# Ian Russell?s new album, 'In Light' inspires peace



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By Nate Smelle

For many, music has provided an escape from the escalation of anxiety created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking to help others tune into this opportunity to experience a moment of peace and tranquility, Maynooth-based musician and songwriter, Ian Russell recently released his latest album, In Light. Acknowledging how listening to music has helped him personally navigate the anxiety and uncertainty during the pandemic, he said over the past year he has been exploring new music, and revisiting some of the music that influenced him early on in his career.

"It's so much quieter here compared to the city, so for me it has really allowed for listening to different kinds of music," said Russell.

"I have listened to a lot of different music, and played in punk bands, in loud instrumental stuff, country bands, but up here I have gotten more into classical music, like solo instruments - piano, guitar, and lute. Now, since I have moved up here I am just amazed by all the music like that. It's not something I saw coming, but it's so beautiful. I feel like my brain has time for it up here, and space for it."

As much as he enjoys the music that has shaped his musical style, Russell has a special kind of appreciation for new music. Looking back on different times in his life, he said there is always certain music that stands out, acting as a kind of soundtrack that triggers precious and influential memories. For Russell, discovering and appreciating new music compliments the making of new memories, while at the same time expanding his possibilities to evolve musically and consciously.

"The more you can be open, the more you have opportunity to let good stuff in, and appreciate new things," Russell said.

"Every time is a significant time in your life, including this time of the pandemic, so to connect with, or to be experiencing something new in every time of your life is really helpful. We all have records that remind us of a certain time, and they mean so much to us. This is a difficult time, but some comforting music that is new, yet not unfamiliar - it's mostly acoustic instrumental guitar - can help people take a break for an hour and just turn it on and listen. Or, just let yourself be at peace for a time. You don't need to check your social media, or check the news. Just peace out for a bit."

In Light features a collection of six songs written, performed, and recorded by Russell throughout 2015 and 2016, while he was

living in Toronto. Although the music on the album was created in the city, the sounds coming from Russell's guitar invoke a sense of the peacefulness one finds in nature. Noting how throughout his life he has drawn on nature for inspiration, he recalls how vital the time he spent hiking the Bruce Trail was for the health of his soul while he was living in the city. Appreciating this meditative quality of the natural world as even more important now, Russell said. Highlighting the value of this peacefulness, he said he is hopeful In Light will give others a chance to tap into a similar state of mind.

"For myself, I find that my head is really much more busy lately with the climate crisis and the pandemic being very tied, and just everything that is going on,? explained Russell.

"There is a lot of unrest, and it's just a busy time. So, for me I thought it was a good time to put out this record which does allow you to get lost in it. It's kind of meditative in a way where you can just focus on it. But, you can also just let yourself go, you don't have to be listening to every bar. That's not how you get it. You can just have it on and be listening to it, and enjoying it, but then if your mind wanders, good for you. The idea is that it doesn't keep you from the world, it just makes it a nice place to be for a time."Since moving to the forest home outside Maynooth with his family in 2016, Russell said he has fallen in love with the area's natural beauty. Something especially precious to him that he finds in the local landscape, which did not exist in the city, he said is the silence. According to Russell, he has come to value this silence so much, it is now helping to shape his music.

"Silence is golden, and I feel like if you are going to break silence it better be for a good reason," he said.

"That's something I tried to keep in mind while making this record. I definitely wanted it to be a generous kind of thing, and I didn't want it to be music that was demanding of the listener. I wanted it to be a really welcoming thing, that can change a room and make a room a very warm place."

To listen and/or purchase a copy of In Light; and to learn more about Russell's music visit his website online at: www.ianrussellguitar.bandcamp.com.