

# Music veteran Jonny Lang set to play State Theatre

By Kevin Sullivan  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

In 1997, a 15-year-old boy from North Dakota released his major label debut, a rare achievement for such a young musician from the heartland playing a mixture of blues-rock and gospel.

Since then, guitarist and singer Jonny Lang has gone on to release several well-received albums, collaborate with artists as diverse as Herbie Hancock and the Jonas Brothers, and earn himself a Grammy award.

His blues-inspired vocals have been especially noteworthy, and have contributed to his rapid ascendance, said Mike Negra, executive director of the State Theatre.

"When he was 14, he had the voice of a 70-year-old," Negra said. "When he came on the

scene, he had the full package."

Lang's analysis of his early recognition is a little more subdued. "I got a little lucky," he said.

Lang will be bringing his seasoned blues-rock sound tonight to the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave., along with guests Moreland & Arbuckle.

For tonight's performance, Lang will be fronting his six-piece band, with the set list covering material from throughout his entire career.

Although he is currently working on a new album, Lang says he won't be playing any of his new songs. Twelve of the songs have been recorded, he said, but there are still more songs to record and the album hasn't yet taken a definite form.

"It's hard to tell at this point because as it shapes up it changes," Lang said. "It's definitely

more of a rock and soul record."

After four successful albums for A&R Records, Lang is currently out of contract and is recording the album independently. Because of this, Lang said the current album is taking a bit longer and isn't sure if he will release it himself or through a label.

"The upside to having a label is they can release it more broadly and internationally, but there are upsides to both," he said. "I think when an artist has more of a commercial appeal, they take more control to make sure that happens. They always let me do my own thing because our first few records were successful."

Although Lang said his experiences with A&R were positive overall, he did experience some "political label issues" that forced him to push back his releases.

But instead of getting angry, Lang said he focused his energies more positively.

"Through the years, I've really appreciated how music can touch people's lives," he said. "That's kind of the motivating factor for me at this point. Of course, I'd love to sell a zillion records, but if that doesn't happen, I'll be all right."

The singer said his sound is a culmination of rock, blues, R&B and gospel influences, James Taylor and Stevie Wonder in particular. He covered the latter's "Living for the City" for his most recent album.

In terms of guitar playing, B.B. King and Albert Collins helped define his sound, Lang said.

Moreland & Arbuckle, another independent blues artist on tonight's bill, has a similar blues style but takes a very different approach.

Combining influences as vastly separated as Hank Williams and The Sex Pistols, Moreland & Arbuckle play three-piece blues rock with just guitar, drums and harmonica, bypassing the traditional need for a bass player.

"We're a very stripped, no-frills kind of band," said Aaron Moreland, guitarist for the band. "We're not fancy, but at the same time, we go for the jugular straight out of the gate. Our music can be pretty intense."

The duo of Aaron Moreland and



Courtesy of Monterey International

Lang will bring tunes from his career which started when he was only 15.

harmonica player and singer Dustin Arbuckle met about eight years ago at an open mic and have been playing together ever since, adopting Brad Horner as full-time drummer three years ago.

Moreland said that his occasional use of a cigar box guitar — a homemade guitar that features a cigar box for its body — sets the band apart as well. It has an extra bass

string that Moreland plays bass parts on.

"I take a different approach to playing it than most guitarists, playing it standing up and with more of a straight-ahead rock 'n' roll approach," Moreland said. "It gives me options I don't have with a regular guitar. It fits my style perfectly."

Negra said he thinks the night will be a great show, and he's happy to have a performer like Lang come to the State Theatre.

Lang, who married a few years ago, has matured over his time as a performer, just like his music has, Negra said.

"I think over time he will be recognized as a guitar god," Negra said. "It's interesting to see him progress and watch him grow up."

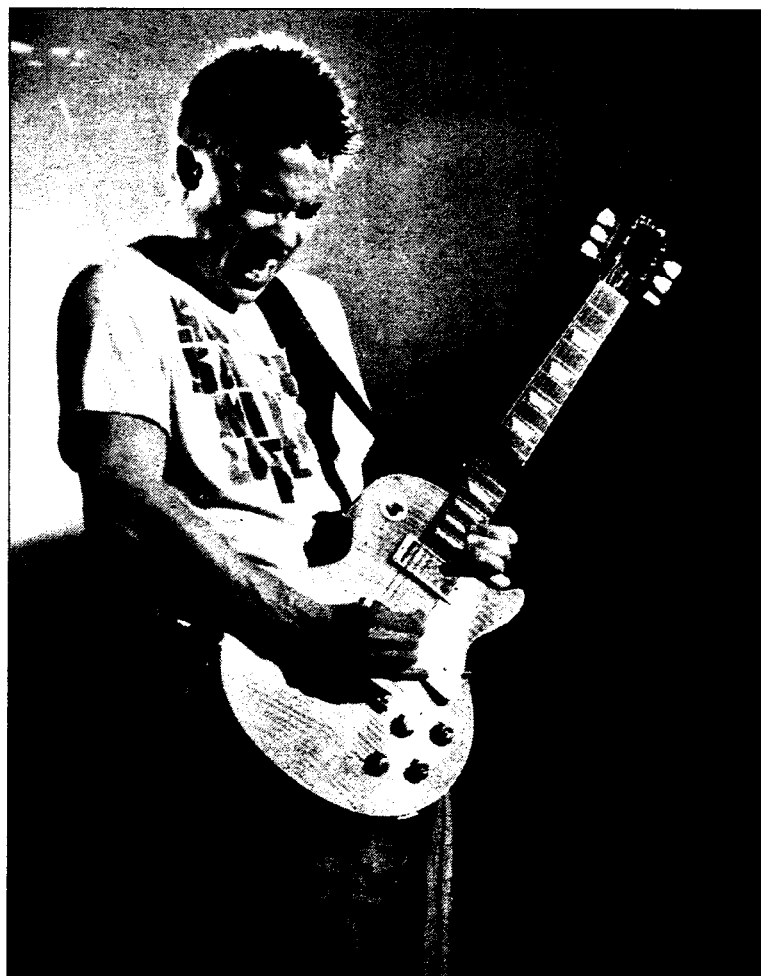
## If you go

**What:** Jonny Lang with special guest Moreland & Arbuckle

**Where:** The State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave.

**When:** 8 tonight

**Details:** Tickets are \$42



Courtesy of Monterey International

Grammy award-winning musician Jonny Lang will play a local show.

To e-mail: [kjs5089@psu.edu](mailto:kjs5089@psu.edu)