

In the absence of live shows, bluesman Steve Strongman recommits to songwriting

about 19 hours ago By: [Taylor Pace](#)



Steve Strongman. Photo provided.

As live music came to an abrupt halt this past year, making the livelihoods of many musicians uncertain, award-winning bluesman Steve Strongman considers himself lucky to still be working and thriving in the music industry today.

The Kitchener-born musician was signed onto Linus Entertainment in September 2020, and is currently in the process of recording his eighth studio album to be released in 2022 through Stony Plain Records, Linus Entertainment's affiliate blues label.

"I'm focusing on some of the positive things that have happened from [the pandemic], and one of them is me signing a deal," Strongman said. "Before, I'd be so busy touring and playing, I might not have been able to focus on things the way that I am during the pandemic, which is writing, recording, and working with other artists."

As a veteran musician who has been touring since he was 16, Strongman has never had much leisure time to really focus on writing. With touring taken out of the equation, he has had time to focus on his craft like never before.

"As a writer, you're always looking for various inspirations from lots of different areas, and obviously, the pandemic has changed that for sure," he said. "But one thing it's afforded me is the opportunity to spend time writing. So in terms of creativity, there's been a lot of things that have been brought to the foreground because of it."

The lack of touring has also afforded him more time to spend with his family. Strongman moved to Hamilton to be with his wife when he was 21, though he grew up living in Kitchener.

"It was a wonderful place to grow up and play music, and there is an incredibly supportive community there," he said.

It was in Kitchener that Strongman got his first taste for the blues.

Though he started playing guitar at 10, he didn't get serious about music until he was about 16, when he snuck into Pop the Gator, a revered Kitchener venue at the time.

Club owner Glenn Smith had invited Strongman and his friend to come to the venue after seeing him play guitar. "But we were underage, so we had to sneak in the back."

It was there that he met the late Mel Brown, renowned blues guitarist and singer.

Texas-born Brown first came to Kitchener when he was invited to play in the house band at the venue.

"I saw Mel Brown playing on stage with some of the best blues musicians I'd ever seen," he said. "And I realized at that point, that that's what I wanted to do."

Soon after, Strongman started going to open jams that Brown would host around the city.

"He would get me up to play and give me his big Super 400 guitar. For a 16-year-old kid, that was a pretty unbelievable experience," he said. "To get up on stage and play with such great musicians and learn from them - that was huge."

Since then, Strongman has played with some of his musical heroes, including Buddy Guy and BB King, who he opened for at Centre In The Square.

"I played in bars and clubs my entire life to get to that point, and it was always a dream that I wanted to do that. When I was in high school, I used to walk by the Centre In The Square and say, 'someday I'm going to play there.'"

Since then, he's released seven albums, with three Juno nominations and one Juno win for Blues Recording of the Year.

Strongman is particularly excited about his next album, which will feature a series of talented Canadian musicians.

"The label's asked me to put together a collective," he said, explaining that the big difference from previous albums "is that I'm going to have a lot of guests; a lot of my very talented friends are going to be on there. And it's also unique in that I'm writing songs with other people in mind."

With pandemic restrictions, he's just been writing and recording in his home studio, and sending things off to other people. But he's hoping that at some point, they will all be able to get together in one studio to play before the album is finished.

While Strongman says they will be doing some kind of tour at some point to promote the album, it's too early to know what that will look like.

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H [Hwy66](#) about 17 hours ago

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