



## Artist Biography

### Jesse Cook

#### *THE BLUE GUITAR SESSIONS*

Jesse Cook's 'blue mood' signals a new direction.

Like millions the world over Jesse Cook got his hands on a copy of Adele's *21* and played it excessively. But the Juno Award-winning guitarist saw something that few of us did, something which emboldened him to tackle a long simmering personal objective and create a 'blue mood' record.

"It was the simplicity of it," says Cook of Adele's work. "For me it was amazing that an album, where many of the tracks were just voice and piano, was a pop record. I loved it. It creates a world where we get to really hear her voice and also the pianist can be more expressive. It just becomes a much more intimate album, a much more personal album and I thought I would love to do that."

Spending the summer of 2011 cottage hopping with his family, Cook set about writing material for *The Blue Guitar Sessions*, his eighth studio album. It's set for release on September 18 in Canada (September 25 in the U.S.).

"I was feeling kind of guilty about leaving work to go on vacation," he recalls. "I thought 'if I write a song every day I can do whatever I want.' It became effortless. It was never a struggle probably because I wanted to do this record for so long. I finally uncorked the genie and, poof, out it came."

For the 47-year-old Toronto resident, who was born in Paris to John Cook, a film director and his wife Heather, a former CBC television producer, this record is much different from the rumba flamenco for which he is best known. Indeed, he has been a leading proponent of the genre since bursting onto the world music scene with 1995's *Tempest*. Among his many accolades, in 2008, he won the silver medal in Acoustic Guitar magazine's prestigious Players' Choice Awards behind the legendary Paco De Lucia.

Cook has steered clear of anything resembling flamenco on this record, producing a sound that allows listeners to appreciate each musician's contribution. To do so he also battled his natural instinct to fill in space.

"It's a big departure from the work I have done in the past," he admits, "and there's a fear that if you do something drastically different, will there still be someone there to listen to it if you change?"

"But I feel the role of an artist is to change, to constantly push forward and try and come up with something new. I don't want to spend the rest of my life repeating my first few records so I decided I was going to do it."

The result is a captivating 14-track album recorded on a pair of vintage microphones, which he had exhaustively searched for to replicate the mood of recordings from the Miles Davis era. Sound is of the utmost importance to him as a musician, producer and engineer.

*The Blue Guitar Sessions* is best enjoyed through a room-filling home stereo system - like the old days. A glass of shiraz next to the fireplace is optional.

"Broken Moon" features his extraordinary guitar accompanied by cellist Amy Laing while Tom Szczniak adds accordion to "Witching Hour" a melodic composition hinting at Cook's Parisian roots.

Toronto vocalist Emma-Lee makes an appearance on "I Put a Spell on You", a cover of the song written by Screamin' Jay Hawkins and popularised by Nina Simone and Jeff Beck. Long time collaborator violinist Chris Church makes several appearances in just the right spots.

Audiences will soon discover how well *The Blue Guitar Sessions* translates to live performances. Cook is set to embark on a worldwide tour this September, beginning with European dates. A major Canadian tour will follow before he ventures south for a five-month U.S. tour, starting in January of 2013.

The live shows will include songs from more familiar work as well as material from the new album. Joining Cook on stage are the musicians that have become as familiar to fans as Cook himself: Chris Church, Rosendo "Chendy" Leon, Nicholas Hernandez and Dennis Mohammed.

"What I found is that the longer the five of us played together, we really gelled and had a sense of what our domains were. Each member grew within their domain to make it something really big. We all learned to fill our space."

If Cook's plate isn't already full, August sees the airing of a new television special on select PBS stations in the U.S., a project which will surely expose his incredible musicality to a wider audience.

The sixty-minute concert footage was shot at the Rose Theatre in Brampton, Ontario in May, introduced at a PBS convention in Denver a few weeks later and rapidly gained momentum amongst programmers at the network stations. At present more than thirty stations - the number keeps growing - have signed on to air the production beginning in August 2012.

A new musical experimentation, a tour that will take him around the world, and now a television show are all indications that Jesse Cook's career has reached a new artistic and globally-recognized level of success. One might say he has filled his space.

[www.jessecook.com](http://www.jessecook.com)

~ Written by Paul Gains

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