

IVAS JOHN BIO

If in the soul of a true artist, lay the marriage of opposites, then an exemplary artist does Ivas John make. A throwback and an innovator. A musician with local roots and worldly chops. A purist who can play the dirtiest blues. Ivas John is a musician's musician. He has a style of effortless authenticity that is both a breath of fresh air and a link to days of yore, imbued with the same sense of timelessness as the shores of the Mississippi River he now calls home.

Ivas John's story is as unique as his music. Born as a first generation Lithuanian American into a music-loving Chicago home, his earliest influences came from European folk dancing, melodies hammered out on the family piano, and playing trumpet in the school band. His working class father was a truck driver by day, and by night appeared in productions for the local opera company and was a regular fixture on the vibrant folk and blues scene in late 60's Chicago. Long before picking up the guitar, taking to the country, and becoming the public figure Ivas John, his musical future was being shaped, at least in part, by the living room record player. And in another way, by a deep appreciation for history, language, and tradition instilled by immigrant parents. In his teens, Ivas got hooked on blues guitar and began making forays to the inner city clubs to get a fix. By means of jamming along with the available record collections, and the sporadic tutelage of his older brother, he learned to play.

In the early years of his career, John was known exclusively for playing the electric blues with finesse, and a maturity beyond his years. While away at Southern Illinois University, he earned a place in the local music scene, and began backing blues luminaries three times his age with his in demand guitar work. It was there he connected with renowned blues singer Big Larry, a consummate entertainer and brother to Big Twist of the famous Alligator records Mellow Fellows band. These years of precious experience gave Ivas a real taste of the working musician's life...in all its glory and hardship. Being both young and hungry, nothing could've been better at the time. Playing every weekend and taking classes during the days, his insatiable quest for music took him through the halls of early jazz, swing, ragtime, country blues, and slide guitar. As his understanding of music blossomed, so did the desire to put his own band together. With the music community on his side, Ivas developed a voice tucked away since childhood folk singing and put together an experienced band that over the last decade has grown into one of the regions busiest and most beloved roots music acts. A new side of himself emerged writing, arranging, and performing original music and the transition from college student to full time working musician was seamless.

The early years of the Ivas John Band were productive ones. Well over 1000 shows and four albums between 2007 and 2012 helped build his name and connect the dots to new markets, including a residency and long standing relationship with the legendary St. Louis club BBs Jazz, Blues & Soups. As his star kept rising and audiences kept coming back for more, the musical evolution continued as well. With the shifting of his musical mind came the urge to collaborate and record with other excellent regional players and also indulge creative curiosities in the banjo, lap steel, and harmonica. During this time Ivas moved from the woods to the river. In historic Cape Girardeau, MO the roll of the Mississippi towed him under the influence of past masters in folk and country music. Ivas studied the world of Woody Guthrie, Jimmie Rodgers, Doc Watson, The Delmore Brothers, and Balladeers like Tom Paxton and Gordon Lightfoot. While immersing himself in the techniques of acoustic flatpicking and fingerstyle guitar, his writing took on historical content, rural images, and simple country wisdom. Pure acoustic sounds and storytelling in song became a passion and soon half of Ivas' performances were unplugged. With a warm baritone voice,

distinct and believable, he began to traverse the vast musical landscape of his surroundings, bringing to life dusty, forgotten visions of the American past with elegant acuity.

Ivas' most recent project, *Good Days A Comin*, put him on the map in the world of acoustic music. Coming together over a shared vision of what pure folk and country blues music should sound like, Ivas and producers Gary and Noah Gordon made it their business to assemble a team of supporting acoustic musicians and get things in motion. Since the release, which *Billboard* magazine called a "Slam Dunk!", the album went to the top of the pile for roots music DJ's and received a great deal of critical acclaim.

"Ivas John is a young man with the heart of a venerable troubadour. The music is chock full of authenticity and a joy to behold." (No Depression)

"The musicianship is wonderful. His voice and guitar work are bold, distinct, and refreshing. I recommend you not pass it up!" (Flatpicking Guitar Magazine)

"This is an artist of purity, a gifted and lyrical guitarist and songwriter. Soulful and solid stuff. Honoring the traditional ground from which he's emerged, Ivas John embraces the source while reaching into the hopeful future, the good days he knows are a comin'." (Paul Zollo/American Songwriter)

"Fresh, upbeat, and familiar, yet unique...Whatever he is, he's the real deal." (Toledo Blade)

Furthermore, *Good Days A Comin* was nominated for *Blues Blast Magazine's* Acoustic Album of the Year, was used on an HGTV show, and climbed to number one on the folk radio charts. The momentum opened the door for Ivas to do more outside touring, and play many noteworthy venues and festivals around the Midwestern U.S., Canada and overseas in Ireland. It would seem that this was indeed his true niche, save for, the blistering club sets still delivered in earnest abundance by the Ivas John Band. Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about Ivas is his potential to keep adding new dimensions to his career and musical identity while wholeheartedly maintaining what's already there. Whether in a homegrown pickin' circle, or fronting his band under the big stage lights, his appetite for variety and ability to play many styles with convincing authenticity have earned him much praise and acceptance from blues, folk, and bluegrass communities, casual bar patrons, and scrutinizing critics alike. While continuing to draw inspiration from a deep well of the most time-tested music, his own original style of playing and singing, and warm stage persona are always at the center of what's becoming Ivas John's universal appeal.

Through his dedication to all aspects of the craft, his growth has extended into other areas. In addition to holding down residence at his ever popular standing gigs, he has enjoyed for many years being involved on the local level as both a teacher and community organizer. He helped found the Southern Illinois Blues Society, the Cross Rivers Roots Festival in Southeast Missouri, and works closely with PBS TV to produce concert events for television. Always one to shine the spotlight onto the gifts of other talented people, his collaborations with other top shelf musicians are steady growing in number. Ivas is known not only for his extraordinary music and unusual name, but for his quiet professionalism, and kind, magnetic personality on and off the stage. Now in his mid 30's, it's hard to say what's next for Ivas John. No doubt that music will be his life's cornerstone, but what new direction that will take is anyone's guess. Long may it be that way.