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# Robert Cray to rock closing spot

By Jamie Smith, tbnewswatch staff



Who has five Grammys, a friend named Eric Clapton and closes the Blues Fest Sunday night? The legendary Strat-slinging Robert Cray will play his only Canadian summer gig in Thunder Bay this weekend.

Despite his accomplished 35-year career, Cray remains humble saying his life has been about constant movement rather than a set of achievements.

"It's the whole movement," said Cray. "You've never really gotten any place because there's always somewhere to go... We consider ourselves lucky to be doing what we do."

Cray and his band broke in the U.K in the mid-'80s with their sophomore album *Bad Influence*. He credits the diversity of the BBC's programming for the band's initial success.

"In England, people latched onto us earlier," he said. "The BBC had a wider variety. When you categorize music it makes people believe they have one taste in music...then you don't have anything else there."

From soul to blues to classic rock, Cray hops genres effortlessly in his songwriting. He admits he's been criticized by what he calls "bluenatics" for not sticking to conventional blues formula, but that's just not who he is.

"I just write and if it turns out that's (the genre) it is, it is...it's me," he said.

Cray will bring original bassist Richard Cousins, new drummer Tony Braunagel and Jim Pugh, who's been with Cray for more than 20 years, on keys.

"It's a good quartet," he said.

The band will play new material in Thunder Bay from their latest studio effort expected this summer. Cray's last two albums were recorded live including 2006's *Live from Across the Pond*, which was live from England's Royal Albert Hall.

"I'd never really liked what we had recorded live before until Albert Hall," said Cray.

The album was the first live record for Cray. He said he enjoyed how much the live versions differed from the studio tracks.

Cray and his band will close the Blues Fest weekend at Marina Park starting at 9:30 p.m.