

# King of the Road

David Jacobs-Strain returns home for Luna gig

At only 23, David Jacobs-Strain is a wanderer. On the road more often than not, he doesn't pay rent anywhere. He hangs his hat at his girlfriend's house in Los Altos, Calif., whenever he can, but judging by his schedule when I caught up with him there by phone on Memorial Day, he's not in Los Altos very often.

"On Monday I played Philadelphia, Tuesday I played Boston, Thursday I played Strawberry [a music festival in Yosemite, Calif.] and Friday night I played in Davis and then last night I played in San Francisco ...," recites the young bluesman. As hectic as that sounds, it suits Jacobs-Strain just fine. "It's been great because I've been totally focused on 'get to the gig, play,' and, you

know, rock as hard as I can."

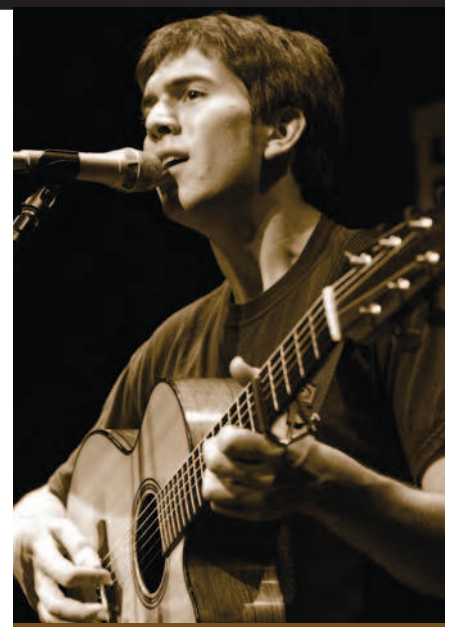
For a slide guitarist most often described as a blues player, Jacobs-Strain rocks pretty hard; this 'rock' sometimes throws a wrench into his work. Jacobs-Strain spent part of January recording his follow-up to 2004's *Ocean or a Teardrop*, but blues labels have rejected it for not being bluesy enough. Rock labels reject it for — you guessed it — being too bluesy.

Jacobs-Strain once again worked with bass player/producer Kenny Passarelli, who suggested bringing in Joe Vitale, drummer for Crosby, Stills & Nash. "We recorded it in Joe's basement," Jacobs-Strain says. "Joe engineered it and played drums, and he's been sound-checking his drums in that room for 15

years, so we just walked in. There was no soundcheck, no rehearsal; we just sat down and ... said, 'All right, here's the first tune, this is how it goes, let's play it.' A lot of stuff was first take."

Jacobs-Strain played some electric guitar this time, and took liberties with two old tracks: The Robert Johnson tune "Traveling Riverside Blues" was "deconstructed" with a Hammond organ and New Orleans vibe, and Fred McDowell's "Write Me a Few Short Lines" was given a new life. It's thanks to this mixed approach that Jacobs-Strain has so many fans. "The people who come to my shows are not necessarily blues fanatics," he explains. "There's always some, but there's people from the jam band scene, there's folkies, there's always some rock and rollers ... and then there's a lot of people who heard the song on the radio and thought, 'That sounds good' and showed up."

EW



**David Jacobs-Strain**  
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