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LOS ANGELES---The clouds of mystery are lifting over the mountainside studio where John Fogerty is rehearsing for his first extended live shows in more than a decade.

Wearing a green plaid workshirt and pressed blue jeans, the creative force behind Creedence Clearwater Revival is preparing to hit the road to promote his new "Blue Moon Swamp" record, released Tuesday on Warner Bros. But the majority of the dates in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago will consist of Creedence hits. Fronting a quartet, Fogerty will even play some of the classics through vintage '60s gear.

Fogerty has never leaned on Creedence songs as a solo act. Coming to terms with the past may account for the clarity of "Blue Moon Swamp." Full of dobros, guitars and passionate vocals, it is Fogerty's most rootsy album since his self-titled 1975 solo debut.

Then again, maybe the clarity was already in place.

"It came first," Fogerty says before rehearsal. "I get a lot of the clarity from my wife, Julie (Kramer, who hails from Elkhart, Ind.). Her positiveness helps me every day. That spilled over into my directness with the music, and I became very clear with who I should be. And that's a good thing to know, because there's been times in my life where I wasn't that sure.

"(The dark, high-tech 1986 release) 'Eye of the Zombie' is certainly a great example. So are some of the lost soul meanderings of the '70s, when I made an ill-fated record called 'Whodo' that shows up in bootlegs at flea markets. Some of the bad stuff surrounding the package known as Creedence bugs me. . . ."

Some of the real bad stuff shakes down when his former bandmates perform the hits he wrote, arranged and sang with a stand-in vocalist and call themselves Creedence Clearwater Revisited.

On Sunday, Fogerty appeared at the Fillmore in San Francisco. On Saturday, Creedence Clearwater Revisited (original drummer Doug Clifford and original bassist Stu Cook) were across town at the Greek Theatre.

"Those guys are continually rewriting history," Fogerty says. "Again, my wife said to scoot on past that. I did. My show will be two hours, and I'll do every hit single from the Creedence catalog, and other things like (Dale Hawkins') 'Suzie Q,' (Lead Belly's) 'Midnight Special' and (Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong's) 'I Heard It Through the Grapevine.' Remember, I'm the only guy who really knows how the Creedence songs should go, because I made up the arrangements in the first

place."

The commotion over Creedence shouldn't overshadow "Blue Moon Swamp." The new blues-tinged recording features ex-John Mellencamp drummer Kenny Aronoff, the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Chad Smith and bassist Duck Dunn of Booker T. and the MG's. Fogerty used the gritty ensemble feel of Booker T. and the MG's as a model for a band.

"All my life I'll swing back to them as the best example of four guys playing with one mind," he says. "The Beatles were a nice band, but they were more of a showcase for the songs. That's what Creedence was, too."

In 1990 Fogerty ventured to the Mississippi Delta as the essential muse for "Blue Moon Swamp." He brought along a camera, logbook and a boom box. He recalls, "I had heard about the Delta, and I really didn't know where it was. So I went there, strictly for the blues, because that was in my childhood. In a lot of happy ways my old feelings from when I was 8 or 9 were allowed to grow through those trips."

The result was a harvest of new songs, including "A Hundred and Ten in the Shade," which Fogerty calls the best composition of his career. It is a pleading Delta blues ballad, whose desolation is framed by the backing vocals of the Fairfield Four gospel quartet. Fogerty's empathetic phrasing makes "A Hundred and Ten in the Shade" one of his strongest vocal performances.

"I wrote that song two months after I started recording," he says. "June, 1992. I felt it was a leap above me, just like I felt after I wrote 'Proud Mary.' Now when I hear it, not only is it better than anything I have ever done, it transcends to a place I will never crisscross again."

Fogerty previously has steered away from discussing the past because of the storied conflict between the 51-year-old singer-songwriter and Saul Zaentz, the Oscar-winning film producer ("The English Patient") and owner of Fantasy Records, for which Creedence recorded.

Zaentz claimed that he was defamed by the songs "Zanz Kant Danz" and "Mr. Greed," both from Fogerty's 1985 "Centerfield" album. He filed a \$142 million civil suit. And in separate civil action, Zaentz said Fogerty plagiarized his own song "Run Through the Jungle" with his "Centerfield" hit single "Old Man Down the Road." In 1988 a San Francisco jury found Fogerty innocent of the charge. Fogerty and Zaentz settled the defamation suit out of court.

"The only allusion I'll make is that I still do it the same way," Fogerty declares. "I know where the (Creedence) solos went and why the bass parts went from here to there. I tend to do the same when I arrange my records now. That's why it's weird when someone says, 'It sounds like Creedence!' Well, no shit----

"I used to get so bent out of shape, because bad things were connected with all

those Creedence songs: legal, lawyers, trials. Now, I'm going out and singing the songs I know, and if people care to put it all together, fine. I'm enjoying it. I can play the songs and not have all those bad ghosts in my mind."