

# Gavin's Woodpile – The Bruce Cockburn Newsletter

Edited by Daniel Keebler

## Issue Number 13

### February 1996

#### Chainsaw In A Velvet Glove

Margaret Davis

the following interview comes from a magazine published in germany called *spotlight*. the interview was conducted while bruce was on tour there in 1994. -dk

*You're known for songs about political and environmental issues. For example, you've recently taken up the cause of the Lubicon Cree in Canada.\* How much influence can an entertainer really have on political events?*

Directly, none. But in the long run, as part of a collective movement, the effect can be quite profound. Songs can't change the world, but what songs can do is be a crystallizing agent for a body of opinion that is already there around a certain issue. They can make their listeners say: "Hey, I'm not the only one who feels this way."

*Have you seen any results from your support of the Lubicon?*

Well, I got an angry letter from Daishowa Paper. It showed we hit a nerve. They were trying to say they were actually the good guys, and they were working to help the Lubicon. I felt sorry for the publicity hack who had to write that thing. In Alberta, we got good media coverage of the concerts and benefits we did there. If the Canadian government thinks it's going to look bad internationally, then that puts pressure on them. The new Liberal government is the same typical bunch of lying procrastinators we've always had. But that doesn't mean it's not worth trying to help. It's never time to give up till you're dead. Chief Ominiyak [Lubicon leader] isn't giving up either, and he's obviously got more at stake than I do.

*Your religious beliefs have also shaped your songwriting. Is it difficult to be a Christian in the rock music business?*

No more than it is in the rest of life. Being a Christian is just another way of getting through the world. I'm not bothered by the things I see around me. I mean, I don't feel personally threatened. I tried most of the things available before I became a Christian, so it's not as if I sit around pining for things I never got to do.

*Your opposition to US policies in Central America made you unpopular with the Reagan and Bush administrations. But you were invited to perform at President Clinton's inauguration. Is Bill Clinton a Bruce Cockburn fan- and vice versa?*

There's no evidence to suggest that he's a fan of mine. That's OK, because I'm not a particular fan of his, either. It would be naive to expect that anybody who has risen to the level of American president would not be slightly corrupt.

*So how did you get invited to the inauguration?*

Actually, the events were all organized by a committee, and I guess they just wanted to invite everybody who looked different from the people the Reagans or the Bushes would have invited. They wanted to show they were attuned to the youth vote and youth culture and lefties, and to appeal to the sort of naive, buoyant hope that people felt at the time. I felt it was naive myself, but you've got to let people feel what they feel. The gesture was honest, if somewhat contrived, and maybe the fact that they made it at all is significant.

*I once heard a television host here comment that there are two types of Bruce Cockburn fans in Germany: those who enjoy him as a great musician, and those who carefully study his lyrics. You're really not an easy artist for a non-English speaking audience, are you?*

No. Yet I do better in Germany than in England, for some reason. I think it has something to do with political contents of albums like *Stealing Fire* that attracted a certain segment of the German population. An earlier record company used to do translations of the songs into German. I don't know if they got the poetry of the lyrics, but at least they helped people know what the hell the song was about. Sony doesn't do that, but maybe it would be a good idea.

*Do you consider yourself a Canadian songwriter, or a songwriter who just happens to live in Canada?*

I have a great deal of affection for the country that I was born in and grew up in, but I would have to say that I think of myself more as a songwriter who happens to be from Canada. But I do value the landscape and the spirit of the place - which is a subtle and yet-to-be-defined thing, but definitely there. I do value that very highly.

*And do you use some Canadian themes for your music?*

Oh, yeah. Well, my songs come from my experience and what I see around me. If what I see around me happens to be in Canada, then it's obviously going to end up in the songs.

*You're in the midst of a very hectic North American and European tour- kind of "if today is Monday, this must be Munich." After 25 years in the business, what's it like to still be on the road?*

Better than it used to be. Travelling conditions are better, and there are lots of interesting things going on. You have to realize it's not a constant thing, just very intense at certain periods when I'm promoting a new album. It's nice to get out and play for people, and I've always liked to travel.

*Listeners are often puzzled about the lyrics to songs. So I'm going to take advantage of the fact that I have the songwriter standing right in front of me and ask you about "Listen for the Laugh." Can you tell me who or what the "sacred bitch" is?*

Well, I was thinking of Madonna, actually. But it doesn't have to be her; it's that image of womanhood that we've inherited from the patriarchy - the painted whore image that we worship. Some cultures have actually literally worshipped that kind of image, and I suppose it's fair to say that we sort of do, too.

*People have sometimes accused you of being a little too serious. Is this song and songs like "Tie Me at the Crossroads" your response to people who have said "Come on, Bruce, lighten up a bit!"?*

Well, not very many people have had the nerve to say that to my face! I suppose [the songs] do serve as that, but I don't really care if someone thinks I should lighten up or not. There obviously are a lot of things in the world to laugh at and a lot of things people take way too seriously. If they worry about me taking things too seriously, just look around at the general attitude people have toward death in our culture, in respect to "Tie Me at the Crossroads." The illusion of security, the idea that you can legislate life into something safe. All that stuff. To me that's when taking things seriously is dead wrong.

*Just one question about German audiences as compared to audiences in other countries.*

German audiences are pretty good at clapping in unison. I find generally that audiences are pretty much the same wherever you go. There are minor differences. Canadian audiences tend to be more reserved than American audiences- with the exception of French Canada. German audiences are a little more reserved than American audiences, but not as reserved as Canadian audiences. Belgian audiences are more reserved still. English audiences like to sing along with everything. There are those little differences, but really, the difference between audiences has a lot more to do with the kind of venue you're playing in and whether or not they've had anything to drink. Those are kind of universal constants.

*After an album of love songs, what's next for you?*

I have no idea. I don't plan very far ahead. I'm not doing much writing at the moment, because I'm busy recording and touring. These things go in cycles - recording, release of an album and touring- and then there's usually a break. After my last album, *Nothing But a Burning Light*, there wasn't any break. We went straight into *Dart to the Heart*. I've got about half an album's worth of material left over, but after this tour I'll definitely be ready for an extended break.

\*at the beginning of his 1994 north american and european tour, bruce announced his support for the land rights claims of the lubicon cree indians in alberta. the native people there have been carrying on a struggle against the canadian government and the japanese firm daishowa, which has built a paper-mill on land the lubicon say is theirs.

## **Child Of The Wind**

This documentary is based on the wilderness adventure legacy of Coast Mountain explorer John Clarke. Over the last 30 years Clarke has achieved over 600 first ascents and traversed thousands of kilometers of remote terrain in British Columbia's Coast Mountains, both on foot and on skis. The camera successfully captures the wildly magnificent scope of the Coast Range. British Columbia film maker, Bill Noble, told me he chose to use Bruce Cockburn's "Child of the Wind" for this 24 minute documentary because "I feel that his music and words touch the 'nature child' within all of us. John Clarke has remained true to his calling and inner nature child all his life. Despite the necessary sacrifices, John's ability to hear the wind and the mountains calling is a rare and beautiful gift. As we vicariously travel with John on his journeys, Bruce's words and music provide the road map."

Bill entered the film into the climbing category at Canada's Banff Mountain Festival of Films, along with 12 other entries from around the world. There were a total of 117 films entered in all categories. Child of the Wind came out on top in the climbing category up against the likes of National Geographic Television, Television New Zealand and numerous others.

The film will tour Canada, Europe, Australia and South Africa as part of a tour called the Best of the Banff Mountain Film Festival. In the U.S, look for it in AK, OR, WA, MT, MA, VT, CT, CO, WY, HI, NY, UT, CA & AZ.

Future plans for the film also include entry into the Telluride Mountain Film Festival (in Colorado), The Dundee Mountain Festival (in Scotland), and the Trento International Film Festival (in Italy).

If you'd like to try and catch the festival, and Child of the Wind, check local newspapers, outdoor sporting shops, radio, university publications and the like.

## **Covers**

check out the cd, *wonder & blue*, for a cover of bruce's 1977 song "free to be." this cd, the most recent from winnipeg-based, **rick unruh**, was released in 1995. the cd may be obtained from:

OH YAH! RECORDS

357 Bannatyne Ave  
Winnipeg, MB R3A-0E3  
Canada  
Tel: 204-942-0781  
Fax: 204-944-8042

for a bluegrass interpretation of bruce's "child of the wind," from *nothing but a burning light*, pick up the 1995 release, *salamander crossing*, from the trio of the same name. check local record stores.

*live at the world cafe, vol. 2*~ bruce joins patty larkin on her song "open arms" on this collection of 15 live cuts from various artists taken from past radio broadcasts at philadelphia's wxpn. bruce adds guitar and vocals in this acoustic performance. for information about availability of this cd contact:

wxpn, world cafe  
3905 spruce  
philadelphia, pa 19104  
tel: 215-573-3323

toronto musician **jim jalsevac** has released his first cd, *on my journey*, in late 1995. on it you'll find a cover of "lord of the starfields." joining jim on this journey are fergus jemison marsh and michael sloski, both having toured and recorded with bruce in the 1980's. this cd is available by contacting:

Faith Roots Music  
1377 Queen St. East  
Toronto, ON M4L-1C7  
Tel: 416-463-9071

the second release from the arizona trio **burning sky** is *blood of the land*, which contains a cover of bruce's "indian wars," which is the only song that contains vocals on this 13 track cd. all remaining tracks are original songs rendered with native american flute, guitar and percussion. the band joined bruce on stage at the verde valley festival in sedona, arizona, for a live rendering of "indian wars" in october 1995. michael bannister, percussionist for the band, told *gavin's woodpile* that the real dream for the band would be to open for bruce on a future tour. for a copy of *blood of the land*, check local record stores or contact:

canyon records  
4143 north 16th st., suite 6  
phoenix, arizona 85016  
tel: 602-266-7835

the 1995 release from **catfish hodge** contains a slightly *funky* blues version of “blues got the world.” the cd is called *like a big dog barkin’* and can be obtained at local record stores, or if all else fails, contact the label at:

wildcat records  
950 kings road #266  
los angeles, ca 90069

### **Cockburn Extends His Range**

by Fiona McQuarrie

the following article comes from a february, 1981 issue of the *vancouver sun*.

Bruce Cockburn is finally starting to receive attention outside his native country, but Friday night at the Hyatt Regency he showed why Canadians have been lucky in having him for more than 10 years.

Cockburn is a topflight songwriter, sketching incidents and scenes with a few well-chosen words and setting them to music that’s influenced by almost every style there is. And now that he’s concentrating on electric music, and is using a band to accompany him, he has even more range; as well as the familiar rock instruments, his guitar work is beautifully complemented by violin and saxophone.

Friday night’s show took its chances by including a large amount of unrecorded and unfamiliar material, but the audience was more than willing to listen to anything Cockburn had to offer.

Much of the new material is reggae-influenced, with Cockburn’s rhythm guitar setting up a gentle counterpoint to Dennis Pendrith’s bass and Bob DiSalle’s drums. “Private Logic,” which Cockburn introduced as a “song about rage,” is a skittery, fast-paced number, with the bass drum booming ominously at its heart.

And the star among the familiar songs had to be the sensuous blues of “Mama Just Wants To Barrelhouse All Night Long,” which featured a vocal duet with Cockburn and Kathryn Moses.

Violinist Hugh Marsh added graceful harmonies to most of the songs, but during his all too few solos he really let fly, sawing at the instrument as though he was trying to cut it in half. And besides being a fine vocalist Moses proved herself to be more than competent on three difficult instruments- flute, alto sax, and soprano sax.

If Canadians suffer from a cultural inferiority complex, we should get a boost when Cockburn at last becomes an international star. Then we can smile and say, “We had him first.”

## **Down From True North**

**voter for choice benefit concert.** this event took place on january 26th and 27th in santa barbara, california, at the arlington theatre. also on the bill was bonnie raitt. money raised from this benefit will help support candidates in the most important and pivotal contests in 1996.

*mummy dust* and *further adventures of* were scheduled for distribution on january 24th. they are available in canada only. check the resources listed below to obtain them.

**bruce's next album** is in the planning stages. at print time there was no further information available (i.e., producer, studio, players, etc.). stayed tuned.

**the demaurier theatre performances** in toronto april 29th and 30th, 1995: these two shows were taped for later broadcast in some capacity. the latest information indicates they may be broadcast sometime during april, 1996, undoubtedly exclusively on canadian tv. more later.

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bruce appeared for the fifth year in a row to present *christmas with cockburn*. several *woodpile* readers who claimed passes to the event called to say they had a wonderful evening, compliments of bruce & co.

here's a look at the artists who have participated with bruce over the last five years...

1991~ sam phillips & t-bone burnett  
1992~ rob wasserman, lou reed & rosanne cash  
1993~ jackson browne  
1994~ nanci griffith  
1995~ patty larkin, jonatha brooke & peter stuart

## **Info To End Your Cosmic Woe**

the **columbia music hour** with bruce cockburn was taped live at sony studios in manhattan, new york, on december 17, 1995. guests were patty larkin, jonatha brooke and peter stuart. bruce "exposed to humanity at large" for the first time one of several songs inspired by his september, 1995, trip to mozambique. the song is titled "the coming rains."

**the best of the columbia records radio hour, vol. 2**~ this collection contains "if i had a rocket launcher" and "chimes of freedom." both were taken from an august 3, 1994, performance at the sony music studios in manhattan. the same show also featured youssou n'dour, who joins bruce on "chimes of freedom." at print time this cd is

scheduled to be released on february 13th. it contains 14 tracks. thanks, renee, for the advanced preview opportunity.

**kgsr radio** in austin, texas, released in 1995 the two cd set, *broadcasts vol. 3*. on it you will find a live solo version of "tibetan side of town" taped at the austin city limits studio on december 2, 1994, as part of the station's 4th anniversary party.

bruce contributed guitar and vocals to the production process of the upcoming **michael been project**, currently scheduled for release in june. bruce's participation took place in december at a studio in san francisco just days prior to his december 17th performance at sony studios in new york. joining bruce and michael was drummer, jim keltner.

## Issue Number 14

### March 1996

#### Steven Hubbard: Humans And Other Things

Daniel Keebler

stephen is the managing editor of *network*, a music magazine with a distribution of 140,000 across canada. i spoke with him by phone from his office in toronto. ~dk

♦ *what is it about the humans album that you find especially attractive?*

it really was the period beginning *around* that album and carrying through virtually to the present that appeals to me, although more through all the '80s albums. from a writing point of view it was a period in which bruce really started to travel widely, and to develop a world view of things. his writing reflected detail and the capturing of place and *sense* of place. it moved away from the slightly more self-absorbed period and writing style that he had in his early days. he moved into a broader view of the world at large. he has a very keen eye to detail. there are so many songs off that album and from that period that have these very precise, wonderful images that i relate to, and enjoy listening to. i guess it was that evolution that i found interesting.

♦ *are there any particular songs from the album that stand out in your mind?*

one of my *favourites* from the first time i heard it right up to this day is "how i spent my fall vacation." that's usually one of the examples i give immediately when people ask about images and writing. that very strong, precise image of "the sun went down looking like the eye of god," and then this wonderful story of a trip in which you get a really good sense of all these different events happening, tied together with this overall feeling of restlessness and then ending with the same image as in the start, but flipped upside down. so rather than saying that "the sun went down *looking* like the eye of god," he says "while the eye of god blazes at us like the sun." i think that's an absolutely perfect image.



i love his vocals on the whole album. he's also coming into that stage when his voice is starting to take on a richness. *humans* is essentially a great collection of songs.

there are other songs on that album such as "grim travellers," in which you start to get the sense of black humour that he has in talking about mercenaries and people wanting to overthrow countries and governments and people being treated like cattle ["gonna take that african nation in record time... every man wants to retire to a place he can call his own"]. there's also a lot of joy found on that album in a song like "rumours of glory."

*humans* is probably his definitive album for me. it works on virtually every level.

- ◆ *bruce's work on humans was obviously affected by his travels at that time. would you compare his writing style during this period with that of a journalist?*

definitely. go from album to album. for example on *inner city front* he's giving us descriptions, but this time in a very much *urban* context. *stealing fire* is among several albums that reflects the latin american experience. as you go through all the albums, certainly through the 1980's, it's very much like a travel log. it's a compendium of the history of that time, and looking back, this is even more evident today.

those albums are a documentation of a period in history. i read them as like the reports of a journalist over a decade.

- ◆ *what are your views of the post 80's work?*

he's one of the few artist where if there is just a hint of the possibility of something coming out, i'll buy it not knowing a thing about it. it's automatic that i want to hear what he's going to put out. i think there are many great songs off the last few albums. for many years a lot of my friends who are fans were kind of pining for him to pick up the acoustic again and go back to a more folk-based sound. even though they loved "lovers in a dangerous time" and "call it democracy" and all the great songs he did in the 80's, they were saying it would be nice someday if he returned to a more acoustic sound. then, *nothing but a burning light* came out. so much of it was stripped down that it was very appealing to the ears when i first heard it. *dart to the heart* remains a similar kind of album in terms of his approach musically. the irony is, as much as i like a number of songs on both those albums, i'm not sure his writing has the edge now that he's essentially writing from a place that's at home and content, even though he isn't a content person, in terms of his view of the world and politics. reflecting on these two albums now that they've been out for a few years and having been able to listen to them beyond the first rush of adrenalin that you get when you play a new album, song for song they don't necessarily stay with me as much. they do in the overall sense of the beauty of the music, but in terms of listing your twenty favourite cockburn songs i don't now how many for me would come from those two albums. having said that, he's the type of person who could release what's considered a brilliant album at any time. he's earned enough right to experiment. he could release an all synthesizer album as far as i'm concerned and i'd give it a chance because there's bound to be some great songwriting. i would stack his writing

up against anyone's, especially over this long period of time. it's a really consistent, fine body of work.

♦ *any feelings as to where bruce is headed next?*

my guess is that sometime, and perhaps not as soon as the next album, i think he will do an about face at some point. he really is one of those people that is so capable of that. whether it will come from travelling, or simply from things that are going on here. i'm sure he's watching with amusement what's happening with the republican race in the states, and certainly here in canada we've got a number of controversial things happening politically. there's any number of things that he can write about. my guess is that he's going to do something that will really surprise people, much like david bowie has done over his career. bruce is the type of artist that the second you try and pin him down is the time he'll turn around and do something really different.

### **discography**

bruce cockburn  
high winds white sky  
sunwheel dance  
night vision  
salt, sun & time  
joy will find a way  
in the falling dark  
circles in the stream  
further adventures of  
dancing in the dragon's jaws  
humans  
mummy dust  
inner city front  
the trouble with normal  
stealing fire  
world of wonders  
waiting for a miracle  
big circumstance  
bruce cockburn live  
nothing but a burning light  
christmas  
dart to the heart

### **Bruce Cockburn**

by Lee Lewis

*From The Music Scene, July-August, 1970.*

Most of us communicate through conversation, through letters, but not Bruce Cockburn. You could talk to Bruce for hours without learning very much about him - until he gets behind that mike with his guitar in his arms... and then he bares his soul shamelessly.

Cockburn (pronounced Co-burn) sings about himself and hopes that other people will see themselves. 'If you get far enough into yourself, you get to universal truths,' he says simply. The first time you hear him in person you become absorbed in listening to the intricate guitar work - a mixture of folk, jazz and classical - and find you're concentrating to catch your own meaning of the lyrics, some deceptively simple and others involved symbolism. The second time you hear him you find yourself requesting a song that got through to you...it could have been written for you. Bruce Cockburn hits home, with both his music and his poetry.

Bruce began writing songs about three years ago but he admits today he cannot relate to many of them and has dropped these from his performances. He believes he's written nearly 200 songs.

*Listen for the ring  
Of tomorrow's bell,  
Be the first to sing  
From beyond the wishing well,  
Know what's behind,  
But change your mind.*

Twenty-five in May, Bruce was born in Ottawa and began studying the guitar when he was in Grade 10. He joined a swing band and expanded his guitar lessons to include rock and jazz. It wasn't until nearly the end of high school that his interests turned to folk. Cockburn completed six grades of Royal Conservatory piano and took private lessons in composition. The urge for travel took him to Paris where he entertained on the streets until the authorities ended that, catching him working without a license.

*I buttoned my coat  
as I crawled through the gate  
To hold me together  
while I made my escape.*

Back across the Atlantic he came, this time heading for Boston and Berklee School of Music. For a year and a half he studied theory and composition and between lessons joined a band. 'I learned most there by association, with musicians in the school, and in Boston itself.' When he reached his saturation point Bruce returned to Ottawa where he did band work for a while before moving to Toronto where he joined Flying Circus, followed by 3's a Crowd.

After 3's a Crowd, Bruce went solo and played the coffee house circuit in Boston, New York, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, as well as two Mariposa folk Festivals and CBC work. On April 25 he played Massey Hall with Pentangle. He married his wife, Cathleen, an art student, the end of last year.

On stage Bruce is quiet, both in his singing and when he talks. He picks the guitar into tune as he introduces a number in story fashion, glancing at the audience through steel-rimmed glasses. He performs only his own compositions and other artists are beginning to pick them up - most recently George Hamilton IV singing "Together Alone" and Anne Murray with "Musical Friends." Some songs are funny, some thought-provoking, and some both.

*Somebody made off with my  
favorite toy  
That I bought with my government  
grant;  
The world situation seems to be  
takin' a definite turn for the worse,  
Somebody put me in reverse.  
Call in the guard  
He's out in the yard  
Been lax in his duties for real  
Take him to task  
For being so crass  
As to let someone in who would  
steal.*

Reporting on a January concert in Ottawa, Lee Edwards wrote in *The Ottawa Citizen* that he found Cockburn's singing 'always compelling. This, combined with thought-provoking lyrics, led to impressive results.'

Bill Horan reported in *The Montreal Star* last year: 'He has good material and good music, both well worth listening to for what they contain.'

Late last year a Toronto performance caused Peter Goddard to write in *The Telegram*: 'Of all the singers around locally, he's still the surest of what he does. And what he does is some of the most compact, lyrical songs heard in Toronto in years.'

Bruce's beautiful guitar work is perhaps best exemplified in "High Priestess" and Life's Mistress" while his sense of humour comes out in "It's an Elephant World."

One line from "The Bicycle Trip" is hard to forget - 'God has buttered the land with sunlight' - and of "Going to the Country" used in *Spring Thaw* this year, Peter Goddard wrote that he found it 'lightly and totally beautiful.'

Bruce's first album, called simply "Bruce Cockburn," came out in April on the True North Records label and includes "Going to the Country," "The Bicycle Trip" and "Musical Friends."

***Voters For Choice Concert Review***

concert date: January 27

*The following is excerpted from the Santa Barbara News-Press, January 30, 1996*

Bruce Cockburn used the opportunity of appearing before a supposedly politically sympathetic audience to trumpet all his favorite causes, particularly those regarding the environment. Cockburn, one of the early arrivals from that seemingly endless stream of gifted Canadian songwriters, doesn't hold back the message. Whether singing love songs or politically-charged statements, his emotions are on his sleeve.

Appearing solo, he didn't miss the band; the power of his words provided more than enough wattage- in one new song, "Wise Users," Cockburn likened environmental desecration to viewing the corpse of his murdered child, while another poured out a stream-of-consciousness list of political ills.

Regrettably, he cut short his fine set when a string broke (snapped under duress, actually) during the violently instrumental portion of "If a Tree Falls," which might be his most eloquent plea decrying the destruction of the rain forest. ~Steven Libowitz

### **Back To The Center**

*january, 1989~ bruce on the weight given to the lyrics of the songs on big circumstance.*

I was thinking in terms of the *song* as opposed to the performance. To give the *song* the weight. That was something I learned on the solo tour I did last year. What was important about what I do, not in any sort of cosmic sense but just in it's own terms, is the songs. The performance is secondary; to get the song out to people. I'd kind of forgotten about that, I think, with all those years of playing with such great musicians and letting them have their head a lot. I tended to get excited about what they were doing and the songs tended to become a vehicle for a performance rather than the focal point of things. On this album we try to put the song back in the center.

### **A Small Pile-O-Stuff**

*storm warning* by murray mclauchlan: bruce contributes background vocals on "if the wind could blow my troubles away." (1981)

*ladies love outlaws* by tom rush: cover of "one day i walk." (1974)

*the fundamental things* by mose scarlett: bruce contributes vocals on the chorus to "hobo's lullaby." (1995)

*stalling for time* by mose scarlett: bruce produced this album. (1981)

*snowbird* by anne murray: cover of “musical friends.” (circa 1970)

*new goodbyes, old hellos* by claudia schmidt: cover of “for the birds.” (1983)

bruce was the special guest and keynote speaker at a fund-raiser and 100 year celebration of the **canadian red cross**. the event took place at the glenbow museum in calgary, alberta, on march 2, 1996. his participation included a talk on his september, 1995, trip to mozambique and the continuing problem with land mines.

### 1996 Tour Gets Underway

april 21	barrymore theater	madison, wisconsin
april 22	fine arts center	grand rapids, michigan
april 24	state theatre	ithaca, new york
april 25	troy music hall	troy, new york
april 26	opera house	lebanon, nh
april 27	wbos earthday show	boston, mass
june 8	calvin simmons theater	oakland, california
july 27	folkfest 96	spilbergo, italy
august 2	schloss festival	schloss, switzerland
september 27	community theatre	sault ste. marie, ontario

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this issue of *gavin's woodpile* looks a bit different to previous issues: there is now more room on the back page for information because the bottom half is not being used for the mailing label, stamp and return address. i've decided to have a go at mailing the newsletter out in envelopes primarily to ensure that the **whole issue** arrives at your doorstep. hopefully it will not only arrive, but arrive in better condition. one reason i have been hesitant to do this any earlier is the additional use of paper involved, so i ask this: PLEASE RECYCLE. it will make me feel better about this decision. the matter of the envelope will be new only to readers in the u.s., as non-domestic mailings have always required them.

## Issue Number 15

### June 1996

## **Bruce Cockburn Talks Video**

with Rob Otis X

*rob interviewed bruce at his home outside toronto by phone in november 1994.*

*Rob:* Bruce, I've got *my* favorite videos but which ones would you say stand out as your best?

*Bruce:* My all time favorite is the one we did called, "Call It Democracy" which uses a lot of "found" footage. The video was very well edited and to me fit the song perfectly just for its lyrical content alone. The other video that was well produced, "Listen For The Laugh," was off my last album.

*Rob:* Have you ever encountered any wildly inconsistent audio problems in the post production editing stages for any of the videos you have released so far?

*Bruce:* No not really, that's something one can pretty much take care of with foresight. I do go into these ventures assuming (laughs) that I will be working with competent people using good competent equipment and directives. In retrospect, of everything I've done so far, I'd say the people are used to handling these types of problems with very little nagging distractions or difficulties.

*Rob:* I'd like to dig a little deeper into the mechanics of certain other audio tools such as visual wave-form editing for the moment.

*Bruce:* I don't think I know enough to intelligently address that one, not being too versed in the technicalities of video editing. I've been around several of my video edits- "Listen for the Laugh" being one of them - but its been more down to the video people alerting me to having "this or that" logically happen in the end result. I'll pretty much determine if I want it in the final footage or not. That's the level I'm involved with my own videos.

*Rob:* I know a lot of artists in the industry, both past and present, have an enormous distaste for producing a "music video" of any magnitude. Do you look at the overall finished vision in a video as an expression of yourself?

*Bruce:* There's always been an urge to express myself and of course the desire in me wants to be heard. Any artist has to have "creative arrogance" to assume that what is said will be viewed as more than just a disposable excursion into fantasy or media happy-land madness. I mean its got to be worthwhile and of value to somebody, right? To me value is at times best left undefined. I operate on the premise that eventually you are going to be heard and what's said definitely will effect somebody. You have to always think about what your story line is about since the influence you have on the viewer will have to be something that you can live with forever. You don't want to be the inspiration behind people committing suicide, torturing children or anything like that.

As I see it you must wind up cultivating their minds and maybe, just maybe, get them to feel simply good about themselves for a little while.

*Rob:* Did “Rocket Launcher” bring the situation of its people into the national limelight and encourage local Guatemalan activists to vigorously reverse the deplorable plight occurring during that time?

*Bruce:* You can never really assess how much any one element has to do with the outcome of the larger picture and its unprecedented set of unfolding events. Interestingly, many of the refugees whom the song was written about eventually heard it.

*Rob:* Did you embark on any special promotion during the time the video was initially airing? If so, were you advised not to travel to Guatemala because of the implications of the song’s powerful message?

*Bruce:* Yes, yes, yes. I was warned not to go there because of the Guatemalan authorities who heard about the song’s emphasis on its misaligned acts of committed discrimination and victimization ideals. To say what kind of overall effect the song had... I can’t really say. If you look at it, the ongoing “hidden” dangers and obstacles are still all around. The situation is still very bad and many are still in difficult straits in Mexico. Their position is still precarious with an every day on-going struggle to pull themselves together and out of the secondhand word of a political situation considered to be someone else’s holy revelation. It remains to be seen where all of this will end up. I just hope their situation will improve with time.

*Rob:* This brings me up to the visual turbulence that was being symbolically altered through the lighting of natural to orange/greenish hues at the beginning sequence frames of “Rocket Launcher.”

*Bruce:* I’d have to look at the first few seconds to see what you are talking about.

*Rob:* It looked like some kind of mutated apparatus swinging around in the wind.

*Bruce:* The bamboo wind chimes? Oh, okay. That’s what you saw. I think we were trying to set up a creative tropical war zone mood. The bamboo chimes have an obvious tropical association with their compelling symbolism. The image is somewhat reminiscent of fragmented bones swinging in the wind... that’s how it struck me when I saw the final clip.

*Rob:* I liked the torrid stained shadows subliminally created by the falling rocks of the quarry scene passages in “A Dream Like Mine.”

*Bruce:* The quarry scenes appealed to me because of how graphic the landscape appeared to be against the falling rocks. The native landscapes were something my film editor, Larry Jordan, had a “bug” to get in. This was a little more footage than I would have used, though everything came down to what was workable and usable during the edit



stages. It's still a good video but it's not exactly what I wanted accomplished originally. Most of the time the musician has very little say.

*Rob:* Did this happen to you with any of your recent video assemblages?

*Bruce:* I was in between bits of touring and was trying to complete the video to "A Dream Like Mine." Larry Jordon came up with the storyline concept. This was the first one we did with Sony (my record company here in the states) and they wanted a lot of say to the finished product. I'll have to say this was the least hands-on-to-detail that I was involved in.

*Rob:* You mean you weren't involved in the "trick curtain" sequences in those rather magnificent settings ?

*Bruce:* Again that was Larry's concept and he was in a hurry, too. The concept of the curtains falling away was more effective as an idea than what it turned out to be in reality for the video. Larry wanted to stick a lot of things in there that really didn't have that much to do with "A Dream Like Mine." The song doesn't deal with the distortions of reality or at least it didn't try to. It more or less is trying to reacquaint the being of balance between the human world and the rest of the universe. The viewer was suppose to see this in terms of how an indigenous person views that type of communicative wholeness. Larry was thinking too much in a dream mode and didn't come up with the right translation to what the song was trying to relate to its listener.

*Rob:* I know that you haven't been blessed with much media exposure in the U.S., which generally likes to suppress any philosophical truths. Shouldn't such songs as "Rocket Launcher" or "A Dream Like Mine" be televised along side other pursuits of proverbial knowledge like Nine Inch Nails who gets shown about ten times a day on VH1/MTV?

*Bruce:* I have to believe that there's got to be many more people besides myself making videos that really are trying to say something. As far as I know there is no way to know if videos- mine or others- are being shown at any time of the day. Though I know for a fact that my videos don't get televised in the States to any appreciable degree. I mean, maybe a "Rocket Launcher" will be on what they call "light rotation" - which means airing it 3A.M. in the morning. There are some local cable channels there showing the "less accessible" videos like mine.

*Rob:* What was the first video you ever made, Bruce?

*Bruce:* "Lovers in a Dangerous Time."

*Rob:* You mean you've done nothing prior to 1984 with all those other releases put out in your name?

*Bruce:* There was a film made in 1970 done by a guy that was working with the National Film Board in Canada. He was using a radical filterization, which is obviously old hat

now. It kind of made images that looked like the cover of the first Mothers of Invention album *Freak Out* which had these strange colors that were either tweaked or blended in. That “video” was about 20 minutes and contained about 5 songs from my first album. The story line had my wife, dog and myself romping around the woods and fields while the album’s music was used as a soundtrack for the film. It would be considered a video but not in terms of what’s being done now. I would have to say the visuals represented the person- me - behind those songs.

*Rob:* What happened to your production afterwards? Was it marketed in any minor-big way?

*Bruce:* It got sold to the Canadian Broadcasting Company but the engineers refused to show it. They thought their name would get a bad reputation because of the color being so weird. It’s funny I don’t even remember the name of the video... you might want to ask Bernie.

*more to come from rob’s interview with bruce...*

## **Where You Are**

*gavin’s woodpile* presently has readers in:

alaska, washington state, oregon, california, hawaii, arizona, utah, new mexico, colorado, texas, oklahoma, minnesota, missouri, kentucky, tennessee, mississippi, alabama, georgia, florida, south carolina, north carolina, virginia, ohio, illinois, wisconsin, indiana michigan, washington, d.c., maryland, pennsylvania, new jersey, new york, connecticut, new hampshire, massachusetts, vermont, maine, ontario, quebec, manitoba, alberta, british columbia, saskatchewan, luxembourg, united kingdom, australia, austria and the netherlands.

thanks to those who have helped spread the word about bruce’s music, and to those who have graciously helped spread the word about *gavin’s woodpile*. your thoughtfulness is appreciated. ~daniel

## **Popularity is Pursuing Elusive Bruce Cockburn**

by Dave Billington

*the following article comes from a canadian newspaper from november, 1974.*

Bruce Cockburn is the kind of artist who drives his manager and record company executives crazy with his refusal to fit into a pigeon-hole.

“How can I explain it,” his manager lamented. “I mean here he is in the middle of his second big tour of Canada, getting great press all over and what’s he doing? He’s just decided to wander over to the bus station and take a bus back to Ottawa before we head out west.”

But is this non-conformity the precise key to the Ottawa singer’s success and rising popularity?

Both personally and musically, Cockburn is something of a Cheshire-cat figure- wispy, almost ethereal, and yet demanding attention because of the wisdom and art which lingers behind the vanishing smile.

There are some artists who are cult-figures. Their attraction stems from the very private aura about them. In some respects Cockburn is like that too, except that talking to people who are seeing or hearing him for the first time you realize that his appeal is far deeper than that.

Perhaps the word that best suits him is warm.

As he sits on the stage playing immaculate and extremely difficult guitar arrangements and singing with his high, clear voice you are caught up in the experience of shared warmth which is rare in most musical performances, and most especially in the so-called “pop” field.

There is no doubt that the quality of his songs has a great deal to do with it. They lack that harsh, cutting bitterness which underpins so much of contemporary pop music. Instead they allude, musically and verbally, to colors and light in a way that makes the very atmosphere around Cockburn seem to glisten.

Even when he’s committing himself politically or socially, Cockburn seems to be more worldly-wise and resigned than bitter.

His stage attitude is unique. He neither panders to an audience nor disappears into a self-indulgent ego trip.

About the only thing that has changed in the Cockburn of this tour from the one of last winter is that he’s let his hair grow back in and he seems to have given up the Laplander boots he was wearing.

Another change, which Cockburn can do nothing about, is the rapidly expanding popularity that is about to overtake him.

His records are selling better and better and his tours are getting longer and more fully booked. He sold out Massey Hall in Toronto, the Alumni Hall in London, Ontario, and the Theatre Maisoneuve here.

He recently played a folk festival in Philadelphia and was such a success that he received the ultimate cache of the American folk-rock scene - a writer from the underground establishment newspaper *Rolling Stone* was assigned to follow him around for a couple of days to do a feature on him.

But from his appearance here it is unlikely this increased attention will seriously change his approach.

How many singers, after cracking on a high note during a particularly intense song, would make a gentle wise-crack about it after the applause died down? Not only allude to it, but take the mickey out of one of his own songs in doing it?

This is the kind of thing you find, not only in a Cockburn concert, but in his songs. A gentle irony, a hint of self-mockery spiced with considerable intelligence and a keen eye for beauty.

No matter how elusive Cockburn seems to be, once you've seen him in concert or really listened to him on record, you'll catch that smile, either in his voice or on his boyish face.

But be careful because just when you think you've got it pinned down it will fade away and turn up somewhere else.

Cheshire cats are like that.

\*\*\*\*\*

**bruce**, the person who was on stage taking pictures of you during the soundcheck at the *state street church* in portland, maine, on april 28, 1996, sends their apologies for being such a distraction. in fact, while crying on my shoulder over this very matter (via the phone) from their home on the east coast, **i** was struck by an earthquake here in snohomish. it was reckoned, given the timing, that perhaps you were chiming in on this subject via the quake. by the way, this was me first shaker. hope it's me last... ~dk

### **Down From True North**

look for the 1995 release by the **oysterband** entitled *the shouting end of life* (tnsd 0100). it is distributed in canada by true north and contains a cover of "lovers in a dangerous time." however, the u.k. release is minus that track.

available on may 22, 1996, is the release *high or hurtin'* by **blackie & the rodeo kings**. the main line-up is: colin linden, stephen fearing and tom wilson (of junkhouse). guest performers include bruce cockburn and colleen peterson.

**celebrating 25 years of true north...** there will be three broadcasts from the university of toronto's CIUT, as follows:

june 3.....the history of true north

june 10...bruce cockburn tribute: the first 25 years

june 17...true north now: blackie & the rodeo kings / the hellbillies and more

**bruce is in the studio** in toronto during parts of may and june recording his next release. it will be co-produced by bruce and colin linden. players include gary burton (vibraphone) and rob wasserman (bass). although it would not be accurate to call it a jazz record, it will likely be the most seriously jazz-influenced release since 1976's *in the falling dark*. dream release-date would be october. more information as it becomes available.

### **squint, the soothsayer**

disclaimer: **none** of this might be true

bruce's next album **might** be titled *the charity of night* or possibly *frogs and other amphibians i have known*.

it **might** be mixed in new orleans or in a blender.

additional musical guests **might** include jonatha brooke and patty larkin, or not.

doug **might** secretly be lorenzo lamas, or secretly rides lamas from south america.

### **yeeeee-ha**

overlooked but not forgotten: bruce contributes guitar to nanci griffith's "goin' back to georgia." this is found on the *columbia records radio hour, vol 2*, released in february, 1996 (see issue number 13 for more details).

**earth day 1996**... this cd contains 17 tracks by canadian artists including "if a tree falls" by bruce cockburn. net proceeds from the sales of this cd go to earth day canada to support the community-based planting projects on the *canadian natural highway*. the project is a joint effort between hmv canada and earth day canada. see page six for hmv's address and toll-free number for ordering. approximately \$12 u.s., including postage to the u.s.

**large kangaroo eats gavin mudd**. *woodpile* reader, gavin mudd, is making a trek from australia to north america from july 28th to october 19th, to see the sights. he's expecting to catch a few of bruce's shows while here. in fact, his *first*. he got tired of waiting for bruce to come back to oz, so he took matters into his own hands. gavin is looking to find people who might want to meet up with him during his journey. he expects to be in alberta, saskatchewan, colorado, wisconsin, michigan, massachusetts ontario, and

probably a few points in between. if you'd like to meet up with gavin (or offer a floor to sleep on) he can be reached as follows:

gavin mudd  
e-mail: angelb@netspace.net.au  
tel: +61-3-9432-2314  
fax: +61-3-9432-1857

**updated schedule- 1996 solo tour**

april 21	barrymore theater	madison, wisconsin
april 22	fine arts center	grand rapids, michigan
april 24	state theatre	ithaca, new york
april 25	troy music hall	troy, new york
april 26	opera house	lebanon, nh
april 27	wbos earthday show	boston, mass
april 28	state street church	portland, maine
april 30	club 930	washington, d.c.
june 8	calvin simmons theater	oakland, california
june 9	cuesta college auditorium	san luis obispo, calif.
july 27	folkfest 96	spilmbergo, itlay
august 2	schloss festival	schloss, switzerland
august 9	edmonton folk festival	edmonton, alberta
august 11	newport folk festival	newport, rhode island
august 17	harbourfront centre	toronto, ontario (taped by cbc)
august 21	big top chautauqua	bayfield, wisconsin
august 24	rocky mountain folk fest.	lyons, colorado
september 27	community theatre	sault ste. marie, ontario

**Outside a broken phone booth with no money in my hand...**

in an effort to make available the most current information regarding bruce's tour schedule, i present the following scenario to help illustrate a proposal:

it's the day before printing the june issue of *gavin's woodpile*. i've got ten tour dates. there are more coming, but the printing deadline can't wait. the newsletter is completed and posted off. the very next day, i receive information via a fax, a phone call, a carrier pigeon, federal express, a man staggering to my door...

anyway, eight more dates are confirmed but this information won't be available to you until the next issue comes out two months later. yikes! on top of that, five of these newly added dates will come and go before the next issue. this leads to my proposal~ publishing the newsletter *everyday*, 365 days a year. no, wait. i have a better idea...

here's the *real* offer: i'm happy to call and tell you of dates that may be in your area, however, i can only do this if you are willing to accept a *collect call*. in otherwords, help share the cost of sharing the information. if this is something you would like to participate in, send a letter or postcard stating that you would like to be on the call roster. please include your phone number, best times to call, city and state you live in and how far you are able/willing to drive to see a show.

### **Looking for...**

*gavin's woodpile* is always looking for photographs and printed articles regarding bruce for the *woodpile* library. if you've anything you'd like to permanently contribute, please include:

with photos: date/ venue/ location/ who took the photo. please include this info on a sticky note or separate from the photo as ink on the back of pictures will eventually bleed through.

with articles: date/ title of newspaper, magazine, etc/ town or city. please write this info in pencil somewhere on the border of the article or attach separately.

*daniel keebler*  
*gavin's woodpile*  
7321 131st ave se  
snohomish, wa 98290

## **Issue Number 16**

### **August 1996**

**talking with david wiffen**  
by daniel keebler

*david is in the midst of preparing for the release of his first album since 1973's **coast to coast fever**. the new album is being produced by phillip bova. i spoke with david by phone from his home town of ottawa on june 21, 1996. we started with the early days and covered some of the bands that david had shared with bruce in the 1960's. by call's end, we were **south of somewhere...***

david, can you tell me a bit about **the children**?

that was my first band. it was an ottawa group which included bruce cockburn on lead guitar and myself as vocalist. there was sandy crawley, richard patterson and on bass, neville wells.

*peter hodgson was in there at some point.*

he was with them when they originally started. at the point that i came on the scene he wanted to go on an extended trip into the states and down to mexico. i took over his place in the band as it were.

we worked little local gigs. we'd occasionally go out for a friday or a saturday and we'd drive to some place that was fairly near the city so we could arrive on time. we had a pretty good time. they were all extremely good musicians. we were tight friends. i still see sandy on a regular basis, i see richard *sometimes*. nev plays now as a solo act in a sort-of roadhouse place in the east of town here. bruce, of course, has done his *incredible* thing. i'm starting all over again.

that's who the personnel were in that group.

*i'll name a few songs that the band performed and perhaps you can make a few comments on them: "i'm leaving you out," "merry go round" and "blotting paper."*

"i'm leaving you out" and "merry go round" are two that i took over the singing on. "blotting paper" is one i think that sandy took the lead on. they probably would have either been written by bruce or sandy. we also had another person involved with the band by the name of bill hawkins. in those days he was, as i like to describe him, a catalyst. he was a poet, and a good one, too. i spoke with him yesterday. he hasn't been in the business for a long, long time.

*i take it there weren't any official releases from that period of time.*

i *think* there was one, yes. it was called "it's a dirty shame" [written by bill hawkins]. the *children* did it, and the *esquires* released a version of it. i can't remember what was on the flip side of it. people still remember that song today. they usually tend to equate it with the *esquires*, because they were a "cleaner" band than we were. i think they were pretty well the top band in ottawa at that time. they had some success in the field which was quite rare in those days. they were together for quite awhile. they were definitely very much a going thing when i got here.

*i've heard of **heavenly blue**, but know little about them.*

they were a blues band that used to play on friday nights at *le hibou*, which was our local coffeehouse. they would start after the main act. people would leave [after the main act] and the doors were locked for awhile. things would take off around twelve or twelve-



thirty. the blues people would be waiting outside, and as soon as the audience changed over and everybody was comfortable then the show started. they were a great band, and bill hawkins was actually the lead singer. there would be guest artists. i was there every friday. i'd sing two or three songs with them and we all had a great time.

*i suppose bruce would have been a part of this scene.*

yes, he was. he probably played lead and rhythm. it was one of those bands where if somebody couldn't make it that night, there was someone to fill in. there were quite a few guest artists who used to go up and sing a song or two.

*were there ever any official releases from **heavenly blue**?*

no, it was purely a fun get-together to just play the blues on friday night.

**3's a crowd**; *probably the largest success you were involved with prior to your solo career?*

definitely. we used to pride ourselves with the fact that we weren't just another rock and roll band. we used to go up there and put on a show. not only was there music but there was comedy and other bits of things that we would do. we were quite unusual for that time. this is before everything got eaten up by discos. we were invited to play at the ontario pavilion at expo '67. i think our original booking was for two weeks and we ended up being there playing two shows everyday, for around three or four months. the place was always packed. after we finished that, we were offered two weeks at the canadian pavilion, which we also did.

*who were the original members of **3's a crowd**?*

brent titcomb, donna warner and trevor veitch. they played quite a few supper clubs in china town in vancouver. visual humour was a very important aspect of that particular group. they put out one 45 that i can remember. one side was gordon lightfoot's "steel rail blues" and the other side i can't recall.

i went to vancouver and visited them and heard them do their thing [david had met up with donna and brent earlier on in calgary where they had surveyed the possibility of them all being in the same band]. we did eventually end up in toronto. they added myself as an extra vocalist, richard patterson on drums and comerie smith on bass. what confuses most people is why there were six people in a band called *3's a crowd*. because they were known quite well under that name we thought we'd better keep it and just explain to whoever wanted to know how we became six, instead of three.

*through the various re-incarnations of the band, bruce's contribution was that of having contributed a few songs.*

his inclusion was after we broke up. we were doing a small ontario tour at the time and we were in london, ontario. before the night of the second performance in london donna became very ill and had to be shuttled back to toronto. there we were without a female vocalist. enter colleen peterson. that's where colleen came into it. we buzzed her on the phone, she got on a plane and she came to london. that night she came up on stage and performed every song perfectly. she was lyrically word-perfect. we finished out the two week gig with colleen. eventually, as most good groups do, we all had different ideas about what we wanted to do and what we should do next and it caused the inevitable breakup of the band. that's when i came to ottawa. that was in 1968. after we got back to ottawa, we found out that while we were away we had been offered a twenty-six week tv show in montreal. harvey glatt [concert promoter, record store owner and one of ottawa's most important figures in the music industry at that time] suggested that we keep myself, colleen and richard. we added sandy crawley, bruce cockburn and dennis pendrith to the band. the other thing that had been going on was that harvey again got an offer for us to go down to the carolina's and do a six week "quickie tour" of north and south carolina. that was when bruce said something to the affect of "okay, this is it. i'll come with you and i'll do the six weeks, and then i'm gone."

*so you did go to the carolina's?*

we did go; chapel hill, charlotte, greenville and others. that was 1968/69.

*bruce's contribution to **christopher's movie matinee** was that of a songwriter, rather than a performer.*

right. i'd heard his songs a long time ago and i would keep on singing them to the rest of the members of the band until trevor turned to me one day and said "you know that song you keep on singing? that's a *really* good song." i'd been trying to get this over to them for six months. i told him that there were people here in ottawa that were incredibly good writers and that we should take advantage of it. bruce being one of them, as well as sandy crawley and bill hawkins. that's how they came to be on that album.

*how did bruce come to produce 1973's **coast to coast fever**?*

bernie finkelstein had phoned harvey glatt to say that bruce had told him that if i was going to make a record that he would very much like to produce it if that was okay with me. i had always had a very high opinion of bruce and i realized there was a magnificent brain in there. he's a natural musician. i was just delighted. i would be working with somebody that i knew and that i had known for quite a long time. i just jumped right at it. there were one or two false starts because as things were in those days, i was a bit of a naughty boy, and i was doing things that i shouldn't and they were having the usual effect. however, i got myself all cleaned up from that and we went into the studio and worked our buns off for however long. it was an everyday thing and eventually out came this album. it was nominated for a juno. bruce was pretty familiar with the kind of stuff that i did so it was a very comfortable thing to do. the musicians that we chose to do the

various tracks were all previously known to me. it was a very tight ship but it was also quite relaxed.

*how did the situation with bruce producing the album work out?*

it was excellent. there was a lot of telepathy going on and there was nary an argument from start to finish. i knew what his capacities were and he certainly knew what mine were. it was just a thoroughly good experience for both of us. i guess i got to find out that he could indeed produce a record all by himself with little help from his friends. it worked out very well.

*david, tell me about the new project you're working on; **south of somewhere**.*

we're pushing now to try and get it ready for a possible october release so we're going to be working hard and fast next week. i'd say we're probably at the seventy-five percent mark right now. we still need to do basic tracks for about three tunes. there are a few that we could probably release right now and people would go for it. i think there will be some surprises in store for quite a lot of people. it's definitely a 90's project and we're going at it from that point of view. it's really going well.

the songs are all original. some of them are updated versions of songs that i've recorded before and there are also quite a few that have never been recorded, at least by myself. phillip bova, janet kirby and i were sitting down, and i forget what we were talking about, but phillip said out of the blue "south of somewhere" and immediately it just stuck in my brain, and i thought that would be an amazing title for this album. we started to use "south of somewhere" as a working title and gradually, as the months have gone by, that's what it is; *south of somewhere*. i'm overjoyed that we're doing it. what i've ended up with today are all the songs i wrote between *coast to coast fever* and about a year ago.

*how are you feeling about some of the live performances you have coming up?*

i can't wait. we've done three or four. the first couple were a little difficult, but as soon as i got on the stage a voice in the back of my head said "you know how to do this. there's no problem here. just do what you do." and i did. that's what we've been doing ever since.

it was very fortuitous that i met phillip and janet at the time that i did because they were the catalysts that i needed to get rid of this great back-log of material that i had. i had resigned myself to the fact that it would never see the light of day, and it's not going to be that way, which is just fantastic. i'm really excited...

### David Wiffen: Recordings

1965 David Wiffen Live at the Bunkhouse

1967 Christopher's Movie Matinee

1971 David Wiffen  
1973 Coast to Coast Fever  
1994 Coast to Coast Fever (cd, re-release)  
1996 South of Somewhere (coming soon)

*thanks to janet kirby (david's "manager" and generally kind person) for facilitating the arrangements for this interview. - dk*

## **All The Diamonds**

by Vic Bell

This review was originally published in the Canadian Folk Music Society Bulletin, Vol 22, # 2-4 December 1988. With thanks to Vic Bell for its use.

*Bruce Cockburn: All The Diamonds*  
*published by OFC Publications*  
*744 Bronson*  
*Ottawa, ON*  
*Canada, K1S 4G3*

Ever since learning that my right hand could do more with my guitar than strum, I've been a Bruce Cockburn fan. I sit here now, amidst fourteen Cockburn albums and tapes, holding the book "Bruce Cockburn: All The Diamonds." The book features twenty-nine songs and instrumental pieces for guitar from his first ten albums. Music, tablature, chord diagrams, tunings, capo positions; it's all here.

Now, like I say, I'm a Cockburn fan. I've been attending his concerts since '72 or so. I've worn records raw. I've been known to carry binoculars to performances for finger close-ups. I've button-holed the man to ask about tunings. All this, because until the "Dancing in the Dragon's Jaws" album, no songbooks were available. This has not been a totally unfortunate situation. It's helped my ear training, and led to many a pleasant afternoon with other fingerpickers, comparing notes on 'Sunwheel Dance.' By the time this book came into my hands, I had already explored my way around twelve of the songs contained within. Hats off then to Paul Bourdeau who transcribed the songs. Bourdeau's transcriptions confirm my own investigations, but more importantly, they fill in the gaps where my laziness contrived "folk process" variations.

"All the Diamonds" is published and designed by the same folks who presented "Stan Rogers: Songs From Fogarty's Cove." (Four Stars!) The layout is similar, with archival photos and brief song introductions adding insights into Cockburn's creative style. The spiral binding lets the book lie flat while your hands are busy elsewhere, and busy they'll be. Some of these songs are killers!

Like all tabulature books, attempting to learn songs from the tab without listening to them, is not recommended. Nuances of timing and attack are difficult to translate. All the songs in the book, with some doubling from the live "Circles in the Stream," ('Barrelhouse' in particular), fit on one and a half ninety minute tapes, a process I recommend to save record wear and tear.

I have some minor quibbles. Instrumental transcriptions like 'Rouler Sa Bosse', (tuned A444 on the album), could be enhanced with the inclusion of chord diagrams where appropriate. I find myself adding these above the tab. Illiterate pickers like myself require all the visual aids we can get.

Delving into the earlier albums will reveal a Cockburn idiosyncrasy not mentioned in the book. On several songs he tunes his guitar one half tone low; i.e. D# G# C# F# Bf D#. The following songs from the book are tuned this way and you should tune accordingly to be able to play along:

Going to the Country  
Thoughts On A Rainy Afternoon  
One Day I Walk  
High Winds White Sky  
Fall  
Blues Got The World  
Salt, Sun & Time  
Never So Free

Songs duplicated on "Circles in the Stream" are in regular tuning with capo positions sometimes at variance from those mentioned in the text. The open D masterpiece, 'Sunwheel Dance,' is approximately one half tone high on the album. I suggest you tune your bass D off the record rather than attempt to tune from a fork, piano, or electronic tuner. In most other cases, Cockburn's guitar is tuned to concert pitch.

"All The Diamonds," of necessity, skips over lots of songs worthy of inclusion, and every Cockburn enthusiast will regret that their particular favourites were left out. We can only hope that the editors contemplate a second installment. The book covers the period 1969 to 1979, with 'Wondering Where the Lions Are,' Cockburn's first song to gain widespread airplay, being the final selection. This book will naturally appeal to those long-time Bruce Cockburn fans who already have his earlier albums. Newer devotees should check out "Salt, Sun and Time," "Joy Will Find a Way," "In the Falling Dark," and the live album "Circles in the Stream." These albums cover seventeen of the songs in the book.

"All the Diamonds" contains variety enough in the song selection to appeal to fingerpickers of every ability although it would definitely be to your advantage to have educated your thumb in alternate bass picking. Work your way through this book and you'll find you've learned a thing or two about the guitar.

**this, that and the other thing**

***Orphans of God*** is a two cd tribute to Mark Heard. It includes Bruce covering Mark's song "Strong Hand of Love," which previously appeared on the cd of the same title. This project is a fundraiser for the Heard family. *Orphans a God* includes 14 of the 17 tracks that were released on the *Strong Hand of Love* cd in 1994, but it includes twenty additional tracks. Of the 14 songs that reappear, some are different mixes and all have been remastered. There is also a 40 page lyric and photo booklet included. *Orphans of God* includes Colin Linden, Brooks Williams, Victoria Williams, Big Faith (Fergus Marsh & Mike Sloski), Michael Been and many others. To obtain a copy of *Orphans of God*, contact:

Fingerprint Records  
PO Box 197  
Merrimac, MA 01860  
Tel: 800-540-4637  
508-346-4577  
Fax: 508-346-7608

**bruce** played ben and jerry's *one world one heart festival* in warren, vermont, on june 22, 1996.

**additional** european tour dates at print time were:

july 29...the roisin dubh...galway, ireland  
july 30...whelans...dublin, ireland  
july 31...the garterlane...waterford, ireland

**the michael been project** that bruce contributed to is on an indefinite approach pattern at the airport.

**the august 17th** performance at harbourfront centre in toronto will be recorded and then broadcast on cbc radio on august 30th and again on september 7th.

**released** in 1996 is, *in their own*

*words, volume two*. includes a live version of "silver wheels," recorded at *the bottom line* in new york city, on june 27, 1995. it can be ordered directly from the label at: *razor & tie*, p.o. box 585, cooper station, n.y., n.y. 10276, or order by phone at 800-443-3555.

**honor**. bruce contributes an acoustic version of "wise users" to this indigo girls benefit project, which is tentatively set to be released in the near future. look for it. more info as it becomes available.

## **down from true north**

While in California for two concert performances in June, Bruce managed time out to go into the studio with both Bonnie Raitt and Bob Weir. The result of the session- Raitt adds her indelible slide guitar work and Weir sings back-up vocal on "The Whole Night Sky," one of the new songs which will appear on Cockburn's 23rd album tentatively titled *The Charity of Night*. In May, other recording sessions took place with Rob Wasserman on bass and Gary Burton on vibes. The album is scheduled to be mixed in New Orleans.

## **more from number 15**

*more from rob otis x's interview with bruce from november, 1994. see issue number 15 for the main interview. bruce talks about audience taping of his shows:*

Officially I'm against the policy of taping my shows, but obviously people do it and get away with it. Genially speaking if we see someone doing it, the tape's gone, and certainly if it's a video tape.

We can't be at the front door checking everybody, so I know there are tapes floating around. Sometimes someone will come up to me after the concert and want me to sign a tape. What I don't like is when people make it into a commercial proposition.

Still, I'm not comfortable with people taping for themselves. It's music I'd rather have control over and to have a say on how it is presented and what comes out of it. If I'm doing a live radio show and know it's being broadcast live then that's a different situation. When I'm playing in a club, the evening may be very magical, or some nights it might be a horrible dreck of a time. This can be embarrassing and it's something I don't want circulated around at all.

# **Issue Number 17**

## **October 1996**

**fergus marsh: baptism by fire**  
by daniel keebler

*fergus, how did you first come to work with bruce?*

my brother, hugh marsh, had played with him before me. i guess bruce was fairly interested in the chapman stick, of which, although i wasn't very accomplished on it, i'd had it probably longer than anyone else he knew. he invited me to get together and try some tunes out. we'd get together and i'd bring my stick and my bass and he'd play a tune and i'd just pick up the bass because it was the most natural thing for me and he would consistently say "no, try the other thing."

*i could imagine bruce would say that.*

that's the way i like to tell it. he may have called it a stick. i always say "the other thing." that's the way i remember it anyway. that's how i first got started with bruce.

*i'm also curious about the origin of the chapman stick.*

it's made in los angeles by a guy named emmett chapman. i think he said he was inspired by jimi hendrix's tapping technique. in otherwords, not plucking the strings but he would slur a lot with his left hand.

of course you see that technique having come into its own in the '80's with van halen and all those guys when they started using that technique. emmett basically took that technique and looked for an instrument to make it a full-time technique for a new instrument.

*how did you first stumble onto the stick?*

i'm a big peter gabriel fan and i went to some live shows and tony levin was playing it. i had no idea what it was at the time but then i saw an ad for it in a trade magazine and i ordered it, never having touched one before. then it came in and i realized, "ooh, this is hard." different, totally different. i just assumed that a bass player plays it so it must be a bass instrument. but, it was quite a

bit different.

*what time-frame are you talking about as far as when you discovered it?*

something like '82. after i got it i didn't really play it. it was baptism by fire when bruce started being interested.

*baptism by stealing fire ?*

right. that's true. because even though i'd had it for probably over a year at that point i really hadn't put any time into it. i diddled around every now and then and then i was put in a position with bruce to have to play it all the time, and so i had to learn on the road basically.

*you were playing music with bruce for a period of about five or six years. can you tell me a bit about the bands during that time?*

there were three incarnations of bands i played with. *stealing fire*, which was a five-piece: chi sharpe, mike sloski, hugh marsh and bruce. the next one, *world of wonders*, was a seven-piece. we added a trumpet and another vocalist. the next one was a trio: bruce, mike sloski and i.



*i saw that arrangement when you all came to seattle.*

[with humor] i can't say i remember that *particular* show. there are a couple i remember better than others, even though they all seem to melt into one long playing of music, but there's a specific one here and there where you go "oh yeah, i *do* remember that one." usually because it's good.[laughter] or we *hope* anyway. i liked each one for different reasons. the trio was nice to do just because there was so much room with just the three of us. i got the chance to fill a lot of stuff. not necessarily lots of notes, but sounds. they were all rewarding in different ways.

*in the 1989 greenbelt performance video i think one of the things i like is the fact the viewer gets to see a lot of your work.*

they get to understand what i'm doing, too, because there's nothing much else going on. people know what a guitar sounds like and they know what drums sound like and then anything that isn't that they know that *i'm* doing it. on other tours, with like seven people up there, you see this weird-looking 2x4 thing on stage and you really don't know where sounds are coming from. it was nice, from an audience stand-point, for people to understand what kind of noises that thing makes.

*how was the recording process when you were recording with bruce and the band?*

i hadn't done a lot of recording up until then. i remember it being intense. it's hard work. you go over and over tunes a fair bit until you feel like everyone's played the best they can, and as a unit, the best *it* can.

*did bruce work hard to get the songs recorded just so?*

it was usually between the producer and bruce. i think bruce would have an idea what he wanted and he would discuss that with his producer, which during the time i was in the band, was jon goldsmith. bruce's concept of how things should come together would have been discussed and planned out beforehand. i think from there he was willing to give over to the producer- once he felt they had his concept in mind- he would give over that power to jon a fair bit. it's not like giving up *power* necessarily, but rather it's like putting your *trust* in the fact that the producer is going to go for what you want. obviously bruce would always have final say. i'm speculating as to how things went, but that's the way it seemed to me.

*what was the rehearsal process like before you began a tour?*

we did a couple of weeks of rehearsal before we went on a major stint. it was intense. a lot of stuff would have been worked on in the recording rehearsals as opposed to the live rehearsals. in live rehearsals you'd do new versions of older tunes. as far as anything we'd just recorded that was no problem. bruce would decide what older tunes he'd do. he would always change that for the benefit of people who came out to his concerts all the time. they don't want to hear all the same old ones. he'd always pick and choose ones he

hadn't played in awhile and then we'd re-work them for our instrumentation or new players. that ended up taking more time than the newest stuff.

*how is making the transition from one band to another, or working with one musician and then moving on to another? are those transitions usually harmonious?*

it can happen so many different ways. one situation can be amicable and another can be very intense and bad feeling all over the place. it depends on the circumstances of each band situation that you're coming to, or going out of, or whatever. as far as working with bruce, i knew he would change. that's how i got the job in the first place. he likes to keep music interesting for himself, so every few albums he will change his instrumentation and get some new players. it was expected in that particular situation. it's not like a typical band where you've worked all together for a long time and if there's a blow up then there's real bad feelings.

*putting the working/job aspect of things aside, did you enjoy bruce's music on a personal level?*

i had a great time, musically speaking, playing with bruce. i enjoyed a lot of his music. i wasn't familiar with his older stuff. of course i knew some of the songs since my brother started playing with him, which was on *humans*, so i started to hear his stuff then. bruce gave a lot of room to his musicians. he likes to make good use of his players. i think he allows that kind of expression that maybe other people in that position wouldn't allow. that makes it very rewarding for each player, i would think. it certainly was for me; to be able to contribute, but to be able to contribute with your own creativity, and input things that you would like to do with his stuff. he would allow that. that was very enjoyable for me musically. i suppose that when you're talking about tunes you're also talking about lyrics and there were many that i identified with a lot or really appreciated, which is obviously one of his fortes. i think i've heard him say several times, in fact, that if he had to choose, he'd pick his lyrics as the most important aspect of what he does.

*a bit of association: **stealing fire.***

i think it has the most personality of any album i've done with bruce. that is the highest compliment i would pay to albums that i enjoy. it has a very personal, unique flavor. i also used to call it "*hot and sweaty.*" those are the words that come to mind when i think of that album. the parts are all simple. i suppose i think of it as a new start for bruce. maybe that's when it's freshest for him; when he's got a new instrumentation. the stick was quite new for me, too. that's one of the reasons my parts are quite spare, but i think it benefits the album and the songs quite a bit. i found that when i was on the road, on subsequent tours that i did, a lot of people would say that was their favorite album, certainly of the ones i've played on.

*world of wonders*

i had a lot of fun on it. i don't have as vivid a memory of the actual recording. it is definitely a more angular album. there's a lot of parts because there are so many players. there are certain tunes that i hone in and go 'that one's really good.' the single on that was "people see through you." that was a neat video.

*world of wonders* was a 'cooler' record, too, if i can use that as a word to describe it. hot and sweaty for *stealing fire* and cool, a little more detached, on this one. a bit more intricate on the music because of the logistics of fitting that many people in what their role is going to be on each particular tune. when you have that many players you have to orchestrate a little more i think, where *stealing fire* had so much breathing room.

### ***big circumstance***

a sparse album. it was actually a quartet on the album. the *tour* was trio. jon goldsmith played on most of the stuff on the album. it's an album that i really enjoy as well.

*on who is doing what these days:*

**jon goldsmith:** he does a lot of movie scores. he writes and produces movie scores. he does the occasional jingle. i've seen him play with my brother's band. he such a talented guy. he won't lack for anything to do for work. i think he produces albums still. i ran into him a few months ago and he was in the middle of a couple of movie scores.

**hugh marsh:** hugh plays with loreena mckennitt, and he gigs around town. he's writing stuff. he's got a cd that he sells through loreena's web page on the internet. he also has a band with jon goldsmith and a couple of other people from toronto. it's pretty bizarre stuff but really *interesting* bizarre. he produced an album for the serod, which is like a baby sitar.

**mike sloski:** he was just over here. he's playing around town. i don't know what particular projects he's been doing. he's always been a guy that gigs all the time.

**chi sharpe:** chi lives in brooklyn. he was playing with harry belafonte after he left working with bruce, but this was a few years ago so i have no idea about recently.

*bring me up to speed on that you've been doing lately. i know that you worked with pierce pettis on tinseltown in 1991.*

yes, and i also worked with mark heard, which is how bruce actually heard mark heard first. i brought back the first tape i did with him [mark]. bruce had actually met mark when i did in los angeles on one of the tours, probably the last tour i did with bruce.

i've played on a bunch of albums since then. i work with a guy out of montreal who sings in french. we travel in europe and quebec mostly. i just finished an album for a guy named gord johnson in winnipeg. i have a band around town, that's sort-of alternative rock, called ***big faith*** [this band includes mike sloski]. it's never really taken off but it's

been a fun band. i did a billy badstone album called *little broken bread*. mark heard was engineering on that one. i'm writing with terry hatty who sings with *the guess who* at the moment. that's early on right now, we're just doing some writing. i'm not sure how we're going to get stuff recorded, or who else is going to play with us. but i'm excited about that one. i really enjoy writing so i get to do a lot of the writing on this. i'm just enjoying it a lot and hoping that things move along to the next level.

*when you say you enjoy writing are you talking about lyrics or music?*

i just write music. but i like writing in the context of songs so i usually write with someone. with *big faith* a lot of that writing would be me and the singer. with this new writing project i would write a groove and progression and hand it over to terry to do some stuff with and we'd get together and hash it out. i enjoy that a lot.

*i spoke with fergus from his home in toronto in april, 1996. photo courtesy of f.m.*

fergus has two cd's available with his band, **big faith**:

*grounded* (1992)

*undertow* (1994)

if you are interested in obtaining copies, check the resource listing on page six. you can also obtain them from:

fingerprint records  
p.o. box 197  
merrimac, ma 01860  
usa

tel: 800-540-4637  
508-346-4577  
fax: 508-346-7608

### **press conference from the 1996 edmonton folk music festival**

*bruce answered questions from various reporters at a press conference prior to his performance on august 9, 1996. i had the interesting experience of attending. the following is the outcome... ~dk*

*you did the two albums [nothing but a burning light and dart to the heart] with t-bone burnett. what is it that he does to bring out the best in an artist, and how is he different from other producers?*

my experience with other producers is pretty limited, but i certainly learned a lot from working with t-bone, and i think we got some good music out of it, too. i think the things that you notice about him right away are that he's got a tremendous amount of studio expertise and knows what everything does, which is something that every producer is supposed to have but not all of them do. he has an incredible insight into what the essence of a song is and an ability to keep that front and center in the process of recording.

*those two albums started to swing a little bit away from the more overtly political content. can you talk a bit about why the shift took place?*

it's just time and space. there's no logic to why things like that happen, other than circumstance. sometimes things are thrust in front of you that produce a certain type of song and other times it's something else. i've never been the type of writer who sits down with an agenda to write a song. i don't go around thinking 'gee, i should write a song about volcanoes this week or something, and then write a song about volcanoes. it doesn't work like that. i have to wait until the trigger comes along and when it does it can be anything.

*what's on your mind these days?*

well, funny you should ask. we just finished a new album [laughter]. there's a song, it probably won't end up on that album, but it's on another one that's just about to come out. the indigo girls have put together a double cd benefit for the *honor the earth* campaign for which they are major supporters in the states. it's got a bunch of different artists on it; victoria williams is on it, i'm on it, they're on it, soul asylum and a whole bunch of others. there's a song on that that i contributed called "wise users," which is a diatribe against the wise use movement. a little less than a year ago i was in mozambique for the second time with the focus of that trip being the issue of landmines. mozambique is typical of a number of countries that have a landmine problem in the third world. i was there looking at that problem. that produced a couple of songs, one of which is about landmines. that's on the album. as you can gather from those descriptions that's the kind of thing that determines the content of an album. it's just what happens to me in the year or two that i'm writing the songs.

*obviously you've witnessed a lot of change since high winds white sky. what do you see as a thread of continuity that has carried you from that time to now?*

it's still *me* doing it. that's the biggest one [laughter]. it's hard for me to be objective enough to actually give you a sensible answer to that. to me all the albums are quite different from each other, but they do all represent the on-going process of *my* life and experiences that make it up. i guess that's the common thread, really. that, and that there's guitar on all of them.

*when you're out doing a solo tour, does it bring out a lot of material that's been sitting on the shelf for awhile?*

no, not per se. most of the songs work well either way. there are a few that don't work solo *at all*, that just really need somebody else playing in them. but most of them translate pretty well from one format to another. it's really more a question of making a show that's interesting and not the same as what i did the last time i came through and keeping myself interested by doing stuff i haven't done for awhile. somebody accused me a few months ago of never playing anything from *inner city front*. i realized that i *hadn't* done anything from that album in a long time, so i revived the song "justice" which i've been doing lately. this guy said he'd been at fifteen or twenty of my shows and he'd never heard me do anything from *inner city front* and 'what the hell was i doing anyway?' [laughter] he *likes* the album.

*are there any covers of your songs by anyone right now that you particularly like?*

that i particularly *like*? oooh, that's loaded. [laughter]

*have you heard any of the stuff that **burning sky** have done?*

yes. actually that's a perfect answer to that. it's a group from arizona. it's a trio; two of whom are native guys and their music is very much influenced by the music of the southwestern native cultures and they did a cover of "indian wars" which is actually *really* nice, and probably truer to the intent of the song than i got, given their background.

*does it make you feel a bit like an institution when people start covering your tunes and releasing tribute albums?*

i wish they'd do *more* of it. the tribute album i could take or leave. i like the idea that people sing the songs. the main reason i started doing it myself is that nobody else would.

*are there any issues here in canada that you are particularly concerned about?*

i keep having to come to alberta and complain about the treatment of the lubicons and every time i go away from here i go away hoping that somebody's going to do something about it and nobody ever does. it seems to me that the lubicon have been so shabbily dealt with, that's putting it kindly, that it's a real *blot* on canada's name and reputation.

*why do you think there's been so little said about it?*

i think it's because the individuals who govern us are a bunch of corrupt sleaze-bags, to put it in a nutshell. i think they're also callous and uncaring. it all seems to add up to a total picture of a really unfortunate set of developments, or *lack* of developments, in the case of the land claims settlement with the lubicons. i think in the old days it was just overt racism. up until recent times the indian affairs department in canada was pretty much a bureaucracy based on racism. that started to change in the '60's probably but the lubicons were unlucky enough to be living on land that somebody discovered resources

on in the early '70's. now they've got a big problem and now nobody *wants* to solve the problem because they want the money instead.

*do you think that some of the aboriginal issues have gotten second-class treatment because there are bigger national unity issues?*

the national unity issue is so complicated and bogus it's hard to get your head around it i find. i can certainly sympathize with people in quebec wanting to maintain their culture, and i think it's a great thing. i hope they maintain it and i hope they do it by staying with the rest of us, because i like it. that sentiment is being played upon by their own version of corrupt bureaucrats. people who want to get huge money out of these mega-projects. it seems to me that this independence thing is more about that than having people be a sovereign nation. not for the average person in the street in quebec but for the real movers in it.

*how long are you in edmonton and what are you doing to have fun while you're here?*

i'm *talking to you guys* for fun [laughter]. i'm here until 6:00 tomorrow morning. when i first booked the festival i was really hoping to stay for the whole thing because i hear nothing but wonderful reports from everybody i run into that plays here. but unfortunately another thing came up and i have to go to that on sunday; the newport folk festival.

*is that the first time you've played there?*

no, i played there a couple of years ago.

*can you substantiate the reports about the edmonton folk festival thus far?*

based on what i've seen so far, yes. good treatment, good music, good audiences. we've even got good weather which i don't think one takes for granted.

*you came out and played a few tunes with **blackie and the rodeo kings** yesterday. have you any comments on willie bennett's songwriting and musicianship.*

i've never actually heard willie play, so i can't comment on his musicianship at all. i certainly appreciate his songwriting. i think he's a tremendous writer. the people who have heard him perform tell me he's good. i think the blackie and the rodeo kings album is good. i was glad to be a part of that even though my involvement is pretty token, it was fun.

*the other big musical thing happening in town is garth brooks doing several shows. i was wondering what you think of garth brooks.*

the bugger didn't invite me [laughter]. what do i think of garth brooks? i think he's good at what he does. i'm not that interested in it, but i think he's good at it. there are other

songwriters operating in the country milieu that interest me more. i'm not even sure if i know who they are but i hear stuff that's more interesting to me, a little edgier. he's kind of 'mister middle-of-the-road' but he's good at that and he's certainly not the worst thing attracting large numbers of people these days. how's that for diplomacy? [laughter]

*have you chosen the band for your next tour yet?*

i don't know if i'll have a band or not. i might, but if so i haven't assembled it as you might gather. the plan is right now to start touring in february in europe and then work out from there, because the album will be coming out in january. there's a lot of time between now and then to decide what to do. i'm sort of toying with the idea of just staying with the solo thing for now. it's a pretty wordy record and a lot of the newer songs are lyric intensive and that works well in the solo format. people are able to hear them and concentrate on them. if i have a band it will be a very small one, and i don't know who it would be yet.

*a long time ago the fellow who ran ecm records was interested in you doing an instrumental album.*

actually he was interested in me doing an album of *songs*. they liked the idea because of the stuff on *in the falling dark*. they knew that album and they wanted something sort-of like that only with *their* players, which would have been a fantastic thing to do but as it turned out, by the time we actually got down to it, my songwriting had taken a different tack. we were more into *dancing in the dragon's jaws/ humans* mode by then and it was no longer really a viable concept. actually i got closer to it on this album than on any other one. we've got gary burton playing vibes, rob wasserman on bass and a drummer from toronto named gary craig who make up the basic band on the record.

*are you starting to get more interested in jazz again?*

again, it's kind-of circumstantial. the songs dictate what they want in the way of treatment, and the songs were going, let's say, away from the overtly 'rootsy' thing that was going on two albums back and to some degree, on *dart to the heart*. for some reason there was the need for vibes on this record, if you're going to get vibes you may as well get the best guy. fortunately he was able and willing to do it.

*when you get somebody like gary burton to come in, does that change the song?*

usually by the time we get that far along i've got a pretty fixed idea of how i want the songs to be and i've probably allowed space for somebody like that already. 'what do you do between verse two and verse three?' well, i could play something on the guitar or i could get *vibes*. that's part of the process for building up to the recordings. where that really did make a difference is on an instrumental piece, which i've been doing as a solo guitar piece, which we tried as a duet piece with gary and me, and it worked out really well. most of the songs with lyrics don't change too much.



*about bernie finkelstein; it's a rare thing in the business to see people together for as long as you guys have stuck it out.*

i know. the only other ones i can think of are neil young and eliott roberts. they've been working together *at least* as long, maybe longer. yes, it's pretty rare, and it's worked all this time. we'll keep doing it as long as it does.

*does he push you or do you guys work together to get things done?*

i guess it depends on what you mean by 'push.' he suffers with what i present him with and deals with it as well as he can and he's got a great sense of strategy which i think is really the key to it all. that's how somebody who does an essentially uncommercial kind of thing has been able to do as well as i have for as long as i have. a lot of it has to do with bernie's ability to get the stuff around to people and make sure it gets heard.

*on the upcoming album:*

in the case of the songs on the new album *all* of them were written at night. one of the reasons for that is that i'm in a position to digest and reflect on the stuff i've acquired during the day. often that is when the creative juices start to flow. it doesn't usually happen when you're on the run somewhere or while you're actually absorbing information, although it can. in the case of two songs on the new album, *mines of mozambique* and *the coming rains*, one and a half of them were written over the course of a whole night, sitting up just looking out the hotel room window at this scene and writing down what i'd seen in the few days preceding. i don't know how to generalize how that works.

*have you ever tried collaborating with another songwriter?*

i've done very little of it. hugh marsh and i wrote "stolen land" for instance. fergus marsh was co-writer of some of the songs on *stealing fire*, from the musical end. barney bentall and i wrote a song together that's on his last album, which is actually the only time since i've been recording that i've actually sat down with somebody with the deliberate intention of writing a song. he got the idea and i ran with it. so far there haven't been any other opportunities.

## **other things**

you may have heard a song on the radio this summer called "standing outside a broken phone booth with money in my hand." although it sounds like a bruce cockburn song title, it isn't *quite*. the song was released by the **primitive radio gods**. however before it got to the airwaves, it was a song with no title. enter bruce cockburn's album *further adventures of*. the band was stuck for a title when member chris o'connor turned to his record collection and pulled out *further adventures of*. he saw the song "outside a broken phone booth with money in my hand" and said "wow! this is a cool title... we copped it."

when contacted, bruce cockburn's comment on chris's tribute was: "well, there's a lot of broken phone booths in the world, but it's nice to know someone is listening. i always wondered who bought that record."

**verde valley school music festival**~ bruce will appear again this year (along with artists such as shawn colvin, bonnie raitt and john trudell) for a solo performance set to benefit the verde valley school in sedona, arizona on october 5th. the concert is aiming to raise money for the school's native american scholarship fund.

bruce played northrop auditorium in minneapolis, minnesota, on september 20, 1996 to help launch *honor*, a benefit cd for the *honor the earth* campaign...

...and, **bruce will play the city center theatre in new york city** on october 17, 1996, as part of the rainforest alliance's "smart sounds: music for the planet" concert. this benefit show includes jackson browne, among others.

## Issue Number 18

### December 1996

#### **My Alley Becomes A Cathedral**

by Barry Wright

In 1969, I was living in Toronto, a refugee from L.A. I wasn't the *typical* American expatriate, meaning that I wasn't a draft dodger, but I still felt all the loneliness of being a stranger in a strange land. I knew three people in town: my ladyfriend, who had moved there with me, and two friends we had known back in California. It was at a dinner at this other couple's house that I first discovered Bruce Cockburn.

We were in their dining room, talking before dinner, and about twenty feet away in the living room, a small black-and-white TV was on. It was tuned to CBC, which was showing a documentary of the latest Mariposa Folk Festival. I was sorta paying attention but not really...the conversation was more interesting.

That is, it was more interesting until I heard several hauntingly beautiful guitar notes and a soft, gentle voice coming from the TV and turned to catch my first glimpse of Bruce Cockburn. He was playing *Thoughts On A Rainy Afternoon*. I was transfixed. I just turned and walked away from my friends and sat down in front of the tiny 12-inch screen and watched and listened. My friends later told me that they were laughing at me and making fun of me the whole time, but I didn't hear a thing they said. I was no longer there. I was in an alley that had been transformed into a cathedral by the simple sound of raindrops on trash can lids. Bruce had somehow managed to reach out through the normally cold, impersonal medium of television and transport me to Another Place.

When the song was over, I found myself sitting on the floor, wiping tears from my eyes. My friends taunted me mercilessly, but I just smiled and didn't mind. I knew something they didn't. I knew about Bruce Cockburn.

Sitting here at my desk, almost 27 years later, I hit Disk 1, Cut 2 on my stereo remote, and voilà — there I am again in that alley, marveling at how lovely it still is. And, just as I did the first time I heard it, I have to fight back tears when he gets to the lines:

*It's easy to love if you let yourself love it  
But like a moth's wing it's easily crushed  
Oh Jesus, don't let tomorrow take my love away...*

For those of you who weren't fortunate enough to be around in the early days of Bruce's career, and have wondered what it was like to see him then, well, wonder no more — you already know. The thing that made Bruce Cockburn unique back then was the thing that makes him unique today — his ability to transport you via words and music to Another Place. It is the ancient art of the shaman, the ability to capture a single moment in eternity so well, so precisely, that when the tale is told, when the song is sung, the folks sitting around the campfire or in the audience can experience that moment, too. In all of its original majesty. Another word for this process is *magic*.

Well, seeing Bruce in those early days was *magic*, pure and simple. After the TV show, I made a mental note of his name and the next day began looking through the music listings to find out where he was appearing next. It turned out to be The Riverboat, a tiny folk club in the hip Yorkville section of Toronto. I saw him there many times over the years, but in my mind they have all coalesced into one extended concert, which I will do my best to describe to you.

It was such a small space — down a short half-flight of stairs to a basement room smaller than many apartments I have lived in since. And it was dark. Not a scary dark, but a kind of cozy, comfortable dark, the kind that wraps around you and makes you feel safe.

In one corner of the room was a tiny stage. Stagelet is actually more like it. It was so small that there was no room on it for the beat-up upright piano. The piano was against the wall on the other side of the room — when Bruce wanted to play *Golden Serpent Blues* or *Musical Friends*, he would have to step down from the stage and walk across the room to where it sat in its own dusty corner.

Bruce would stand or sit on this tiny stage and spin tales of wonder about Other Places, both internal and external. And we in the audience — probably no more than 20 of us at a time — would have no choice but to go with him to those places.

Like a kindly old tour guide with round-rimmed glasses and the warmest smile you have ever seen, Bruce would take us on a stoned *Bicycle Trip*, pointing out the sights along the way, warning us about potential dangers, like the katydid humming a monotonous tune, rather hypnotically... And then segue into *Feet Fall On The*

*Road*, in which we awaken to find ourselves zooming through time and space on the peculiar vehicle of a bridge: “It’s not the river that flows but the bridge that moves o’er...” We wave to the fat balloon man as we pass, because we’re going to the country, o la la la la la.

We wander along the forest path, listening to Bruce sing *The Thirteenth Mountain* and *Change Your Mind* and *One Day I Walk* and *Spring Song*. We are definitely not still in Toronto. We are in Another Place. And while we’re here, Bruce decides to drop by his mother-in-law’s log cabin and introduce us all to *Life’s Mistress*. She is just as he described her, moving serenely around the small room, a huge ring of keys jingling at her waist. Like him, we are content to “just sit still and watch her go by” and share his moment of silent meditation.

As we sit cozily around the fire, we gaze out the window at the lake as Bruce sings us songs about evenings spent watching the sunset out on that lake in his canoe. Songs like *Let Us Go Laughing*, with its incredibly wise title and chorus. Or *When The Sun Falls*, which he plays on a brand-new mandolin using the only chords he knows, introducing it by saying it was inspired by the poems of Robert Graves. We “watch the sun go down in fire” as he uses a simple Number Two pencil to turn an Appalachian dulcimer into a hammer dulcimer on *Shining Mountain*. Finally, as night falls, Bruce sings us a love song for Mother Earth. And even though we know she isn’t there physically, in our minds we can see the two of them swirl together around the cabin in a slow, graceful waltz to *Fall* as “the mists of all twilights dance close at hand.”

The song ends and the moment is perfect but it’s late and it’s time to go. So we say goodbye to our hostess and venture outside. It’s a chilly night, but before we head back to the city, Bruce has us pause and look up. City dwellers all, we gasp at the sight of the night sky as it was meant to be seen. Somehow, the silence of the forest night is deepened, not disturbed, as he sings *High Winds*, *White Sky* and we stand there gazing up, lost in its crystalline starmass. It is a moment of frozen eternity, one that I still cannot adequately describe.

All I can remember is that there was some mention of pyramids in the song, and they must have been of the magical variety, because suddenly we found ourselves back at The Riverboat. Bruce was on the stage and we were in the audience and the last notes of the song were fading out and we had to shake ourselves from our reveries and remember to applaud. Bruce just smiled and thanked us for coming and walked offstage, which I always suspected meant walking into the kitchen. I hope so...maybe he was able to grab a quick snack as we continued to clap and clap and clap, desperately wanting more. Finally, just as we were about to give up hope, he walked back out and sat down again on the stool. He looked out at us and, even though it was the last set of three and he was tired and it was ‘way past midnight, Bruce took us on one last trip.

Try to imagine sitting there in that small club, in an audience of only twenty or so, hearing *Dialogue With The Devil* for the first time. It was as if the group of us were instantly transported to that lonely precipice in the desert and sat in a semicircle watching

this life-and-death conversation take place. Like Christ and like Bruce, we Thought About It and looked over the edge when offered the Easy Way Out: “You could roll down to the canyon, piss away this incarnation, but remember that you pay for what you get.” And at the end of the song, we felt our hearts soar with exultation when Christ/Bruce/we decided to “kiss the sun in spite of him.” As Bruce sang the last line — “Why don’t we celebrate?” — over and over, members of the audience began joining in, even though none of them had heard the song before. First one voice, then two or three more, finally all of us. He ended the evening with that song, even though I think he had originally planned to do another one. It’s possible that he was thinking, “What can I possibly do that could top that moment?” And if so, he was probably right, because I remember walking home that night under a full moon that would have made Van Gogh weep, singing softly to myself, “Why don’t we celebrate? Why don’t we celebrate?”

At some point, Bruce stopped playing *The Riverboat*. Maybe it closed, or he got too popular. I don’t know. I went to a few more of his Toronto concerts, in progressively larger halls filled with progressively larger audiences. But the only memory that stands out in my mind from that period as vividly as my memories of *The Riverboat* is Bruce performing his final encore at the Mariposa Folk Festival, leading the audience in a round of *For The Birds*. I have never left a concert with a bigger smile on my face.

The last time I saw Bruce in Toronto was also the only time I have ever met him personally. I was working at Sam The Record Man on Yonge Street and Bruce walked in. He was with an enormous shaggy dog, who was far more well-behaved than many of the other patrons. I walked up to Bruce and asked if he needed any help finding anything.

He said that he did and I led him to that section and talked with him a bit while he was looking for the record he was after. I humbly apologize to those Cockburn fanatics who are dying to find out what he was looking for, what his “influences” were at that time, but my memory of that has been mysteriously erased by aliens...all I remember is that I was having a great time playing with the dog while Bruce searched through the bins. I asked what the dog’s name was and Bruce said, “Well, the first few weeks we had him, he howled all night long, and we figured he was calling his own name, so we named him ‘Aroo.’”

Just then, a sweet young teeny-bopper walked up hesitantly and asked Bruce if he was indeed Bruce. He admitted it. The bopper then asked for his autograph with a voice filled with the kind of adoration usually reserved for living saints. Bruce agreed, but didn’t have either pen or paper. The bopper didn’t either, so I ran to the closest drawer and brought back all I could find, a magic marker and a 7x10-inch yellow card normally used to separate sections in the 45 department. As Bruce signed the card, the bopper, too shy to stand and watch, knelt and played with Aroo. I was suddenly struck by an inspiration and asked her if she would like Aroo’s autograph, too.

Both the bopper and Bruce seemed intrigued by the idea, so I ran back to the drawer and came back with a black inkpad. Bruce and I took Aroo’s paw, pressed it on the stamp

pad, and added his pawprint to the yellow card, just below Bruce's signature. The bopper was beside herself, jumping up and down and squealing with delight. Bruce and I were doing everything in our power to avoid cracking up and losing it completely in public.

Finally, the bopper thanked Bruce and walked off clutching her autograph and Bruce thanked me and walked off clutching his record. When he was finished paying for it, he and Aroo walked to the door and started to leave, but Bruce seemed to remember something and turned around and waved goodbye to me. Then he turned and walked out of the store.

I followed him out. I just couldn't help myself... I just wanted one last glimpse of Bruce and Aroo walking down Yonge Street. It had just started raining, and hordes of shoppers were scurrying about, trying to get to shelter before they got drenched. I stood there and watched them walk slowly down the street until they disappeared into the crowd. I still remember the feel of rain on my face. And you know, I could swear that at that moment I could hear – from the alley in back of the store – the unmistakable sound of raindrops falling on trash can lids. It sounded like cathedral bells.

*Barry Wright is currently working on a book about his adventures teaching meditation in the red light district of Amsterdam. It contains more than a few references to Bruce.*

### **A Fine Evening at Harbourfront Centre**

by Frederick Harrison

*Performance date: August 17, 1996*

It was the perfect ending to a perfect summer day: an evening with Bruce Cockburn and special guests Rob Wasserman and Jonatha Brooke, set in Harbourfront, a public park/tourist attraction on waterfront land reclaimed from what had once been old warehouses and factories in Toronto Harbour. The evening was hosted by Shelagh Rogers of the CBC, who had chosen this day to celebrate 60 years of radio broadcasting with a series of concerts, of which this FREE concert by Bruce Cockburn was the main attraction. Many people had camped out in the amphitheatre since late afternoon to ensure good seats for the evening performance and by show time the facility was standing room only. The crowd that has assembled spanned many generations of listeners, all of whom had been touched at some point in their lives by Bruce's music, and were eager to hear some clue as to where Bruce would be heading with the new album. Shortly after 8 PM Bruce was introduced and strode onto the stage dressed in a navy blue cotton shirt and black cotton pants. After thanking the crowd for coming out, he spied a large yacht sailing by, which prompted the comment "Geez, what did THAT cost?!" Bruce went on to explain that the lure of material possessions didn't appeal to him, but what was most

important to him was (as he gestured towards the audience) the bond between performer and audience. He then launched into “Wondering Where The Lions Are”, followed by “Call It Democracy”. He then paused to comment upon the current situation of a band (Primitive Radio Gods) enjoying a hit with a song titled “Standing Outside A Broken Phone Booth With Money In My Hand”. Apparently the title of the current hit was “borrowed” from Bruce’s song (from “Further Adventures Of...”), which the younger author had had in his record collection. Bruce admitted to having stolen a few song titles himself (Shipwrecked At The Stable Door, from Brennan Manning’s wonderful book “Lion & Lamb” comes to mind) and then introduced a new song, “Night Train” (same title as the James Brown hit) as being an example. This will be a track on the new album, “The Charity Of Night”, due in the New Year. “Night Train” is cut from the same musical cloth as “Silver Wheels” with vivid lyrical imagery. Aside from a line mentioning Alcatraz, St. Helena, and Patmos in the same breath, comes this couplet:

*“In the absence of a vision, there are nightmares;  
In the absence of compassion, there is cancer.”*

This was followed with “Child Of The Wind”, following which Rob Wasserman joined Bruce onstage for “Lovers In A Dangerous Time”. Rob then performed a solo piece that began as a raga like improvisation, then transformed into “Amazing Grace” and then into “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”. Bruce then rejoined him on stage and told the audience that he had never written a fan letter to any artist before, until he heard his next guest, Jonatha Brooke. Jonatha then took the stage for two solo numbers “Full Fledged Strangers” and “Nothing Sacred” before Bruce and Rob came back to join her for another new Bruce song “The Coming Rains”. Following this, Bruce switched to electric guitar for another song by Jonatha titled “At The Still Point” to end the first set. A brief word about Jonatha Brooke - as Bruce had noted, many of the best songwriters emerging today are women and Jonatha was no exception. She reminds me of Joni Mitchell circa “Hejira”, but with less emphasis on jazz or African music. Like Joni, she shares a penchant for different tunings and unusual chord structures in her music, but lyrically she is more frank and open, to the point of confrontation. Her material was well received by the audience, many of whom were hearing her for the first time. After a 25 minute break the second set began with Bruce performing two songs on solo acoustic guitar. The first of these was a new instrumental “Mistress Of Storms” which incorporated his trademark kick-started windchimes. The second number was “Waiting For The Moon” an “oldie” from “The Trouble With Normal”. Rob Wasserman joined Bruce for an incredible “Lord Of The Starfields”, following which Jonatha Brooke performed “Inconsolable” with Bruce adding tasteful electric guitar and a great solo. Rob Wasserman was then given another solo spotlight in which he performed a Moroccan-flamenco improvisation which eventually included a bit of the Grateful Dead’s “St. Stephen” (much to the delight of the Deadheads in the audience!). Bruce and Jonatha then took the stage to perform “War” from Jonatha’s album “Plumb”. Bruce, now solo, then performed “Justice” followed by an stunning acoustic + echoplex version of “If A Tree Falls”, marred only by the guitar becoming unplugged for a moment near the end of the song. Rob and Jonatha then joined Bruce for “Stolen Land” arranged for bass, hand drum and vocals, with Jonatha taking one of the verses. The second set concluded with “Joy Will Find A Way” - quite a

surprise to hear, and, as in the "Circles In The Stream" performance so many years ago, there were a few dancers in the audience for this one. After an enthusiastic response, Bruce and his guests returned for an encore. Someone in the audience shouted out "Do one for Mike Harris" (the current premier of Ontario, similar to state governor) to which Bruce replied with a loud raspberry! (For those not familiar with Ontario politics, Mike Harris cut welfare payments by 20% across the board regardless of the recipients' financial situation, as well as deregulated environmental protection laws to allow logging in the last stands of virgin white pine forest in North America, and slashed budgets without regard to the impact the cuts would have on the public. It's hard times in Ontario as a result - unless you are part of Big Business.) The encore consisted of a new song "It's Your Eyes I Want To See". The crowd wanted a second encore, but had to settle for a curtain call as Bruce admitted that they "didn't know any more stuff" to perform as an ensemble (A solo number would have been quite welcome!). Thus the show ended and the audience dispersed into a comfortably warm summer evening.

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bruce turned up at queen's park in toronto on october 26th as part of a rally to increase awareness regarding premier mike harris's conservative government. a *maclean's* article states there were about 75,000 people there listening to "folksongs and leftist speechifying."

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the enclosed photograph of bruce is from the soundcheck at the edmonton folk music festival in edmonton alberta, on august 9, 1996. the first two hundred issues contain this photo as an enclosure. with thanks to reader **marie westhaver** for funding this project. ~photo by ohop

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### **a bunch of different stuff**

**earthbeat! records** of california has released a cd compilation titled *if a tree falls*. each song on the cd acts like a chapter in a story. it begins with the telling of the spirit and beauty of the forest, as espoused in native american john trudell's "song of the trees." the story takes a turn for the worse as told in bruce cockburn's title cut, "if a tree falls." this cd contains fifteen tracks from fifteen different artists. a portion of each sale goes to the **trees foundation**, which supports 20 forest conservation groups. check your local record stores or contact earthbeat! at 800-346-4445. by mail: p.o. box 1460, redway, ca, 95560.

bruce taped an episode of *rita & friends* on november 7, 1996. the producers say it is scheduled to air on january 22, 1997, on cbc television.

cover: "mama just wants to barrelhouse all night long" appears on *tired & emotional*, a 1987 release by ireland's **mary coughlan**. [with thanks to andy mcbean]



on november 21, 1996, bruce participated in a concert in moncton, new brunswick, at the capitol theatre. it was recorded as part of the *du maurier concert stage* series. it is expected to air sometime in 1997.

**from rykodisc:** bruce will be undertaking a promotional tour of radio stations in january to discuss his coming release, *the charity of night*. the first single from the cd will be “night train.”

1-5-97..... LA Howard & Roz’s Folk Show\*  
1-6-97..... Santa Monica KCRW\*\*  
1-7-97..... San Francisco KFOG  
1-8-97..... Seattle KMTT  
1-9-97..... Portland, OR KINK  
1-10-97..... Boulder KBCO  
1-12-97..... NYC WFUV/WNEW  
1-13-97..... Minneapolis KTCZ  
1-14-97..... Chicago WXRT  
1-15-97..... Detroit/Windsor WDET/CIDR  
1-16-97..... Philadelphia WXPN  
1-17-97..... Boston WBOS/WXRV

\*call letters not available at print time

\*\*not confirmed at print time

*air dates may vary from appearance dates*

### **bruce cockburn’s dirty little secret**

*RYKODISC PRESS RELEASE- October 7, 1996...*

It was jointly announced today in Salem, Massachusetts and Toronto that Bruce Cockburn has signed an exclusive recording agreement with Rykodisc worldwide outside of Canada. The singer-songwriter recently completed work on his twenty-third album, *The Charity Of Night*, scheduled for release on February 4, 1997. Under the terms of his new contract, the album will be released by True North Records in Canada and by Rykodisc throughout the rest of the world.

“We’re proud to be associated with Bruce,” said Rykodisc President, Don Rose. “He is already well known as an outstanding performer and writer, but the dirty little secret about Bruce is his awesome guitar playing. This is amply showcased on his new album and we’re looking forward to sharing it with his fans as well as a potentially broader audience.” Similar sentiments were echoed north of the border by Bernie Finkelstein, the President of True North as well as Cockburn’s manager for twenty-six years. “I’ve been a longtime admirer of Rykodisc’s repertoire, as has Bruce, and we’re delighted to be a part of their family.”

## **Cockburn Hits High Note**

*the following article by Iain MacLeod appeared in a canadian newspaper from september, 1973.*

TORONTO- Bruce Cockburn eyed one of his publicity photos on the wall of his manager's office with alarm.

"I hope you're not going to use that one," he grinned.

Gone are the flowing locks and bushy beard, the Cockburn appearance familiar to many of his Canadian followers.

Today one of the country's foremost singers and songwriters has taken on a surprisingly conservative profile. But no one is going to have trouble recognizing him on his current Canada-wide tour.

His music now is better than ever as he turns his innovative style of singing and guitar-playing into another chapter of his career.

This is Bruce's second tour of Canada and, with four albums behind him, this talented musician from Ottawa is fast becoming a familiar name throughout the country.

His music is, however, moving in different directions these days.

"One side of me is going towards a more electric sound and one side is sticking with the acoustic sound," he said before the tour.

Several tracks on Bruce's third and recently released fourth albums reveal this new direction, with prominent use of electric guitar, bass and drums complimenting his innovative acoustic guitar.

On stage, however, he remains a soloist.

"I like the excitement of a group but it happens all too infrequently," he said. "I don't aim on bringing in other musicians to back me live."

Earlier in his career, before his talents were recognized publicly, Bruce spent several years in bands "which were going to achieve stardom overnight."

Those early years served to give Bruce a thorough grounding in songwriting.

"I would write songs specifically for the group I was playing in at the time. There were many different styles and I had to match each one. Writing songs from different angles and making different uses of music did me good."

He also played a variety of instruments, even, at one time, the organ.

“I was an awful organist,” he recalled.

Today his fine guitar playing can be attributed to those early years when he strummed jazz, blues, country and pop rhythms depending on what type of group he was in at the time.

And unlike many of his contemporaries, Bruce “served time” in a music school.

After leaving high school in Ottawa he enrolled in the Berkeley School of Music in Boston for a four-year course.

“The first year was pretty easy because I knew most of the stuff,” he said. “But the second year was different. I realized I wasn’t willing to do the work so I left- after 18 months.”

Bruce joined a band from Ottawa and started playing the Boston nightspots. He was, at times, living on \$10 a week. Surprisingly he does not recall too many hardships.

“I suppose you could call them hard times, but I don’t look back on them as such,” he said. “I was learning a lot.”

After a couple of years he learned that “my songs sounded better when I sang them on my own.” Bands were stifling him and, after meeting a record business contact in Toronto, he decided he had an album inside him.

In late 1969 he recorded *Bruce Cockburn* which was released a few months later in 1970.

“It was pretty well received,” he recalled. “But I wasn’t surprised or dejected. I really wasn’t expecting anything.”

However, club dates soon led to concert appearances and by the time his second album, *High Winds White Sky*, appeared in 1971, Bruce found himself well on the way to wide recognition.

Much of the music on the first two albums revealed Bruce’s love of the countryside and his interest in medieval life.

“I’m interested in being in nature,” he said. “Many of the feelings I have come from the countryside. I was also a medieval freak for a long time. I’ve read quite a bit about the Middle Ages.”

Among his interests outside of music is collecting old blades, swords and knives. He is also studying Christianity.