lucky to be able to keep doing this," he says. "Other people in society have chosen to make a stronger financial living and that's fine for them. It hasn't been easy all the time for me. I haven't got any money, but I have great friends and some totally fucked-up experiences I could never buy. I just hope that I've played great shows and treated people well. If anything, I hope that I'm seen as that."

C'Mon is currently on tour in Canada this fall with Toronto's The Illuminati.