

Gavin's Woodpile – The Bruce Cockburn Newsletter

Edited by Daniel Keebler

Issue Number 25

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Mali and The River of Sand

Bruce Cockburn will travel with a Canadian documentary crew to Mali in February, to capture the life and livelihood of the people of the West African country.

Cockburn will spend a month exploring the country. His itinerary will include stops in the legendary city of Timbuktu as well as the heart of Dogon country, home to one of Africa's most ancient and fascinating cultures. Along the way, he will cross musical paths with some of Mali's most well known musicians. His findings will be part of a one hour, made-for-broadcast documentary, *River of Sand*. It will provide a blend of music and culture while addressing the serious issues facing the people of the country. The film will be produced by Kensington Communications of Toronto.

Cockburn, who will narrate and host the film, will also spend time in the Douentza district. There he will have the opportunity to view, first-hand, the ongoing life and death struggle of the local people in overcoming a serious drought this year. As well, he will investigate the progress being made in fighting back the desert, with the assistance of a Canadian development organization, USC Canada (www.usc-canada.org). The singer/songwriter is well known for his interest in environmental issues through his work as spokesperson for USC over the last 25 years.

River of Sand will be aired nationally by Vision TV and regionally by TV Ontario and Saskatchewan Education Network. It is presently scheduled to first be aired during October of 1998 on Vision TV. Funding assistance for the project has been provided, in part, by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Robert Lang, director of the documentary, says the final product will be of interest to a wide audience. "We plan to tell a story about Bruce's encounters there on both a musical-cultural level and on a level where we will learn about the people and their attempts to stem the desertification that is taking place."

A website will also be on-line with footage and audio, linking Bruce's day to day travels throughout the tour to the website. The address for the site is www.kensingtontv.com/go/riverofsand.

Bruce is expected to cross paths with Mali's acclaimed blues artist, Ali Farka Toure, while in Timbuktu. Further, there should be an opportunity for some musical exchange. If

you are not familiar with Farka Toure's music, suggested works might be *Source* (1992) and *Talking Timbuktu* (1994), which was a 1995 Grammy-winning effort with Ry Cooder.

all the stuff that's fit to print

Bruce is spending the last few days of January and the first week of February **in Europe** on a promotional tour (radio, print and TV) for the recently released EP, *You Pay Your Money And You Take Your Chance*. This is **not** a concert tour. Stops along the way include: Brussels, Amsterdam, Warsaw, Krakow and Paris.

Bruce will be performing solo at the Fine Arts Center at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on April 3, 1998. On the evening of April 4, Bruce will conduct a workshop on songwriting as part of the **Festival of Faith & Writing Conference**, on the campus of Calvin. More information on attending these events at: (Tel) 616-957-6770, (Fax) 616-957-8508, (Email) writers98@calvin.edu. The conference runs April 2-4. [My thanks to Bob Hudson]

Bruce was interviewed during the summer of 1997 by June Callwood, for the program *June Callwood's National Treasures*. The program aired on Vision TV in Canada on January 14, 1998. Running time is 50 minutes. For a copy of the video, contact:

Viewer Services, Unit 19
ATTN: Donna Dake
785 Pacific Rd.
Oakville, Ontario L6L 6M3
Canada
Tel: 905-469-9300

Speculation From Squint, The Soothsayer... There is a very good chance that Bruce will undertake a solo **tour of Australia** in April. While there was no confirmation of this at print time, feel free to check with me, or look in on the *Gavin's Woodpile* website for updates on this matter.

Cockburn, An Uncommon Denominator

Although Bruce Cockburn consistently refuses to be labeled a patriot or a nationalist, he deserves whatever Canada Council grants come his way.

Aside from brilliant songwriting and performing talents, he records for a company called True North, whose trademark is a compass needle pointing above the 49th parallel. The lyric sheets are printed in his hand-lettered French and English, and his latest album, *Night Vision*, displays Canadian artist Alex Colville's magnificent painting of a thick-bodied horse speeding toward a prairie train.

As many of his songs deal none too obliquely with the frenetic and degrading recognition-rush of society and show-biz, it was heartening to see that his own Tuesday night performance at the Egress was marked by both simplicity and integrity.

Surrounded by a guitar, a dulcimer with heart-shaped sound holes, and a banjo decorated with silver arabesques, Cockburn's appearance was as idiosyncratic as his songs.

A green, poverty-level scarf was offset by beautiful, soft leather boots like over-grown moccasins,. Heavy wool socks climbed outside his jeans to just below the knee. Redish-blond hair cut close to the skull made his unglamorous face look even more boyish, and firm lips covered teeth that aren't quite agreed on a common direction.

Cockburn avoids the lowest-common-denominator definition of a folk singer by using such long words as "recalcitrant" without a blush. His sense of humor is a joy. He painstakingly explained that the peculiar shape of a dulcimer distinguishes it from a trout. During a sing-a-long, we were told, "You can sing with your mouth full if you wish, as Emily Post won't be here. We mailed her an invitation, but she sent back a very rude no."

When the Sun Goes Nova, Foxglove, He Came From the Mountain and You Don't Have to Play the Horses were among the familiar songs in the first half of a long set. The best, however, was Mama Just Wants to Barrelhouse. Cockburn sang this extraordinary, rolling blues without a single clichéd black inflection, and substituted a superb guitar for the record's rich piano.

Eugene Martynec, a fine guitarist and Cockburn's producer, sat in for a group of newly written songs.

The new material was excellent in terms of the dual guitar arrangements. But, on this first hearing, the lyrics suffered from Cockburn's tendency to wispy, falsely "poetic" images of rain and wind, diamonds and devils. An exception was Christmas Song, which nicely combined his interest in both personal reincarnation and Christ's/ "We melt away and return again/ Stronger for the tempering flame/ Stronger for the Saviour's name."

The Blues Got the World was his encore: "This is a very profound song, and I'd like to draw your attention in particular to every word." At the Egress until March 23, and worth going to twice, or thrice.

-Don Stanley, The Vancouver Sun, 1974

Shut Down The School Of The Americas

World War II was the "good war." After that conflict, most Americans believed that US intentions in the world were noble -- the US was the punisher of aggression and a warrior for freedom. This image was for generations of Americans the measure by which they judged their country in world affairs. The war in Vietnam ended the illusion that America was always on the "right side." Today, America's image as a defender of democracy and justice has been further eroded by the School of the Americas (SOA), which trains Latin American and Caribbean military officers and soldiers to subvert democracy and kill hope in their own countries.

Founded by the United States in 1946, the SOA was initially located in Panama, but in 1984 it was kicked out under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty and moved to the army base at Fort Benning, Georgia. Then-President of Panama Jorge Illueca called it “the biggest base for de-stabilization in Latin America,” and a major Panamanian newspaper dubbed it “The School of Assassins.”

Today, SOA instructors and students are recruited from the cream of the Latin American military establishment. The School trains 700-2,000 soldiers a year, and since its inception in 1946, more than 60,000 military personnel have graduated from the SOA.

If the SOA concentrated its training on protecting country borders from foreign aggression or safeguarding citizens from invasion by outside enemies, it would be considered an exemplary institution, worth the cost of American tax dollars and US prestige. But, the SOA has very different goals. Its curriculum includes courses in psychological warfare, counterinsurgency, interrogation techniques, and infantry and commando tactics. Presented with the most sophisticated and up-to-date techniques by the US Army’s best instructors, these courses teach military officers and soldiers of Third World countries to subvert the truth, to muzzle union leaders, activist clergy, and journalists, and to make war on their own people. It prepares them to subdue the voices of dissent and to make protesters submit. It instructs them in techniques of marginalizing the poor, the hungry, and the dispossessed. It tells them how to stamp out freedom and terrorize their own citizens. It trains them to destroy the hope of democracy.

The School of the Americas (SOA) has been given other names -- “School for Dictators,” “School of Assassins”, and “Nursery of Death Squads.” And, countries with the worst human rights records send the most soldiers to the School.

When they return to their home countries, graduates of the SOA hold a rather unique and peculiar view of their countrymen. They look upon priests, social workers, journalists, and liberal intellectuals, not as assets to their societies, but as dangerous subversives, working to undermine the system that keeps these soldiers, army officers, and their sponsors in power.

- GRADUATES -

Graduates of the SOA have been among the most repressive tyrants in Latin America, and their actions have been some of the most cruel and violent. In El Salvador, in 1989, a Salvadoran army patrol executed six Jesuit priests as they lay face-down on the ground at Central America University. According to the United Nation’s Truth Commission Report on El Salvador in 1993, 19 of the 27 officers who took part in the executions were trained at the SOA.

In 1990, in El Salvador, populist Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated. Three-quarters of the Salvadoran officers implicated in the killing were trained at the SOA. Roberto D’Aubuisson, the late leader of El Salvador’s Death Squad, was implicated in the plot to assassinate Archbishop Romero. He also participated in numerous murders,

including a massacre in the village of El Mazote, where more than 900 men, women, and children were killed. He graduated from SOA as well.

In other Latin American countries, graduates of the SOA have been equally prominent enemies of human rights. Former dictators Omar Torrijos of Panama, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, and Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, all overthrew constitutionally elected governments in their countries. Leopoldo Galtieri, the former head of the Argentina junta defeated in the Falklands War, was responsible for thousands of “disappeared” citizens who supported freedom and democracy in Argentina, and paid the ultimate price with their lives. He was an SOA graduate.

In Honduras, General Humberto Ragalado Hernandez, was trained at the SOA at the same time that he was linked to Columbian drug cartels, and the highest ranking officers in the Honduran Death Squad were trained at SOA as well.

In Peru, the most senior officers convicted of the February 1994 murder of nine university students and a professor, were graduates of the SOA. In Columbia, a 1992 human rights tribunal cited 246 officers for crimes against the people of Columbia. 105 of the officers were trained at the SOA. In Panama, ex-dictator Manuel Noriega, formerly on the CIA payroll, graduated from the SOA. He is now in a US prison, convicted of trafficking in drugs.

In Guatemala, a country of 10 million, the indigenous Mayan population of 6 million have endured the greatest suffering in Latin America. During more than 30 years of civil war, tens-of-thousands have been slaughtered, with the total killed estimated to exceed 200,000. Most of the ranking generals involved in the numerous coups and acts of terror and murder during this period were trained at the SOA.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, in Guatemala, thousands of political activists and opponents of government policies were assassinated. General Manuel Antonio Callejas y Callejas, Chief of Army Intelligence at the time, was cited by the UN as the individual responsible for most of those murders. He graduated from the SOA. One of the most vicious tyrants in recent Guatemalan history is Jose Efraim Rios Montt. General, dictator, and a former president from 1982-83, Rios Montt was proud of his political philosophy of “beans for the obedient; bullets for the rest.” He was also a graduate of the SOA.

- FUNDED BY TAX DOLLARS -

The impact of SOA graduates on Latin American freedom has been devastating. Armed with sophisticated training, modern weapons, and up-to-date techniques of control and surveillance, graduates of the SOA have terrorized their own countrymen for a generation.

In the name of its citizens and using American taxpayer dollars, the United States, the most-democratic of countries, has for decades been training some of the most anti-democratic leaders in the world. Administrations that have decried terrorism abroad, have encouraged terrorists right here at home -- at the SOA.

Our country, for generations, a beacon of liberty and democracy to the world, should play no part in subverting democracy and killing hope in other countries. Americans who condemn world terror should condemn just as strongly America's training of Third World terrorists. It is time for all of us to demand that the School of the Americas be closed.

What you can do:

Call, fax, or write the President, and your Senators and Representative. Ask them to end funding for the SOA and stop training terrorists and murderers in America. Tell them you support Senate Bill S 980, and The House of Representatives Bill HR 611.

Father Roy Bourgeois founded SOA Watch to inform the American public about "the School of Assassins" and to close it down...

"During my fifth year in Bolivia, the repression intensified and many people of faith were arrested for speaking out. Our local Catholic bishop responded by forming an ecumenical human rights commission. But then a number of foreign priests were arrested, including me. I had to leave Bolivia persona non grata, which meant I could not return.

In March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was gunned down while saying Mass. A few months later, three nuns and a lay missionary from the United States were raped and killed by Salvadoran soldiers. Two of the nuns, Maryknoll Sisters, had been my friends.

Shortly after their deaths, I went to El Salvador. I found a country similar to Bolivia, but the violence was much worse. Again, the poor and those Church leaders who dared to defend them were being slaughtered. And again, my country was arming and training the military.

I and many others returned from El Salvador and spoke against what we'd seen. To us, our country's involvement in El Salvador was leading to much suffering and more death. But our voices were not enough to stop the bloodshed.

Then, in November 1989, six Jesuit priests and their housekeeper, with her teenage daughter, were massacred in El Salvador. A Congressional task force later sent to investigate the incident reported that the soldiers responsible for the killing were trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas.

I received permission from Maryknoll seminaries to go to Georgia to research SOA. Along with a Jesuit priest and two Dominicans, I opened a small office just outside the Fort Benning main gate. We called it SOA Watch. Since then, we've gathered information about the school and its graduates, much of it hidden from the public."

Father Roy Bourgeois needs the support of all Americans who abhor the training of terrorists and murderers in this country. Support SOA Watch and Father Bourgeois at:

SOA Watch
PO Box 3330
Columbus, GA 31903
706-682-5369

SOA Watch has several videos and books available on the topic of the School of The Americas. Parts of **Bruce Cockburn**'s "The Whole Night Sky" are included appropriately in the video *SOA- An Insider Speaks Out*.

For information regarding the SOA Watch, to receive their newsletter, or to order books or videos, contact:

SOA Watch
1719 Irving St. NW
Washington, DC 20010
Tel: 202-234-3440
Website: www.soaw.org

The website contains far more detailed information regarding the SOA than could be included here. If you have access to the Web I suggest you take a look at their site.

[My thanks to Tom Zerger.]

You Pay Your Money... Visited by Richard Hoare

Musicians:- Bruce Cockburn: guitars & vocals, Steve Lucas: bass & b/v, Ben Riley: drums & b/v. Recorded at The Barrymore Theater, Madison, Wisconsin, USA on May 3, 1997.

1. Call It Democracy (5.43)

Song first released on: *World Of Wonders* 1985 (3.50)

Bruce Cockburn: Through a growing familiarity with the Nicaraguan revolution, a recognition of North-South relations began to take shape. Nicaragua, The Philippines, Chile, virtually all of Latin America really, Indonesia, emerging African countries...Wherever you look you find the same financial interests at work. Working to get rich without controls, at the expense of the poor. When the poor complain, out come the troops, and then the arms companies get rich too.(a)

2. Stolen Land (7.06)

Song first released on: *Waiting For A Miracle* 1987 (5.23)

BC: We were about to do a benefit in Vancouver in support of the Haida land claims in the Queen Charlottes [islands off the coast of British Columbia] or Haida Gwaii, as the islands should be known. I had wanted a dramatic song which touched on Native issues. I had partial lyrics & a pretty good head of steam built up about the Haida situation, and

that in Arizona at Big Mountain, where government industrial hanky panky was forcing people off traditional lands. I had no musical ideas, but got together with Hugh Marsh to work on it & we managed to cook this up.(b)

On the studio cut the funk part is Hugh Marsh's influence. During this song on the 1986 septet band tour Cockburn let rip on his guitar like a cross between Carlos Santana & Jerry Garcia. Subsequently, Bruce played this song solo live with a Bo Diddley beat on the bodhran, an Irish drum - this arrangement was captured on Bruce's 1990 album *Live*. During the 1992 & 1994 quintet band tours the song was re-arranged again to a more chugging rock beat with Bruce whisking up a different guitar storm. This ep version is more primal being adapted this time for a trio.

3. Strange Waters (6.30)

Song first released on: *The Charity Of Night* 1997 (5.49)

BC uses psalm like metaphors to ask his god when he will experience release from the surrounding turbulence. Bruce plays distorted electric guitar with Hendrix-like tones on this elemental drum stomp mantra.

4. Fascist Architecture (2.46)

Song first released on: *Humans* 1980 (2.37)

BC: That was when my marriage broke up & that fact broke a lot of things in me. The image "fascist architecture" came from Italy. It was stuff that was built during Mussolini's period that was a particular style where the buildings are really larger than life & what is supposed to celebrate the greatness of humanity actually dwarfs humanity. It makes you feel tiny & helpless next to it & everybody hates this stuff. It seems to me a suitable image for the things in ourselves, the structures we build that are built on false expectations or pretenses. The things that we pretend to ourselves. And when some catastrophe comes our way those things crack & you get glimpses through them, the light comes through them. It's not a comfortable thing.(c)

Cockburn went into Manta Sound, in Toronto in November - December 1986 with the World Of Wonders band to record *Stolen Land & Waiting For A Miracle*. He also re-recorded *Fascist Architecture* (4.04), which was released on the *Waiting For A Miracle* singles compilation instead of the take from *Humans*.

5. You Pay Your Money And You Take Your Chance (4.31)

Song first released on: *Inner City Front* 1981 (4.19)

BC: A small crawl through a newly discovered urban landscape of love, lust and speakeasies. I was living next door to a chicken slaughterhouse near Kensington Market in Toronto at the time.(d)

This re-arrangement incorporating an Eastern acoustic guitar introduction & mid song solo blows a breath of fresh air through the song.

6. Birmingham Shadows (10.46)

Song first released on: *The Charity Of Night* 1997 (9.39)

Stephen Hubbard: I get the strong sense from the liner notes to the album thanking Ani DiFranco & the song Birmingham Shadows which I'm told is about an evening you spent with Ani after a gig , hanging out talking, that she had a big effect on you.... BC: You got that off the Internet? SH: Yeah, is that not true? BC: Well, let me put it this way: I never told anybody that...That is interpretation which I won't comment on the veracity of. I mean the song is about somebody & I'd just as soon not be the one who says who it is, so you can take that where you want.(e)

Footnotes.

(a),(b) & (d) BC quotes from songbook: Rumours Of Glory,1980-1990, OFC Publications, A Division of The Ottawa Folklore Centre Ltd, 1111 Bank St. South, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1S 3X4.

(c) BC quote from Song Talk Vol 4 Issue 2 1994 in an interview with Paul Zollo entitled Closer To The Light with Bruce Cockburn. (US magazine).

(e) BC quote from Network Volume 11,Number 1,Spring 1997 in The Network Interview: Bruce Cockburn with Stephen Hubbard. (Canadian magazine).

more of the stuff that's fit to print

You Pay Your Money And You Take Your Chance- Bruce Cockburn Live This cd was made available through retailers on January 13, 1997. It is a six track EP CD with all songs coming from the Barrymore Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin from May 1997. A limited internet release was made available through the Rykodisc website at www.rykodisc.com, or call tollfree 888-232-7385. The difference between the two releases are: the color of the cd, the catalogue number and the words "Special internet edition of 1000 copies" on the release made available via the internet.

For The Record: The November 19, 1997 show at the Brockville Arts Centre in Brockville, Ontario, was a *solo* performance. This was not noted in the last issue.

On December 3, 1997, Bruce performed in Ottawa as part of the signing of the **international effort to ban landmines**. Also on the bill were Jann Arden, Jackson Browne and Chude Mondlane. Chude toured Canada with Bruce in September 1995 for a six-city speaking engagement on the matter of landmines in her homeland of Mozambique.

You'll find a lovely cover of "Lord Of The Starfields" on the CD *Paddling Upstream*, by Andy Kalt. The CD can be purchased by contacting Andy at :

8 Edith Ave., Apt 3
Everett, MA 02149
USA

Tel: 617-381-9867
Email: akalt@tiac.net

Yet another cover: Look for “Can I Go With You,” on the CD *Romantics & Mystics*, by Winnipeg-based musician, Steve Bell. Fergus Marsh provides Chapman Stick and bass on this project. Learn more about Steve’s work at www.signpostmusic.com. Check local record stores or resources below.

My thanks to Marie Westhaver for the work on the SOA image

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We Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore
by Chris Cobb

*You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray and live on hay
You’ll get pie in the sky when you die*

- Joe Hill, 1911 (sung to the melody of In the Sweet Bye and Bye). U.S. songwriter, organizer for Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies).

*There’s a wealth of amputation
Waiting in the ground
But no one can remember
where they put it down.*

*If you’re the child who finds it there
you will rise upon the sound
of the mines of Mozambique*

- The Mines of Mozambique, by Bruce Cockburn, 1995.

There was magic in the air that night last December. Bruce Cockburn sang his unadorned version of Mines of Mozambique to the giddy Ottawa audience celebrating the international Land Mines Treaty. The protest singer stood together with the protesters. His song, usually offered only in theoretical circumstance, had found a real purpose and a real place.

Thirty, even 20 years ago, there would have been nothing particularly striking about a singer leading a crowd of like-minded individuals in an anthem against some social or political injustice. Today it's a rarity. The protests lived, the songs died.

The land mines show reminded Bruce Cockburn of another, much tougher concert, in Santiago, Chile in 1983.

He had recently written *If I Had a Rocket Launcher*, a song inspired by a visit to Guatemalan refugees in camps at Chiapas, southern Mexico. The refugees, subsisting on three tortillas a day, had no medicine and were regularly attacked by Guatemalan military helicopters. The Canadian singer was in Chile a few months later as part of an international delegation reluctantly allowed into the country by Gen. Augusto Pinochet's military junta. He sang *If I Had a Rocket Launcher* to a room of 600 or so Chileans.

"A Chilean songwriter, whose name I can't remember, worked out a Spanish translation and recited it line by line as I sang the song," recalls Cockburn. "We did a duet- the structure of the song is such there is room between the lines to do that. It was fantastically effective. When we got to the line "Some Son of a Bitch Must Die," he was pounding his fist in the air and the whole audience was on its feet pounding fists in the air. They related to it very personally. The spirit was so strong. It was a once-in-a-lifetime dovetailing of a particular song with a particular situation."

People at the land mines concert weren't protesting repression and brutality by their own government but there was a rare passion and common purpose about the place nonetheless.

"There was a bond," says Cockburn, "between the audience and the performers that transcended the event itself. It doesn't happen often."

Hardly at all, actually.

Since the first decade of the century, protest songs served as rallying cries for grievances against The Establishment. Songs have been written about poverty, unemployment, unfair labour practice, war, civil rights abuses, repressive dictatorships. Wherever there was an injustice, somebody wrote a song about it. Most have fallen into obscurity. A few live on as powerful, popular reminders of causes that might otherwise be forgotten.

Swedish-born U.S. labour leader Joe Hill, of the Industrial Workers of the World (The Wobblies), was the first activist to use songs as part of a campaign to create an alternative culture. He wrote lyrics and adapted them to familiar hymn tunes for the sole purpose of singing at labour rallies.

Fifty years later, the likes of Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Tom Paxton and Arlo Guthrie were continuing the tradition, pumping out songs in support of the civil rights movement, attacking social injustice and decrying the Vietnam War. And in between, there had been Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, The Weavers, the great blues writer Big Bill Broonzy,

songs from the First and Second World Wars and the Spanish Civil War- hundreds of guitar-strumming singers, songs and causes.

So where have all the protest songs gone? Don't we care as we once did? Or are times so good that we don't need protest songs anymore?

*Come gather round people wherever you roam,
And admit that the waters around you have grown,
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you is worth savin'
Then you'd better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.*

- The Times They Are A-Changin', by Bob Dylan, 1965, on social upheaval.

Bob Dylan wrote The Times They Are A-Changin' and Blowin' In the Wind, two songs that became treasured anthems for the '60s generation. But when "The Times" was co-opted as a marketing jingle by the Bank of Montreal, Bob didn't whisper a word in... well, protest.

This is the same Bob Dylan who wrote Masters of War, condemning those who built weapons of destruction, Blowin' in the Wind, an anthem against racism and nuclear war, and Chimes of Freedom about the "luckless, abandoned and forsaken." Motivated in the early part of his career by his hero Woody Guthrie, he wrote for the less fortunate before becoming enormously wealthy and moving on to deal exclusively with matters more spiritual and personal.

There are several reasons why protest songs have all but disappeared, says labour historian Mark Leier, who specializes in folk and protest music at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C.

"Protest songs need a social movement," says Mr. Leier, "because they are meant to be sung by groups of people. There has been a decline in protest songs partly because there has been a corresponding decline in social movements. Joe Hill wrote all kinds of songs specifically for his very active union movement. He wasn't just sitting in an office rhymin' moon and June and hoping to make a few bucks off it."

The most effective protest songs are simple enough to be taken up immediately by a crowd. "That's why Joe Hill borrowed lots of great hymn tunes" says Mr. Leier. "In those days, everyone knew the hymns, so Hill just reworked them slightly with new lyrics and he didn't have to spend hours teaching them to people."

Changes in the music industry have militated against the protest song, says Mr. Leier. "The music industry today isn't interested in folk music and protest movements," he says. "They don't want songs that are particularly meaningful because the purpose of today's mass media is not to get people excited and into the streets protesting. How can a bunch

of people on a picket line replicate Pink Floyd? Modern music has been taken out of the hands of the people. Today, we are taught to listen to the music, not take it up ourselves.”

*And I stole California from the Mexican land
I fought in the bloody Civil War
I even killed my brothers and so many others
But I ain't marchin' any more
And I marched to the battle of the German trench
In the war that was bound to end all wars
I must have killed a million men
And now they want me back again
But I ain't marchin' any more.*

- I Ain't Marchin' Anymore, by American songwriter Phil Ochs, 1966, on the Vietnam War.

Despite the brilliance of Bob Dylan's work over the years, only a small proportion can be justifiably called protest music. Like Joe Hill, Dylan often “borrowed” from others: Blowin' In the Wind, for example, was based on an old Negro spiritual.

The prolific Phil Ochs was different. A friend of Dylan's in the early days, he never enjoyed the same commercial success, despite a brief period when he wore gold lame suits to expound his theory that music “should be a fusion between Elvis Presley and Che Guevera.”

Ochs, a former journalism student and a graduate from military college, was the essence of the '60s protest singer. He wrote I Ain't Marchin' Anymore to protest the Vietnam War, Love Me I'm a Liberal, There But for Fortune and scores of other songs often inspired by stories he had read in magazines and newspapers. Ochs travelled around the U.S. playing at protest rallies and selling records by hard slog on the coffee-house circuit. He hanged himself 22 years ago at age 35, leaving a legacy of magnificent music and a 400-page FBI file.

Ochs performed with all the renowned '60s social activists- Martin Luther King, Malcom X, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin- but was, says his brother and manager Michael, happier to be associated with John and Robert Kennedy.

“He was a social democrat who wanted democracy to work,” says Michael Ochs. “He came out of military academy- he graduated with (former Richard Nixon aide) John Dean- which had been like a John Wayne movie. He had been taught that everything America was doing is right and when he got out discovered the antithesis was true.”

Phil Ochs, more prolific than Dylan and other contemporaries, immersed himself in news reports.

“Jerry Rubin once attacked Phil for his opulence,” recalls Michael Ochs, “because Phil bought a 21-inch RCA colour television. Phil said that not having a TV in these times is like not going to the theatre in the Shakespearean era. He was moved by the times. There were so many things going on simultaneously. People were feeding off the same energy, whether it was anti-war stuff, assassinations, civil rights or the man on the moon. It was one thing after another - a time of incredible change.”

Michael Ochs, who runs a photo archivist business in Venice, California, photographed many of his brother’s early concerts.

“I sometimes look at the proof sheets and see Phil onstage with Martin Luther King or Malcom X and (former Black Panther) Bobby Seale and other up-and-coming leaders of the times. He performed with King at a rally across from the UN in 1967 but back then we had no idea King would become such an important figure.”

Ochs’s close friendship with Dylan cooled rapidly in 1967 while the two were riding in a taxi cab.

Dylan asked Ochs what he thought of his newly released *Blonde on Blonde*, an album of abstract titles such as *Rainy Day Women #12 and 35*; *Leopardskin Pill-Box Hat* and *Obviously 5 Believers*.

According to Michael Ochs, Dylan didn’t like the answer: “Phil told Bob that half of the album was the best stuff he’d ever done and the rest was filler. At which point, Dylan stopped the cab and told Phil to get out.” (Another version of the story has Dylan screaming at Ochs: “You’re not a folk singer, you’re a journalist!”).

The two were cordial until Ochs’s death on April 9, 1976. Dylan’s star-studded Rolling Thunder tour in the fall of 1975 was Ochs’s idea but Dylan didn’t invite him to take part.

“Bob’s been criticized for that but he was right,” says Michael. “Phil was too far over the edge by then and was in no shape to go out on tour. It would have been a disaster.”

Ochs, drunken and disillusioned with the system, hanged himself at his sister’s house on Long Island, having lost his will to write- unable, even, to come up with a song when Richard Nixon resigned.

“He felt his role in life was over,” says Michael.

*Yes, as through this world I ramble
I see lots of funny men.
Some will rob you with a six-gun, and
Some with a fountain pen.
But as through your life you’ll travel
Wherever you may roam,
You won’t never see an outlaw drive*

A family from their home.

- Pretty Boy Floyd, by Woody Guthrie, 1961 on Oklahoma's "Robin Hood."

Bruce Cockburn says he is uncomfortable being called a protest singer, a term he feels got perverted with the industrialized, business-approach to music.

"Protest became a kind of marketing term for the '60s," he says. "There shouldn't be anything wrong with it, but the concept was cheapened for me because it was made into this marketing term. The people who inspired the term- Dylan, Phil Ochs and their predecessors-wrote good songs that commented on social and political situations. With their success came imitators: lesser people writing protest songs because the concept was so successful."

After an era of strange social fusion (and confusion) in which former symbols of rebellion- earrings, pony tails and blue jeans- have been adopted as fashion statements by male business executives and songs of rebellion have been co-opted to sell products on TV, change may be afoot.

Mr. Leier at Simon Fraser predicts the protest song is headed toward a revival, as young, right wing, coddled middle class kids of baby boomers become more left-leaning and radical.

Mr. Leier teaches a course in labour history and detects that shift in his students. "Until the last couple of years, it was just another course for them. That's changing. I sing labour songs to them and they say 'hey, what these guys were writing 60 years ago could be about me today.' Kids are stuck in dead-end jobs and after 20 years of being assaulted by the business community, people all over are tired of it. They tolerated job cuts, unemployment and now they are being told the system still isn't working properly. There's a noticeable upswing in the union movement. Even places like Starbucks and Walmart are being organized."

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night, alive as you and me

Says I "But Joe, you're 10 years dead."

"I never died," says he.

From San Diego up to Maine, in every mine and mill

Where workers stand up for their rights

It's there you'll find Joe Hill.

- Joe Hill, words by Alfred Hayes, 1925.

This bubbling anger is the early sign of a push against the political and business establishment for change. suggests Mr. Leier. It's good news for the protest song. "It's that element of politics, in its broadest sense, that is the important ingredient for the protest song," he says.

“If everyone sat around singing a song about hating Mondays, that wouldn’t be a protest song, even though it may be a condition we all may share.”

Bruce Cockburn agrees.

“Songs can be a rallying point if there’s a sense of common interest and mutual strength. A song needs that fertile ground to fall on before it can be effective. If you sound off against something that is of no interest to people, you’re pissing into the wind.”

Or blowin’ into it, at least.

This article first appeared in the Ottawa Citizen on February 8, 1998. My thanks to Chris (and Doug for the heads-up).

Australian Spring Tour- 1998

In 1983, Bruce Cockburn made his first journey to Australia. It was a solo trip to promote the newly released *The Trouble with Normal*. Move forward six years to 1989... Bruce returned to Oz, but this time with Fergus Marsh and Michael Sloski for the release of *Big Circumstance*. In April, 1998, Bruce will return for only his third tour of Australia, again, playing solo. The eight-year-long Bruce drought is about to end in The Land Down Under...

April 9	Byron Bay, NSW	Byron Bay Festival
April 11	Perth, WA	Fly By Night
April 14	Adelaide, SA	Gov. Hindmarsh Hotel
April 17	Geelong, VIC	The Woolshed
April 18	Melbourne, SA	The National Theatre
April 19	Sydney, NSW	The Basement
April 20	Sydney, NSW	The Basement
April 22	Katoomba, NSW	The Clarendon
April 23	Katoomba, NSW	The Clarendon
April 24	Canberra, ACT	Tilley’s

Return From Mali

I spoke with **Friederike Knabe**, the Director of Canadian Programs for USC, on March 11, 1998. She had returned from Mali one week earlier, where she, Bruce Cockburn, and a documentary film crew were examining the problem that desertification is causing throughout the country. These were some of her impressions and observations from that journey...

We saw what we wanted to see. We saw more than we wanted to see.

We met really fascinating people. Bruce met with some really wonderful musicians and was able to jam with them. It was wonderful to watch him interact with Malian musicians in his very sensitive and professional way. It was great to hear that music. Being in a village, we didn't know how the villagers would take Bruce's music, because they'd never seen a guitar before. He was sitting in the back of the truck and just jamming along by himself, and a circle of attentive listeners grew by the second. Finally he must have had half the village in a half-circle around him- watching him, listening to him and being absolutely silent- absorbed by the music. They're not used to having people sing and play at the same time. They either have players or singers, so that was quite extraordinary when he opened his mouth- they couldn't quite fathom that. It was great. That is one image that will stay with me for a long time.

We concentrated on one village mainly to film, and we spent about five days there- the village of Ibissa. It's one of eighteen villages where we work. It's very attractive in its location. It has certain interesting features. The director's (Bob Lang) assessment that we should try and break the ice by going back a few times, really worked. People were very open and very interested in saying 'hi' as we walked down the street. They got quite relaxed around us. This was a very special experience in that way because we got closer to them than you would normally do just passing through. You could really get a sense of the struggle. It's an incredibly hard life they have. In that village they work around the clock. They do have water but it's a small spring and it has to be managed twenty-four hours a day. People have access to water, but it might be at three o'clock in the morning or at midnight. So people work around the clock to nurture their little market garden areas to grow the food they need to feed the family.

On the Interactive Website

You have to visualize us being in the middle of the desert using one car battery to keep the satellite telephone going and the other battery so we could actually film Bruce on the phone- with the stars, with Orion, above us. It was quite a scene. Of course people around us were quite amazed that we could just call Canada on the satellite phone. I think it was great to have this opportunity. It's certainly given us ideas on how we can be connected, and how much more we can do to stay connected.

We don't own the land, we have borrowed it from our children...

I think they are very conscious of that now. They didn't *always* think that way, because in the village where we were they were telling us that fifty or sixty years ago the surroundings were very densely wooded and forested - that you could hardly see before because of the forest. Now it's bare, and that's in fifty or sixty years. You couldn't imagine that it had ever been densely forested, but they say they remembered it. Now

they know that they weren't that careful about their environment. They never thought it would ever disappear. I think their message is maybe something *we* should also hear.

*The documentary film, called **The River Of Sand**, is scheduled to air this fall in Canada. Plans are in the works to also make the film available on video tape. Details on this possibility in a future issue.*

~ Daniel Keebler

tasty bits

When 1983's *The Trouble With Normal* was released in North America on CD it was lacking one song that was included on the German Pläne release; "**Cala Luna.**" This track is an instrumental. If you purchase the True North CD release (TNMN 0053) you'll find a surprise: "Cala Luna" appears as track number five, the same position as it did on the Pläne release. The interesting thing here is that the track does not appear on the track listing on the CD liner notes so you wouldn't realize the song was on the CD until you heard it, and then you might not know what it was. True North suggests that the Pläne master was used for this pressing, but not the Pläne liner notes.

There were other True North releases of *The Trouble With Normal*: TNK-53, for instance. However, if you want the one with "Cala Luna," be sure and get **TNMD 0053**.

It was announced on January 17, 1998, that Bruce Cockburn had been nominated for a **Juno Award** in the "Best Male Vocalist" category for his work on 1997's *The Charity of Night*. The Junos were held in Vancouver, B.C., on March 22, 1998. While Bruce won't be adding another Juno to his collection this year, he has 10 Junos to his credit:

- ◆ 1971, 1972, 1973 Canadian Folksinger Of The Year
- ◆ 1975 Best Album Graphics for *Night Vision*
- ◆ 1976 Best Album Graphics for *Joy Will Find A Way*
- ◆ 1980 Folk Artist Of The Year
- ◆ 1981 Male Vocalist Of The Year & Folk Artist Of The Year
- ◆ 1982 Best Male Vocalist & Best Folk Artist

Where Have All The Flowers Gone- The Songs Of Pete Seeger. This 39 track double cd was released in the U.S. on March 17, 1998. Bruce contributes a fresh (not a trace of the Byrds!) cover of "Turn, Turn, Turn," recorded in January of 1997. Other artists include: Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Ani DiFranco, The Indigo Girls, Billy Bragg and 32 others. The two booklets contain extensive notes celebrating 50 years of singing and songwriting.

Bruce, from the liner notes: "When I was a young songwriter, Pete was more a role model than anything. He was an important figure and the source of beautiful and

powerful songs. He was the first guy I was aware of - because I didn't know about Woody Guthrie in those days - who was doing songs that actually said something."

Lovingly produced by Jim Musselman of Appleseed Recordings, the cd is available at local record stores, or contact Appleseed at:

P.O. Box 2593
West Chester, PA 19380
Tel: 610-701-5755
email: folkradicl@aol.com
www.appleseedrec.com

COMING TO A SUMMER FESTIVAL NEAR YOU...

Plans are in the making for Bruce to take to the road this summer for solo performances at various festivals throughout North America. More information as it becomes available.

Life Is Full Of Moving On...

Changes are coming for *Gavin's Woodpile* and those of us who work here (Um, that would be *me*). As I write this, I'm not certain *exactly* what those changes will be, but it's best to let you all know at this point that the future is foggy at the moment (is that possible?).

Here's what's up: we're moving from Snohomish to San Juan Island, which is located about seven miles off the southeast tip of Vancouver Island. However, SJI is part of Washington State, about a 1.5 hour ride on a State ferry from mainland Washington. There is one incorporated town in the approximately 172 islands that make up the San Juan Islands archipelago. The town is called Friday Harbor, and it is located on San Juan Island. Services on the island are more limited than where I currently live on the mainland.

What this might mean:

- The newsletter will go on as usual.
- The newsletter will go on, just not as usual, because of new logistical and financial difficulties associated with being on a small island.
- I will turn the newsletter over to another person who would be able to carry on with publishing it.
- *Gavin's Woodpile* says farewell (however, this is not the most likely option).

Okay, so there is really nothing new about all these possibilities as this is *always* the fate of the newsletter! The point in bringing this matter up is that I don't want readers caught off guard in the event changes of some sort do come. Watch for a new mailing address and additional contact information in a coming issue of the newsletter.

Issue Number 27

June 1998

Bruce Cockburn, Guitarist Supreme
Steve Weitzman

The following article is circa May, 1980.

Bruce Cockburn is tuning his custom made Larrivée acoustic guitar during a sold-out show at My Father's Place on Long Island while another several thousand listen at home over WLIR-FM. He has an album and single in the Top Thirty and three days earlier performed his hit, "Wondering Where The Lions Are," on NBC's *Saturday Night Live*. He is, as they say in the industry, "hot" right now.

He is getting ready for his next song as a girl in the front hands him a note written on the back of a folded Millennium Records album ad that was placed on each table. He opens it up and reads the wrong side.

"Oh, wow," he cracks a smile. "it says here I can get a dollar off on my record." He puts it in his pocket. "That's good to know."

To most of the audience and the others who are buying his new single and album, Bruce Cockburn is a new entity. Discounts on his records, though they've been for different reasons, are now new, however. There was time- in fact, most of the time up until now- when you could get *many* dollars off on Bruce's records, if you could find them at all. Go to Canada where he's been selling out entire tours of 3,000 seat theatres for eight years and has ten gold albums and it's been a different story. Up there, Bruce Cockburn packs 'em in like Bruce Springsteen. America has been a tough nut to crack, but after nine years it looks like he's finally done it.

With *Dancing In The Dragon's Jaws*, his new Millennium LP, US record buyers are finding out what Canadians have known since 1970: Bruce Cockburn is a tremendously gifted songwriter and one of the major acoustic guitar talents in contemporary music. The funny thing is, he didn't do anything different this, the tenth time, around.

Referring to "Wondering Where The Lions Are," the song that broke the album, he says, "We recorded it just the the way we record everything else and after the album was finished, Bernie (Finkelstein, Bruce's manager) felt that was the one that had the best chance of getting played. But we put out singles from all the other albums and they never went anywhere."

Of Cockburn's albums, six of the ten have been released in the US. Prior to Millennium he was on Epic (two albums) and Island (three). The second of the three Island albums, a double live set recorded entirely in Canada and titled *Circles In The Stream*, was released

in late 1977. Along with two guitar instrumentals (a regular feature of Cockburn's records except for his most recent), *Circles* includes a sampling of his best material over the years, much of which has previously been released only in Canada.

With songs like "Dialogue With The Devil" from *Sunwheel Dance*, "God Bless The Children" from *Night Vision* and "All The Diamonds In The World" and "Never So Free" from *Salt, Sun & Time*, Bruce Cockburn has managed to elevate a song from a simple musical statement to a hypnotic and mesmerizing experience. Somehow, on most of his ballads (and "No Footprints" from the new album falls into this category), he transcended the pop song format while staying within it structurally. Once you meet him, this doesn't seem all that surprising. He is one of the most idyllic, low-keyed, artistically sensitive "entertainers" in memory.

Cockburn, who grew up in the country outside Ottawa, Ontario, naturally has difficulty discussing his art with regard to the emotions most people feel when exposed to it. "Songs are a by-product of who people are as far as the way you live your life," he says, "but I'm on the inside of those songs looking out."

One trademark of his material is that the body of his songs is usually centered around his guitar playing which draws on many past influences: jazz, classical acoustic blues and Eastern musics. His vocals often seem like an afterthought even though he is a more than competent singer. "My melodies come from searching on the guitar a lot of the time," he says. "And that means that the guitar is most of the music in the songs. And when I use accompaniment in the studio or live, the accompaniment generally grows out of the guitar parts as well."

Bruce Cockburn's guitar style is distinctive for its fluidity, precision, haunting melodicism and most of all, his remarkable touch. Although thousands of hours of practice and almost twenty years of constant playing are now behind him, ask him how he got to be the guitar player he is today and he'll say, "Largely by accident."

When he first picked up a guitar he found in his aunt's closet ("It was just a real beat up old thing. It was strung like a Hawaiian guitar."), he wanted to be like Elvis. His parents "got a bit nervous because the association at that time between guitar playing and life had to do with chains, black leather jackets and sideburns. So they made me promise that if I was going to play the guitar, I would not get a leather jacket or grow sideburns and that I'd take lessons. Which meant that, whereas all the other people around me were learning on their own or from other guys who knew a couple of rock and roll licks, I went and took lessons from a guy who really admired Les Paul and Django Reinhardt and played the standard tunes of the Forties. And I also learned to read on the guitar and play more sophisticated chords than most other people were doing.

"He had his limitations as a musician but he was a decent teacher and he taught me a lot of things, and the direction it took was so unlikely compared to what I would've done if I had taught myself. In some ways, I'm sorry I didn't learn more in (the Chuck Berry)

direction, but at the same time it got an unusual blend of influences going for me right off the bat.”

Bruce spent two years studying flat picking using a Kay arch-top single pick-up guitar (“like a jazz guitar”). He later bought a Gibson ES 345 “Stereo” and during his first years in high school he floated in and out of various rock and roll bands. During his last two years in high school he “ran into some folkie people who were into Sonny Terry, Brownie McGee, Bill Broonzy, etc. and the blues thing was close enough to jazz so I could make that connection. I taught myself to fingerpick at first from the friends right around me who could play three-finger style. As I learned more from watching people in clubs, two things came out of it. Mississippi John Hurt was one main thing - doing that sort of alternating bass with the melody over top, and Mance Lipscomb, who was an exponent of the ‘droning’ bass notes and playing blues licks over top of that.”

Cockburn briefly resumed his flat picking studies after high school when he went to Berklee “for three terms of a four term stay.” He had brought along a Gibson ES 175, majoring in composition.

Feeling something was missing, he went back to Ottawa in 1965 and formed a rock and roll band, playing of all things, a Farfisa organ! “I got away with playing one long note through a lot of the songs,” he laughs. He spent the next several years continuing in other rock and roll bands and listening to Hendrix and Eric Clapton before making the commitment to acoustic music and a solo career in 1969, the year of his first album in Canada.

Over the years he became attached to a Martin D-18 he had bought. Then he met a guitar maker named John Larrivéé. “When I first tried his guitars,” Cockburn remembers, “they were nice, but for me, getting a guitar is a very personal thing. A guitar sort of sings in a certain way to you and you know that’s your guitar. I hadn’t found that about his although I admired the work. But then Kitty (Bruce’s wife) and I decided to go to Europe after the *Night Vision* LP, and since we were going to be traveling light, I got John to make me a small guitar that would be easy to carry. It was a very interesting guitar, with a twelve fret neck and a cedar top made in some ways like a classical guitar but braced a little heavier for steel strings.

“That first Larrivéé is on *Salt, Sun & Time* (1974), which wasn’t released in the States. For a small guitar, it had about as much bottom end as you could expect and incredible top end. After having this Larrivéé for a while and deciding I liked what he did - obviously, he could make a guitar that would be right for me - we both got talking about making an acoustic cutaway and that first cutaway he made for me on the *Joy Will Find A Way* LP, and it was a beautiful guitar. But he felt there were some things he didn’t like about it because it was a prototype and he wanted to try and improve on it. We made a deal that he would make another cutaway and I would take whichever one I liked better. Then he built the one I’ve been using pretty much ever since which is quite a strange guitar. It’s made of ebony instead of rosewood. He just did that to see what it would do.”

What does it do?

“Nothing,” Bruce laughs. “It just makes the guitar weigh about twice as much. It doesn’t significantly affect the sound. It just happens that the guitar is very, very good. The neck is very comfortable. It has what to me is just about the most important thing a guitar has to have which you can’t doctor into it. Like you can fix things like the action and whether there’s more top end or more bottom end. Stuff like that can be altered. But this guitar just has an incredible response to the touch and is capable of really delicate shades of tone which I really like.

“The only thing I’m looking for in an acoustic guitar now that’s missing from my whole scene is a better way of amplifying so it can be played with a band and still sound good. I haven’t yet discovered a pick-up that really sounds good. I’ve tried Frap and Barcus Berry pick-ups and also a High A magnetic pick-up, like a sound-hole type pick-up. On the live album it’s a combination of the miked sound plus the sound-hole pick-up. Out of all of them in the end, that turns out to be the best thing.

I also had another guitar made by another guy - a Ren guitar that had an ovation pick-up built into it but that never quite did it either. Although it was loud, it never really sounded that good. It sounded like an Ovation, which to me doesn’t sound much like a real guitar.”

For strings on the Larrivée, Bruce uses light gauge brass strings and has the first and seconds a bit lighter than the regular light gauge. Whereas regular light gauge would be an .012 and an .016 (E and B strings), he uses an .011 and an .014. His amp is a Fender Deluxe Reverb “with the circuitry changed to accommodate a distortion circuit and a mid-range boost. It ends up being very much like the stock Music Man amp.”

He doesn’t use effects except for basic amp reverb, occasional flanger and he has an Electro-Harmonix “Doctor Q” Envelope Follower that he used on “Dialogue With The Devil” on the live album. Added to this lineup, he occasionally plugs in a new Fender Strat for some of the electric numbers.

And how has he been able to get such a gorgeous acoustic guitar sound that sets his records apart from almost everyone else? Ask his producer, Gene Martynec.

“Other than using Neumann 84 mikes, which are in every studio, there’s really no secret,” says Martynec. “Bruce is such a clean player and his guitar is such a beautiful instrument, it’s just a matter of positioning the mike. Half the time we don’t even bother with the equalizer. I hate to make it sound so mundane but with Bruce, it’s very, very simple to make it sound good. You can get a great sound if you’ve got a great guitar player.” End

Summer Tour Dates 1998

June 13

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Mann Center

June 16	Northampton, Massachusetts	The Pines Theatre
June 18	Boston, Massachusetts	Harborlights
June 19	Concord, New Hampshire	The Capitol Theatre
June 21	Detroit, Michigan	The Royal Oak Theatre
June 23	Annapolis, Maryland	The Ram's Head
June 27	Nantucket, Massachusetts	Nectarfest
June 28	Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts	Nectarfest
July 4	Sudbury, Ontario	Northern Lights Festival
July 7	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Shank Hall
July 8	Bayfield, Wisconsin	Big Top Chatauqua
July 9	Fish Creek, Wisconsin	Door Community Theatre
July 11	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Winnipeg Folk Festival
July 16	Dawson City, Yukon	Dawson City Music Festival
July 19	Anchorage, Alaska	Discovery Theatre
July 26	Guelph, Ontario	The Hillside Festival
July 30	Atlanta, Georgia	Lakewood
August 2	New York City, New York	Jones Beach
August 9	Saratoga, New York	Performing Arts Center
August 12	Moncton, New Brunswick	The Capitol Theatre
August 13	Saint John, New Brunswick	Festival By The Sea
August 15	Yarmouth, Nova Scotia	Fish Aid Festival
August 17	Glace Bay, Nova Scotia	Savoy Theatre
August 22	Gananoque, Ontario	Festival Of The Islands
September 1	Petaluma, California	The Mystic Theatre
September 2	Saratoga, California	The Garden Theatre
September 4	Seattle, Washington	Bumbershoot
September 6	Jacksonville, Oregon	The Britt Pavilion
September 8	Victoria, British Columbia	The McPherson Playhouse
September 9	Vancouver, British Columbia	Massey Theatre
September 10	Kamloops, British Columbia	The Sagebrush Theatre
September 11	Prince George, British Columbia	Vanier Hall
September 13	Calgary, Alberta	The Max Bell Theatre
September 14	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	The Broadway Theatre
September 20	Los Angeles, California	The Greek Theatre

While this is the bulk of the dates for this tour, it is possible there will be a few more. If so, they will appear on the Woodpile's website (The Webpile?) and in the August issue of the newsletter.

Bruce: a sensitive new age guitar hero

BRUCE COCKBURN

The Basement, April 19, 1998

Sydney, Australia

by Bruce Elder

There are thousands of dud singer/ songwriters. I know. They keep sending their pathetic little CDs for review without realizing that only their mothers and girlfriends admire their flat singing, inept guitar-playing and banal lyrics.

There are a small number of mediocrities who drift around the edges of the record industry, selling a few hundred of their albums and writing one or two good songs.

Then, at the sharp end of this vast pyramid, there are a few men and women of genius. Bruce Cockburn is at the very sharpest point of the pyramid.

Once lumped in with Steve Forbert, Loudon Wainwright III and John Prine under the odious "new Bob Dylan" tag, Cockburn, now 23 albums into his career, is totally his own man. He is not the new Bob Dylan. He is just the very gifted Bruce Cockburn, a guitarist of such flair and originality that he can be compared with Richard Thompson (they will tour together later this year - but not in Australia, sadly) and a songwriter full of sharply focused images and great political passion and intensity.

He sings and recites his lyrics (a kind of cross between talking blues and poetry recitation) with such clarity that, even if you had never heard any of his songs before, you would still leave his concert incensed at the treatment of indigenous minorities (*Stolen Land*), deeply depressed by our environmental profligacy (*If A Tree Falls, Embers Of Eden*) and outraged by the obscenity of landmines (*The Mines Of Mozambique*). And, after hearing *Call It Democracy*, you'd be likely to head off immediately to join the picket lines at Port Botany or Darling Harbour.

This is not some dated 1960s idealism - it is hard-hitting contemporary outrage at a world gone mad.

But, most of all, it is Cockburn's consummate guitar-playing that keeps you mesmerised for the two hours. It is so rich, subtle and beautiful.

I went to this concert familiar with, but hardly addicted to, the work of Bruce Cockburn. I came away convinced that here was one of the great singer/songwriters of his generation.

Globs of Information

Please note that *Gavin's Woodpile* has moved to a new location. Contact should be made as follows:

Daniel Keebler
5770 San Juan Drive
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Tel/Fax: 360-378-1340

Email: danjer@rockisland.com
Website: www.rockisland.com/~danjer

•••

COVERS

The Dark Gift Of Time (FLED 3016, released in 1998) by Christine Collister contains a cover of "The Whole Night Sky," with Richard Thompson on guitar. To obtain a copy go to www.thebeesknees.com, or write to:

Fledg'ling Records
PO Box 547
London, England
SE26 4BD
U.K.

Jo Freya & Pete Morton (BTL CD2, released in 1997) by Jo Freya & Pete Morton contains a cover of "One Of The Best Ones." Released in the U.K.

Heiter Bis Folkig (CD 27296-2, released in 1997) by Quodlibet. This cd contains a cover of "Laughter" (track 7). After track 12 has finished let the cd run to 4:17 and you will hear a second "hidden" version of the song. The Cd was released in Germany. Try to order it as an import, or inquire directly to the label at:

Pila Music
Postfach 143
72133 Dettenhausen
Germany
Tel: +7157-56430
Fax: +7157-564390

•••

On April 4, 1998, Bruce conducted a **workshop on songwriting** at the Festival of Faith & Writing Conference on the campus of Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Good insight to the birth of some of Bruce's songs, which often bloom from the journals he keeps, and from which he reads as part of the workshop. Performances include *Wondering Where The Lions Are* and *Southland Of The Heart*. The hour-long workshop is available on audio cassette for \$6.00, U.S. funds. Postage within the U.S. is \$4.00, via UPS. The cassette may be purchased as follows:

Tel: 800-748-0122
Tel: 616-957-6376
Fax: 616-957-6575
<http://www.calvin.edu/engl/conf/tapes.htm>

or write to:
Calvin College Bookstore
3201 Burton SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
USA

•••

For the record: an extra tour date was added in Sydney, Australia for April 26, 1998, at The Basement.

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Buy A Collector's Item (And some great music, too)

A limited internet release (1,000) of the six-track live CD titled *You Pay Your Money and You Take Your Chance- Bruce Cockburn Live*, is available directly from Rykodisc in Salem, MA. All tracks are from the Barrymore Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin, from May 3, 1997. Produced by Bruce Cockburn and Colin Linden, the tracklist is: Call It Democracy, Stolen Land, Strange Waters, Fascist Architecture, You Pay Your Money And You Take Your Chance, Birmingham Shadows. The CD can be ordered from the U.S. and Canada by phoning 1-888-232-7385. It can also be ordered directly from the internet at www.rykodisc.com.

•••

Bruce Cockburn presented an award at the *First Native American Music Awards* in Ledyard, Connecticut. The event took place on May 24, 1998 in the Fox Theatre on the Mashantucket-Pequot Reservation. Other presenters included Richie Havens, John Trudell and Elaine Miles.

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My thanks to **Mark Robinson**, who made our move to San Juan Island much more enjoyable, not to mention the muscle he provided. Mark, I'm counting on you to remember how to get the couch (and especially the office desk!) out of this place when we finally move to our own place! If I remember correctly, protractors, grease and survey equipment were involved to get some of this stuff into the house.

Let's go fishin'.

things on page six

it's late march and i'm standing at the photocopy machine watching issue number 26 of *gavin's woodpile* fly out at tremendous speed. suddenly it dawns on me as i'm staring down at page three and the australian tour dates: australia, spring, and april... *they don't*

go together. sure, it's spring here in the united states, but not down under. my apologies to the southern hemisphere.

•••

gavin's woodpile welcomes bruce-related articles, reviews, interviews and such for the *woodpile* archive. if submitting such things, please try to include the name and date of the publication. if sending photos, include date and location (venue, town, etc.), and the name of the person who took the photo. do not write on the back of the photo as inks often bleed through photographs over time! include this information separately. my thanks in advance.

•••

When we come
when we come again
to celebrate renewal
at the heart
at the heart of us
our eyes will touch Life

though we may be hard to find,
where we stand in time
the mirrors of the past shine
with the light of unborn days
we wander in the flames
with nothing but our names
and no-one for the blame
we love so well to focus on

When we come
when we come again
to search beside the Fool
for the heart
for the heart of us
our eyes will touch Life

by ornaments entranced
we trace in frenzied dance
the patterns carved by chance
on the pavement of memory
seasons turning yet again
the Mother's breast is full again
as in heaven, so with men
is now and ever shall be

till we come
till we come again
to recognize renewal
at the heart

at the heart of us
our eyes will touch Life

Spring Song- Bruce Cockburn 1970

Issue Number 28

August 1998

Bernie & Bruce

the followings article appeared in the toronto star in august, 1986, written by peter goddard.

Years ago, when they wrote songs about this sort of thing, it would be called "The Ballad Of Bernie And Bruce"- a story about a unique partnership between the unlikeliest of partners.

These days the relationship is not *in* the song, but *behind* it.

Bruce Cockburn's appearance at Kingswood Thursday can only be called a triumph of tenacity and intelligence for a singer *and* audience who have grown together in 16 years from Ottawa Valley laid-back to Third World political.

It's a sort of triumph as well for Bernie Finkelstein, Cockburn's manager; a personal one, coming at the other end of what could be called a mild mid-life crisis. "Actually, crisis isn't the right word exactly," he instructs. "It's a career thing. I've been doing the same thing for 20 years and I'm looking for changes."

Finkelstein, only two years ago honored by the Broadcast Executives Society as *the* rising young stud executive in the Canadian music business, has decided to chuck the corporate for the private.

He wants time for himself. So he parted ways with Murray McLauchlan, a friend and partner for years, as well as with Carole Pope and Rough Trade. He stopped looking for new artists to handle. And his company, True North Records, one of the feistiest and successful of all the independent labels was trimmed down to only one act: Cockburn.

Now, the singer himself maintains that despite all the flack he attracted from his current hit, "Call It Democracy" that "I'm just doing what I've always done- singing about what touches me."

That's not how Finkelstein senses things are turning out. Cockburn's "Rocket Launcher," the 1984 single about life in Guatemalan refugee camps, took Finkelstein on a rocket ride- from handling letters from U.S. patriots outraged at what they see as his client's

anti-Americanism, to haggling with video channels about what bits to cut out of his controversial video about “Democracy.”

Managing Cockburn years ago was mostly a matter of getting him booked into the right folk festivals and clubs. Now, because of the strident political slant of much of his material, promoters of his shows are asking the manager privately “will I get in trouble for doing this?”

By trouble, they mean from the U.S. government, frequently the object of Cockburn’s anger. “I have to keep telling people they can give my number out if they’re worried,” says Finkelstein.

They are much alike in some ways. Both are in their early 40s. Both like travel, good food and good wine. Both had fathers in the army. Neither would call himself a rebel yet both, you sense, found himself alone a lot during his childhood. But the similarities end there. Finkelstein *loves* baseball, Cockburn doesn’t like sports. Cockburn is thoughtful, soft-spoken and rather hesitant around the press. Finkelstein is thoughtful, garrulous and arguably the most skilled manipulator of press and publicity in the music business.

Cockburn is the very model of suburban Canadian WASP, Finkelstein is inner-city Jewish. Cockburn is lean and lithe yet somehow soft looking. Finkelstein is large yet somehow tough.

Yet, it could be argued that neither would be where he is, financially, artistically or perhaps even intellectually without the other. “Without Finkel, no one would have heard about Bruce,” says one friend. “Without Bruce, Bernie would not have as much reason to talk to everyone.”

Cockburn’s growing anger over Central American politics has helped trigger some of Finkelstein’s own. He has long seen himself as an outsider in the Canadian music business- “like the Jew outside the church, selling rugs,” he says. He feels he’s always had an uphill battle. Not for whim did he call his company True North in the face of a business dominated by foreign-controlled firms.

Cockburn’s tough stance against what he sees as growing American imperialism mirrors Finkelstein’s own fight to survive as a small Canadian company.

In 1969 Cockburn recorded the first album released by True North. It was Finkelstein’s excitement about the new music he heard the singer recording in the early 1980s which helped launch Cockburn’s new career.

As of now, Cockburn says, “we don’t see eye-to-eye on everything. But Bernie is more willing than I am to tolerate business interests.”

Indeed. Prior to the release in the United States of Cockburn's current album, *World of Wonders*, Finkelstein was informed by MCA, the American distributor, that they'd have to put a sticker on it warning buyers that it contained language some might find offensive.

"They said they had to do this because we had the word *bleep* in 'Call It Democracy,' " he explains. "MCA decided that a generic sticker would be good enough. So we talked it over and decided to let them do it. But then they called us back and said they didn't want to sticker it themselves. They didn't want to feel as if they were bowing to outside pressure. They wanted Bruce to put his *own* sticker on it with something like, 'This record is dangerous to Republicans.' Well, we told them we absolutely weren't going to do that."

MCA next decided that if there wasn't going to be a sticker, then why don't they print the lyrics on the back of the album? *That* way everyone buying the album can see exactly which words, naughty or not, this guy Bruce Cockburn uses.

"We said that's fine too," Finkelstein explains. "Only then they called back *again* and indicated that this would *not* satisfy the would-be censors because there is still the possibility that someone would pick the album up and *not* read the lyrics.

"They asked us how we would feel if they put a yellow line through the word *bleep*? That way, you see, no one could not miss that the word was on the album.

"*Next* they decided to use stars instead of letters for part of the word *bleep*. Then they decided it was getting out of hand and to ignore the whole thing entirely. So there's one pressing of the album, with the yellow line, the stars and even a yellow box around the song. The second pressing doesn't have anything.

"I always find it curious just how far these things can go and how nervous they get with Bruce. I'm not so sure that if 'Call It Democracy' had been about love this issue would have come up, that word or not. But because of the (political) context Bruce is working in, there's a tendency for suspicion to arise.

"This is where we differ, I guess. Bruce saw all this as tampering with his song. I thought it was important enough to get out, even with the tampering." "Bruce," adds Bernie, "has a healthy skepticism of the entire music business- including me. I think we both understand that." *end*

1998 Tour Dates Added

Sept 5.....Portland, OR.....Rose Garden Amphitheatre
Sept 18.....San Juan Capistrano, CA.....The Coach House
Sept 19.....Ventura, CA.....The Ventura Theatre

Come and gone...

June 17.....Portland, ME.....The Merrill Auditorium
June 23.....Ram's Head, Annapolis, MD, second show added
June 24.....Washington, DC.....The Birchmere

True North's Bernie Finkelstein: A True Music Enthusiast

*The following article comes from Billboard magazine, 1995. Story by **Larry Le Blanc**.*

TORONTO- Manager/label head Bernie Finkelstein is known throughout the Canadian music industry for telling anyone who'll listen that the artists he works with are the best in the world.

"All he can talk about is how great Bruce Cockburn is," says Finkelstein's ex-partner Bernie Fiedler, who manages the Canadian acts Liona Boyd, the Canadian Brass, and Quartetto Gelato. "I visited him the other day and asked how he was. Two seconds later, he's talking about Bruce. I said, 'Who the hell cares [about Cockburn], Bernie? How are you?' But that's Bernie."

Finkelstein's enthusiasm is, perhaps, second nature, because he has managed Canadian singer/songwriter Cockburn since 1971. Additionally, under the Finkelstein Management Co. he manages Barney Bentall & the Legendary Hearts, and Stephen Fearing.

These days Finkelstein is brimming with good cheer, because his True North label is celebrating its 25th anniversary this month. The label has released 76 albums by such Canadian acts as Cockburn (22 albums), Murray McLauchlan (14 albums), Fearing, Rough Trade, Doug Cameron, Syrinx, Graham Shaw, Luke Gibson, and Gregory Hoskins & the Stick People.

On April 5, Finkelstein made the final step in switching over catalog from True North's licensing agreement with Sony Music Entertainment (Canada), which had handled the label from its origins, to a pressing and distribution deal with MCA Records Canada. "We're a different label," he says. "MCA is excited about what we're doing, and I'm excited by what they're doing."

"MCA is a strong catalog company, and True North will make a good contribution in that area," says Randy Lennox, VP, national sales, MCA Records Canada. "We've already [reissued] 11 titles to the 37 [albums] available."

For the first time, True North has moved into licensing of foreign product in Canada. It recently picked up rights to the U.S.-based World Domination label (Low Pop Suicide and Sky Cries Mary), the U.K.-based Cooking Vinyl label (The Oyster Band, Jackie Leven), and Kelly-Jo Phelps' blues debut, "Lead Me On."

Finkelstein was born in Toronto and raised in Canada and England. After his family returned to Toronto while he was in his mid-teens, he worked in several clubs in the Yorkville Village district, where young people went to see folk and rock performers. After handling the affairs of an unknown local band called the Dimensions, Finkelstein began managing the Paupers, one of the city's top progressive rock bands. Shortly afterward, he landed the group an opening spot for the Jefferson Airplane's New York debut in 1966.

Realizing that the Paupers needed additional record industry clout in America, Finkelstein, then 19, brazenly entered into a partnership with Albert Grossman, then manager of Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul, and Mary, to handle the group. The Paupers went on to record two poor-selling albums for the Verve/Forecast label, and Finkelstein was soon shunted aside. But he rebounded with the Toronto-based, progressive band Kensington Market, which recorded two albums for Warner Bros. Produced by Felix Pappalardi, bassist for Mountain, the albums failed to sell in the States. After the group splintered in 1969, Finkelstein retreated to his farm in the Killaloe area outside Toronto and spent the next six months pondering his future.

"I didn't know how to make things work in international ways," he says. "I was frustrated by the great cultural difference between Toronto and Los Angeles." Finkelstein eventually decided to take some earnings he had saved and launch True North Records. After seeing a number of performers, he settled on Cockburn as his first signing. "We did the whole project ['Bruce Cockburn']. . . for \$5,000," he recalls. From almost the moment True North put out Cockburn's debut album in April 1970, Finkelstein realized he had to have more than a label. As Cockburn's second album, "High Winds, White Sky," was being prepared the next year, Finkelstein took over the singer's management. Then he signed McLauchlan to True North and took on managing him as well. True North's start-up days were rough financially. "Although our first four or five records really got noticed in Canada, we didn't sell too many records," he says. In 1972, looking for financial stability and further industry clout, Finkelstein pitched the idea of becoming partners with Bernie Fiedler, owner of the prestigious 120-seat club the Riverboat in Yorkville Village. From Fiedler's apartment in mid-town Toronto, Fiedler and Finkelstein operated True North Records and Finkelstein-Fiedler Management. They also expanded into promoting, with major Canadian concerts for Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Kris Kristofferson, Jackson Browne, Seals & Crofts, Harry Chapin, and Leonard Cohen.

"Singer/songwriters were extremely popular in the mid-'70s, and we had the pre-eminent venue in Canada, the Riverboat," says Finkelstein. "The acts playing there were slightly known, filled the club, and six months later they were James Taylor with 'Fire And Rain' selling out Massey Hall, and we were promoting them."

At the same time, the promoter duo also guided Cockburn and McLauchlan into becoming major concert attractions throughout Canada. Things really heated up for their operation when Toronto-based Dan Hill was added to Finkelstein-Fiedler Management in 1975. His third album, 1979's "Longer Fuse," contained the single "Sometimes When

We Touch,” which reached No. 3 on Billboard’s Hot 100 Singles chart. By this time, after leaving Epic Records in the U.S., True North had secured a U.S. distribution home with Island Records, and Cockburn and McLauchlan were getting substantial American press attention there for the first time.

By the late 1970s the popularity of singer/songwriters in North America was on the wane. Competing against a sea of discos and other clubs, the Riverboat closed in 1978.

Four years later, Finkelstein and Fiedler abruptly split. Finkelstein continued to manage Cockburn and EMI singer Graham Shaw, and he still operated True North. The label had signed cutting-edge rock band Rough Trade, which soon became popular in Canada.

Finkelstein says he was trying to slow down during this period, but when Cockburn’s 1984 album “Stealing Fire” became his biggest to date, life became increasingly chaotic at the company.

Proud of his quarter-century relationship with Cockburn and his world-wide status as a quality artist, Finkelstein says, “Bruce has never had the huge record and he may never have, but he shares that with a lot of interesting artists.” END

The 1998 Verde Valley Festival, Sedona Arizona...

Look for Bruce to be there on either October 3rd or 4th, *maybe* both days. More details in the next issue.

Thanks, Bernie.

Flashback

*The following article comes from the Ottawa Journal, October 2, 1970. It appeared in a column called The Coffee House Scene, written by **Peter Nichol**.*

Many things make a successful entertainer:

Talent: years of playing and practising; a fair share of downright good luck and a lot of very hard work.

Even if you achieve all this you are really only on the ground floor, so to speak. About last year at this time, a young Ottawa musician had finally achieved ground floor status in this sense. He has since become a highly successful performer.

His name is Bruce Cockburn.

Cockburn’s musical background includes graduation from the Berkeley School of Music in Boston, one of the finest academies of its type in North America; playing with local

bands (such as the Children, and in more successful bands like Three's A Crowd which included Dave Wiffen and Sandy Crawley).

He has played for years (it seems) on the coffee house circuits; in bars and university concert halls; to standing ovations at Mariposa and many television appearances. He has, in short, done the whole thing.

Best of all, he signed a recording contract with the True North label and released one album which has sold well.

It is interesting to note he has signed a contract which expressly excludes the United States as an area of release. The record can only be bought here in Canada or in England. It takes a lot of courage to try and make it big without the Yankee brass band stuff.

His music has a “one-ness” about it that spans things like generation gaps and appreciation gaps and credibility gaps. It is exceedingly difficult to define (even for Cockburn, I guess) but it has to do with gentility. I think that is the hallmark of his compositions.

It is this gentility, combined with honesty and optimism, which makes up the person of Bruce Cockburn as well, that his audiences most identify with. It may be only my experience but I have found he is a very personal singer, who still retains enough generalities in his lyrics to allow everyone to identify with them. (A sort of cross between Cohen and Jerry Jeff Walker).

Last winter I wrote: “Cockburn opens doors. He allows you to see what he sees; to feel what he feels; to be, if only for a moment, what he is. Whether or not you enter is up to you. No one who has, ever returned disappointed.” It may be a coincidence (and probably is) that the album cover is a door leading from the choked city to the country.

Gentility is also the hallmark of his performances. He is a small man, gnomish behind his wire-rim glasses, who quietly smiles at you from behind his guitar or piano. His stories reflect his soft-spoken humor, much the way his lyrics reflect his soft-mannered thoughts.

Cockburn is not only a fine composer (he writes all his own material) but is also an excellent guitarist, possessed of a highly melodic voice. To see him is to understand why he is the most successful “folk” musician to ever come out of Ottawa, and why he is gaining a vast and well-deserved reputation across the country.

He is playing this weekend at Le Hibou. If you have not had the pleasure of seeing him before, I recommend him most highly. END

information vital to your survival

The Charity Of Night- Special Edition Tour Pack (D31713). This two cd package includes the original releases of *The Charity Of Night* and *You Pay Your Money And You Take Your Chance*. They are packaged in a cardboard box with a collage of pictures on the front. It was released as part of the Australian solo tour in April, 1998.

Covers

Stained Glass by The Singers and Players of Beaches Presbyterian Church (SM003, 1996). This cd contains a cover of "Lord Of The Starfields." You can obtain a copy as follows:

The Colportuer's House
2356 Gerrard St. E., Unit 110
Toronto, Ontario M4E 2E2
Canada

Fax: 416-690-9967
e-mail: seraph@pathcom.com

tip of the iceberg by Glen Dias (BEBO 001, 1998). This cd contains a cover of "Anything Can Happen." Obtain as follows:

Bear Bones Music
P.O. Box 21077
Stratford, Ontario N5A 7V4
Canada

Tel: 519-273-5818
Fax: 519-273-5796

Vulturama! by Hot Vultures (WEBE 9031, 1998). This is a 23 track "best of" cd that contains "The Blues Got The World By The Balls." This track was originally released in 1977 on the album, *The East Street Shakes*. Contact as follows:

Rogue Productions
PO Box 337
London, England N4 1TW
UK

Fax: +44-181-348-5626
Email: beatnik@fruits.demon.co.uk
Collections

KINK Live (1998). This cd contains 17 tracks from different artists who visited the studios of KINK radio in Portland, Oregon. It includes a solo performance of "Joy Will Find A Way" from Bruce's visit to the station on January 9, 1997. Proceeds from the sale

of the cd will go to the Portland Public Schools Foundation, a non-profit independent advocate for public schools. To obtain this limited release:

Music Millennium #2
801 NW 23rd Ave.
Portland, Oregon 97204
USA

Tel: 503-248-0163

The Folkscene Collection- From The Heart Of Studio A (RHR CD 109, 1998). A 13 track collection of live songs from KPFK in Los Angeles, California. It includes a solo performance of "Pacing The Cage," from Bruce's visit to the station on January 5, 1997. A copy may be obtained by contacting:

Red House Records
P.O. Box 4044
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104
USA

1-800-695-4687

WXRV Presents: Live From The River Music Hall, Vol. 1 (EFR-CD-114, 1998). A 13 track cd which includes a live in-studio performance of "Night Train," while Bruce was at the station on January 17, 1997. The proceeds from this cd go to RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network). Other artist include Tori Amos, Big Head Todd & The Monsters, Ani Di Franco, Barenaked Ladies and Jonatha Brooke. Check with local retailers, or so more of the proceeds go toward RAINN, mail order from the label at:

Eastern Front Records
7 Curve Street
Medfield, MA 02052

1-800-337-3747, or
1-508-359-8003
Fax: 508-359-8090
Website: www.easternfront.com

Other Matters

The Festival of Faith & Writing Conference. As reported in the last issue an audio tape is available of Bruce's participation at this event in April 1998. PLEASE NOTE: you should have received TWO tapes. In talking with the folks at Calvin College they told me there was a mix-up in filling some customer orders and that only one tape was sent. Part two contains a new song currently called "Look How Far." Contact Calvin if you received only one tape. See issue 27, page five, for contact details.

My thanks to Roxanne Perrin for the typing work on *True North's Bernie Finkelstein: A True Music Enthusiast*.

Issue Number 29

October 1998

Produced by Eugene Martynec

By Daniel Keebler

Eugene Martynec produced fourteen of the first fifteen Bruce Cockburn albums. No small achievement in the music business. They are: 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, Resume and The Trouble With Normal. On August 7, 1998, we talked about a few of those early albums...

In The Beginning

We moved to Toronto [from Winnipeg] in my high school years, and that's when I became interested in music. Eventually through my interest in music I ran into Bruce Cockburn through several bands... in the late 60s I guess. He ended up playing with a band that I played with for awhile. They mentioned they had this great guitar player/singer/writer from Ottawa and that I should come and check him out. I became friends with Bruce through that.

How I got involved in doing his first recording was Bruce was in Toronto and somehow heard that I was interested in doing some record production, or had some experience. I had done one album at that point with someone else as a co-production, and the band I was with had some experience recording. We'd done two albums. At that point in time in Canada there wasn't much in the way of a recording industry. I'd say there weren't many recording studios to boot. So, it was pretty easy to get involved at that point. One of Bruce's little quips was that it was interesting that we got into doing recordings when we did. It was just at a time when nobody said you couldn't do it. I think about ten years into our work situation he brought that up... that it was much harder for people now.

He wanted to make a recording. He'd gone around to different people, and at that point in time there was a lot of what we used to call "sweetening." They would take a song and make it radio friendly, shall we say. I think Bruce was obviously not interested in that. Usually those kind of things sounded corny to us. He didn't want to get involved in that. Anyway, he came around to me and we talked. I always enjoyed what he was doing so I went to Bernie Finkelstein because I really don't have much of a business sense. I

mentioned Bruce to him. Eventually what happened is we got some funding and the recording studio in town actually put up a little bit of studio time for us as well. We put together his first album on a shoestring. From there Bernie was able to get a distribution deal through one of the major labels here. I guess it was Columbia at the time. It was done very inexpensively, and it's mostly Bruce. There are a few little overdubs but we tried to keep away from a typical commercial way of dealing with music at that point.

We got some airplay. We were lucky. I think it was "Going To The Country" that got airplay. It was very difficult to get airplay at first because it was always deemed "folk music," so the major stations were reluctant to play anything.

As you know he has been incredibly prolific over the years. It used to always blow me away that every year he had enough material to actually do another recording. What he's been doing is quite unusual. I don't know anybody who seems to survive as long as he has, generally.

A curious thing is that I met Bruce as a kind of electric blues guitarist. Right around that time he had just taken up the acoustic guitar, I mean in a more serious vein. I met him right around the time he was making that change. I think seven or eight, maybe ten years later, he decided to pick up the electric again. A curious turn around shall we say. We did go through that whole acoustic realm for quite awhile. Almost traditional folk in a roundabout way depending on what the material was like.

I remember Bruce coming around, as I said, with all this material. He was interested in doing something, but he wanted to do it mostly voice and guitar. That was the sound that he was after. The *song* was more important than the arrangement. That was the stance we took early on, at least that's the direction that was taken at that point. As you know, after things loosened up a bit we went back into a situation where he was interested in working with other musicians and having input from other players. He had an interesting way of choosing musicians to work with. It was always a little different from what was mainstream at any point.

What stuck out in your memory about the first album?

In my mind the big thing for us was doing it, finishing it, getting a cover, getting it manufactured and actually getting it released. That was like a *major* achievement at that point. Then the big struggle in trying to get Radio to play some of it. We did get some play on "Musical Friends." That really helped. As small as it was it helped establish him in the sense that we were able to do more stuff after that. That comes with pressures of once you start dealing with a major label then you have the pressures of "What's radio going to play? What's the so-called single off the album?" We got caught up in all that stuff later as well.

High Winds White Sky, another very acoustic album, includes some of your guitar work.

Right, I ended up playing on it. At that point Bruce had actually moved across the street from me in Toronto. He had written some new material and we would get together to play. He had this material and I ended up learning some of the songs that we wound up recording together on that particular album. I actually went on the road with him as well. It was a very interesting experience and lots of fun.

This is the album that produced One Day I walk, Love Song, Let Us Go Laughing...a lot of beautiful songs.

That's right. He's never been short of them (laughs). That's what's really amazing. At times we would meet perhaps six months after doing a recording and he would have certain material and he would come by and say 'I'm doing this.' Then three or four months later he would discard all those songs and have a whole new batch. He was just trying to figure out what he wanted to record. I was always amazed that the output was really quite staggering. He always worked, too, even on the road... and I'm sure he does that still now. We'd be in some strange town away from home and I'd walk by his hotel room and I'd hear him working on a new tune or whatever. We also used to always rehearse every day before we did a concert. It wasn't unusual for us to go through everything we played. It was a respect for his own work, but also for the audience.

Touring behind High Winds White Sky must have been interesting, in that it was fairly simple, with just a few people.

Just the two of us, yes. It was very easy in that sense. A lot of times I would, depending on where we were, fly home for a week or two. He used to like to take the touring nice and slow... jump in his van or truck or whatever. If it was warm enough he'd camp and write tunes. I would come home, where I would usually have other work, then I'd fly out and meet him for the next few gigs. It was good to see how receptive the audiences were.

Night Vision is where we start to hear a more electric urban sound in Bruce's work.

He was building an audience. I think we were starting to get more "radio friendly," to use a bad term. He was able to play to larger houses, and was touring with more musicians. I think some of the songs were being put into that vein. Whatever the future of his sound was going to be, this was kind of the beginning of that, in some respects.

You have to remember we started out with the idea that we didn't *need* anything else, or *he* didn't need anything else because of the way he structured his songs- fine guitar playing, and a lot of times the guitar almost playing the melody line along with him- good accompaniment. Almost like the space was covered.

His roots are in electric guitar, not acoustic guitar. I think that thing started to raise it's head again and incorporate that into his work. That's what I thought anyway.

This album was produced by both you and Bruce.

The production is very much a collaborative effort. It was myself, Bruce and Bernie actually. You could call that the “production team.” I was more delegated to get performances, and to make sure that things *sounded* good. Bruce was good at making decisions on what he wanted to put on an album. At times I didn’t even know what we would be recording until we got to the studio. This wasn’t *always* the case, but there was that situation occasionally. I would show up, and was essentially the first audience he had. I guess there was a trust of some sort there. Whatever we did, the next day I’d take it over to Bernie’s office and we’d go through the “work in progress,” shall we say. If certain things weren’t working we’d do it again. It was very much a team effort. I got the name of “producer,” but in actual fact, everybody involved is part of the team.

Salt, Sun & Time: In addition to producing this album with Bruce Anthony, you played guitar, synthesizer and co-wrote “Seeds On The Wind.”

He gave me a credit for that? I don’t know if I wrote anything... [laughing] *generous*. Another tour came out of that. I think I played much more on *that* album than any of his albums *after* that. I really enjoyed going on the road with him. It was a good experience. Bruce Anthony [a friend of Eugene’s] was there because we needed somebody that we could trust to give us some feedback on what we played. I find it difficult when I record something to step back and have a reasonable opinion as to what happened musically. I didn’t really want to worry about what things sounded like. I was more interested in getting a musical performance happening, and I needed someone to do that.

Joy Will Find Away, from 1975...

Bruce meets African music. That’s my take on it. It’s like early World Music or something, even though we didn’t know very much about it. That’s what I remember about that record.

Were you rolling along- and here you are at album four, album five and so forth- and thinking “How long will this last? How did I get into this? This is a good thing.”

Sure, of course. It was always the case of “Are they going to ask me to do the next album or are they *not* going to ask me to do the next album?” Essentially that’s where it was sitting. It *had* to end sometime, but it was an usually long stint. END

Eugene Martynec has been involved in all facets of music making since high school in Toronto in the late 1960’s. He has performed, composed or recorded with pop groups, pit orchestras, music for visual media, modern dance and live theatre. He studied electronic music, composition and orchestration with Dr. Samuel Dolin at the Royal Conservatory of Music where he received two scholarships to study electronic music (1970-1975). His interest in record production resulted in Juno Awards (Canadian Grammy) in 1981 and 1973 for his work with Bruce Cockburn, pop groups Rough Trade and Edward Bear. He has produced over 40 record albums from 1969 to the present. He has been awarded Canada Council and Toronto Arts awards for music composition.

His main interest now is performing live interactive electroacoustic music and the use of alternate controllers for music making. His first solo CD (released Fall /Winter of 1997) of composed and solo interactive electroacoustic music is titled *Silica*.

Bruce in Kamloops, British Columbia, at the Sagebrush Theatre on September 10, 1998.

Selected prints will be available from four shows from September, 1998. They will be posted for viewing on the Woodpile's website at www.rockisland.com/~danjer, and in the December issue of the newsletter. Photos will be available as 8x10 inch enlargements. The cost will be US\$20, which includes postage. The proceeds will go toward supporting the newsletter. There will be color and black & white prints to choose from. Details to follow.

Exploring Life On The Edge Of The Desert

If you thought the city of Timbuktu was more myth than reality and that nothing can stand in the way of the advancing Sahara Desert, then has Bruce Cockburn got a story for you! And he'll be more than happy to tell it when the hour-long documentary *River Of Sand* is broadcast nationwide [in Canada] by Vision TV, on October 23, 1998, at 9pm.

As host and narrator of the film, Bruce will take viewers on a trip through the north of Mali, from legendary Timbuktu to the little-known village of Ibissa, deep in the heart of Dogon country. Enroute, he will cross paths with Malian musicians including Toumani Diabaté, master of the West African 21-string classical harp called the "kora" and internationally renowned blues man Ali Farka Touré. Bruce also witnesses, first-hand, the progress made in strengthening the lives of local villagers, through projects supported by USC Canada.

Produced by Kensington Communications of Toronto, with primary support from USC Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency and Vision TV, *River Of Sand* will explore life on the edge of the Sahara and the ongoing battle of the people of Northern Mali to fight back the encroaching desert. It will also expose the audience to a phenomenon that Canadians have heard little about... desertification.

Subsequent broadcasts of *River Of Sand* are expected later this fall on TV Ontario, and the Saskatchewan Education Network.

by Susan Fisher,
Manager of Communication, USC

For those of you living in Rangoon, out of reach of the Canadian stations that will carry this program, fear not. It will be available for purchase on video from several sources in

the near future. I will publish information on how to purchase it once all details are known. -Daniel

All Kinds Of Things

Congratulations go to Bruce Cockburn for being selected as one of the recipients of the prestigious **Governor General's Award** for the Performing Arts. The award entails significant recognition of Bruce's lifelong artistic achievement as well as his social and political contributions. The Awards Gala will be taped at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa on November 7, and the program will air nationally on CBC on December 27.

For The Record: The August 13th show in Saint John, NB, was rescheduled for August 18th. The Glace Bay show was canceled, and had not been rescheduled at the time of this writing. These changes were due to illness.

Raised By Wolves by Colin Linden (Columbia, CK 80329), produced by Colin Linden and John Whynot. Colin covers the Bruce-penned song "Anything, Anytime, Anywhere." While Bruce has performed this song in concert, he has never recorded it. Bruce also provides harmony vocals on "Holy Fire" and "Ride With Me." Other familiar names on the cd include Richard Bell, John Dymond, Gary Craig, Janice Powers, Stephen Fearing, Colin James and Tom Wilson.

Bruce played the ***Annual Music Festival: A Benefit Concert for the Native American Scholarship Project*** on October 4, 1998. The concert is held each year at the Hamilton Warren Amphitheater, located on the Verde Valley School campus in Sedona, Arizona.

The proceeds from the concerts are directed to the Native American Scholarship program, which was established in 1990 to provide financial, academic and emotional support for Native American students in the region and to support the school's commitment to ethnic and cultural diversity. Verde Valley School provides scholarships to those students who want to continue their education and return to their peers with a better understanding of how to cope in this rapidly changing world.

Back Page

My thanks to Doug Flavelle, Bruce Cockburn, Ron Decker & Leslie Charbon for this, that and the other thing relating to the four shows I attended in September.

Studio Works Available On CD

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
The Charity Of Night
You Pay Your Money...

Issue Number 30

December 1998

The Rhythm Of Circumstance

Daniel Keebler

*I spoke with **Miche Pouliot** from his home in Ottawa on November 4, 1998, regarding his stint as drummer on three tours and one album with Bruce . -DK*

It was a dark and stormy night...

The first time I met Bruce I was playing here in Ottawa at a bar, Squire's Tavern. He came in to have a beer, and got up and did some jamming. That was the first time I ever met him, or talked to him. I'd known of him, of course, as we all had here. That was about 1976, certainly not much later than that. I'd bump into him here and there when I was down in Toronto out on the street or whatever, or he'd come in to see a band play that I was in.

The first time I saw him in concert officially was in Toronto in the summer of '83, and I was just *blown* away with the quality of the musicianship and the sound. The whole production was just terrific. At the time I was working at a music store in Toronto. It was just before Christmas of '83... it was about ten till nine and we were about to close the

store. I was the last guy there... and I got this phone call from Bruce. He'd just gotten a drum machine and I was thinking he had some problems with that or he wanted to know something having to do with programming or whatever. He said 'No, actually I want to know if you'd like to audition for my band.' I was just *floored*. Like I said, I'd seen the band and I was pretty impressed with them. I said yes, of course. It was early '84 that we got together and ran some songs. I think he looked at three people including me, and I got the gig. Hugh Marsh had produced a demo of a band I was playing with and had played it for Bruce. I think that's how Bruce decided he wanted to give me a shot at the seat.

How was the audition set up?

There was a rehearsal space that we went to... and Fergus Marsh was there, who I knew already from Ottawa. Percussionist, Chi Sharpe, was there... and me and Bruce. He just started running some songs. He and Fergus had been writing, so they had some stuff ready to go. We just started jamming these songs... *Lovers in a Dangerous Time*, *To Raise The Morning Star*... all of that album. He just started playing that stuff, and we just saw where it went. I guess he liked what he heard. It took an afternoon. Then it was about another week or so when he called me up and said I got the gig. I was *absolutely* thrilled. Then in February of '84 we started the first tour. We went out to eastern Canada for eight dates and firmed up the material. Actually, we rehearsed for two weeks *then* we went out for a tour and we came back and cut *Stealing Fire*.

When I talked to Fergus, he described Stealing Fire, as "hot and sweaty." What was your overall impression of doing that album?

At that point I was working in a music store, and I was playing in four or five bands... real street-level stuff. So, to get *yanked* out of that scene and into this gorgeous recording studio, and doing concerts in really nice venues, was just other-worldly to me. In making that album I'd just never heard sounds that good in a studio before. The material was so strong and I got to play basically what I wanted to play. It worked really well. It was great playing with Fergus, Chi and Bruce. Jon Goldsmith was producing. It was a great experience. It was a top-flight week. I think we tracked everything in five days.

There's a funny story I should tell you. On the last day I came in with all the makings to make sushi for everybody. I did that, and I forgot one piece of fish in the drum booth, which got left over the weekend in this sealed room. So when everybody came in on Monday, it *really* stank. It took them awhile to get it out of there. They had to figure out where it was first of all.

Fergus is right, it was sweaty. It was a very sensual album. The whole Central American theme was up-front at that point. At the rehearsals when we were working on this material Bruce would start telling us stories about his trip down there... some of the beautiful things he saw and some of the absolutely disgusting, atrocious violations of humanity that he saw. It would make us *really* feel the song and *really* play it from our guts. He would really inspire us that way. People misinterpret *Rocket Launcher* so often. From my understanding of how he feels about it, he doesn't even like to sing that song, but people want to hear it. It makes him feel really bad. He doesn't like to go to the place

where he feels like he wants to kill somebody. It's not a place that he likes to go. It's not about him *gleefully* marching through the field and blasting helicopters out of the sky. He'd rather not visit that place at all.

Are there songs from that album that stand out for you personally?

Sahara Gold always struck me as being a *really* sexy song. Great to play. It had so many elements in it of sensuality. The whole way that we ended up playing that song... it was just *so* sensual. I love that song.

The last couple of tours that I did with him, the '91 and the '94 tour, we were doing Peggy's Kitchen Wall, which is just a *blast* to play. It has such a light-hearted feel, with such a sweet and bouncy look at trying to figure out who put the bullet hole in Peggy's kitchen wall. There's a real story to it, and it's not all pleasant, but the song sure came out fun. I still play the album once in awhile because it was such a fun album to make and the songs were so great.

The drums on To Raise The Morning Star are very nice.

We had two passes at that. There was the groove part, and some overdubs at the end. The first time we played that song live after the album, I'd forgotten about those overdubs. We cut the tracks, Bruce mixed, and then we didn't really have much contact for a couple of months. Then we had a gig. At the end of the song Bruce kind of turned around and was looking at me like 'Do that thing,' and I was going, 'What thing?' I hadn't even heard the tracks so I didn't even know how it came out. I didn't exactly remember what he wanted me to do, but I sort of did *something*.

John Naslen, who was the engineer, actually won a Juno for that album that year. When I finally heard the album after it had been mixed I just couldn't believe how good it sounded. I was just amazed by the skill of Jon Goldsmith, Bruce and John Naslen.

Shooting the video for Lovers In A Dangerous Time...

I don't remember a whole lot about that day, except that it was a *long* day. I think we drove out to Hamilton- or somewhere- it was a bit of a drive west of Toronto. We were there for a long, long time as I recall.

The Stealing Fire tour...

There were some great gigs. The ones we had in Fort Collins, Boulder and Denver were great places to play. That's big Bruce territory. The west coast, all the California dates, were outstanding. For me, it was the first time I'd been through those places, seeing all these old theatres and beautiful facilities. It was a fantastic experience.

We played a funny trick on Fergus once. We had just played New York City and left to drive to Washington, D.C., for our next show. We arrived in the afternoon, and Stuart

Raven-Hill and I [tour manager] went out to look for something to eat. We ended up in the Hilton, in the dining room, and we noticed that Fergus and his wife were there, but they didn't see us. So, at the end of their meal we ordered the biggest, *most ridiculous* dessert you've ever seen... just a *mountain* of ice cream and wafers and whipped cream and sauce. The thing was like fifteen bucks. We sent it over anonymously and just watched with glee as he tried to turn it back. Eventually the waiter pointed us out... we were just killing ourselves laughing. He ate it. I have pictures.

More than five years after the Stealing Fire tour, you end up touring with Bruce for Nothing But A Burning Light. How did this come about?

After touring with Bruce [for Stealing Fire] I worked with k.d. lang and The Reclines for a few years. That wrapped up and I ended up back here in Ottawa. I've known Colin Linden for a long time, since 1981. He had been working with Bruce, writing. I was up at the family cottage and I got a phone call from John Dymond, the bass player, who was with me in The Reclines. He said, 'I think Bruce is looking for you.' I said, 'What for?' John said, 'I think he's doing a tour.' So I called Bernie Finkelstein's office. They weren't about to offer anything up. 'Hi, I'm Miche. Bruce is looking for me.' Yeah, *sure*. Do you know how many phone calls go into that office with people saying that Bruce is looking for them, or whatever? Anyway, I did get a message from Bruce saying there was indeed a tour, and was I available to do it. I called back and left a message. I didn't actually talk to him until a few weeks later when we finally nailed it all down... that indeed he did want me to play on the tour. We set up the time- it was going to be from October '91 to June '92. At that time I wasn't doing any other touring. My best memories of that tour were the people [fellow musicians] on the tour, and the music.

Dart To The Heart...

We'd had some time off and I was doing other things in Ottawa, playing with other bands and recording. Bruce did the *Christmas* album, and he used Gary Craig on drums. There was a Christmas special for CBC radio and Bruce asked me if I was available to do it. We talked a little bit about the upcoming tour [Dart To The Heart] and he wasn't sure if he was going to have me on it or not. I wasn't his first choice, but I was still a choice... which is still good.

We have these gigs that we do about once a year in Toronto. The "gang" gets together and we play a bunch of cover songs in a bar, as Bambi and the Deerhunters. I don't know if I'll be around this year for it. I missed it last year, too. I was working.

This gig is something Bruce tries to get in on every year?

If he isn't available we don't do it. But nobody will own up to being Bambi. We all think it's Richard Bell, but he won't admit it *or* deny it.

You're about to head off to Europe on tour.

That trip is with Andy J. Forest, who is a harmonica player from New Orleans. I met him last year here. He splits his time between New Orleans and Italy. He came up here to do a series of shows [blues festivals] and figured it would save some money by hiring local people. We just completely hit it off. We just cut a live album in April that's just been released [*Andy J. Forest, Live at the Rainbow*]. There's no deal on that one yet so we're not actually selling it in the States or Europe, unfortunately. The album we're out promoting right now is called *Letter From Hell*. We'll be in Europe for seven weeks. When I come back I'll be moving to Toronto and getting to work again there.

Anger and Artistry

*The following interview comes from **Grant Kerr**, for the Saint John Times Globe, August 1998.*

If anger management ever takes the rock and roll world by storm, there would be a lot less great music out there. From Bob Dylan to The Who to the Sex Pistols to Ani DiFranco, many of the greatest songs in the last three decades have been written by songwriters who are being pursued by a big, black cloud.

Rock at its best has always been about grabbing listeners by the throat and giving them a violent shake.

For much of Bruce Cockburn's career, he has been able to turn his finely-tuned sense of outrage into exquisite poetry and song.

"I don't think I go around angry all the time, or anything like that," he said in a recent telephone interview from his Toronto home. "Generally, when you feel good, you are not as motivated to write. I am sure you have heard that from other writers, too. The sense of outrage is one source of creative energy, I suppose."

That's exactly how Marshall McLuhan's "The medium is the message" statement got twisted into Public Image Ltd.'s classic line, "Anger is the energy."

"Lately the thing that bugs me most over and over again is the whole greed-based globalization thing that is destroying everything, destroying some of the good things about the fabric of human society," Cockburn said. "It's destroying the environment hand over fist, all in the name of profits for a very few people."

"When I wrote *Call It Democracy* in the mid-eighties, that was based on my experiences in the Third World and seeing up close the effects of global economic policies on the people in the Third World. What they are doing with globalization is applying it everywhere. In one way it's healthy, I suppose, because it makes us realize we are all in the same boat. The GM workers in North America are faced with similar things,

although nowhere to the degree of their counterparts elsewhere, in Mexico or Central America.

“Now we are starting to recognize it. That’s the good side. The bad side is of course because these greedy [expletive] are doing it to all of us and getting away with it. It’s pretty pathetic.”

He’s not too thrilled about former prime minister Brian Mulroney receiving a prestigious national award, either.

“Giving Mulroney the Order of Canada, or upgrading him in the Order of Canada, is a disgraceful manoeuvre,” he said.

But there is so much more to the 53-year-old Cockburn than the anger that has produced much of his greatest work. After all, a man who has recorded and released as much material as he has over the years (24 albums in 28 years) can not get by on one note.

His music, as well, has evolved markedly over the years, from the stripped down acoustic folk of his beginnings through the more freewheeling, improvisational approach in the late seventies and early eighties. That latter decade arguably produced his best-known work, but it’s a rare occasion that his songs can be found on the radio these days.

Of course, there will always be *Wondering Where the Lions Are*, a song that blew up the charts in 1979, eventually becoming something he grew to loathe doing in concert.

When he hits New Brunswick next week to play solo shows in Moncton and Saint John, it will be anybody’s guess what he will pull out of his repertoire. But don’t hold your breath for the biggies.

“You know, when I get to the point where I hate playing it, I just don’t play it. That doesn’t happen very often but it happened with *Wondering Where the Lions Are* for a while and I let it lie for a couple of years and then it was fine again. And I’m kind of feeling that way about *Rocket Launcher* right now.”

To this day, those two songs stand out as his best-known work, which is exacerbated by classic rock stations only playing the oldies even when Cockburn is still releasing so much good new stuff. But even the stations that insist on playing the same tired old songs day in, day out are giving short shrift to a man who has a world-wide reputation as a poet, activist, songwriter and musician.

If they are not on the radio, people don’t hear the songs. And if they’re not hearing it, the artist fades from the consciousness of the public who buy CDs and purchase concert tickets.

This chain reaction limits Cockburn's ability to tour, especially in areas that are difficult to reach because of their large geography and small population. This, Cockburn explained, is why it has taken him nearly a decade to return to this province on tour.

"It bugs me to the extent that it's hard to do a tour in Eastern Canada," he said of lack of air time on radio. "That's where it becomes problematic. It's not a problem in terms of 'Am I offended because my songs are not on the radio?'...But it does smooth the way. It makes it easier to get the songs to the people.

"It's just become harder and harder to make a tour of Atlantic Canada work. I can do it solo, which is what we're doing this time, but it's just hard to find anybody that's willing to put on the shows.

"That's been a problem for years so I am really happy that we're able to come down and do a few shows now, instead of just whipping in and out of Halifax, which is something I have done a couple of times."

Never mind the fact that Cockburn, to this day, is releasing relevant music that resonates with conviction, passion and his own version of truth.

Take last year's *The Charity of Night* for instance. It's a 70-minute blast of poetry and beauty, as harrowing as it is inspiring. It's also a return to a more stripped-down sound with just guitar, bass and drums on much of the album. Gone are the keyboards and some of the eighties frills that have dated some of his work.

There is also the recent five-song EP, *You Pay Your Money and You Take Your Chance - Live*, a souvenir of Cockburn's worldwide concert tour last year.

Fans, of course, have come to expect the consistency that has marked his output over the last three decades. But for the more casual listener it's easy to forget that he's a man who carries an awful lot of the world on his shoulders. After all, many of his songs rail against environmental catastrophes, globalization, dictatorships, and social injustice.

But he doesn't feel the weight. Since his self-titled debut album in 1970 and even before, Cockburn has worked for it, coveted it, cherished his place as a spokesman for the generations.

"I am aware of having a certain responsibility. It's a chicken and egg thing. I think I had the responsibility before I had the audience.

"There is a sense that with people who are listening to you, you need to offer them something like truth, whatever that is. Truth is different for everybody and you don't necessarily have to talk about the same truth, nor does everybody have to deal with the same kind of things. I do feel that obligation, so I guess it is some kind of weight."

Having said that, Cockburn added, "It's not a very big burden because it's what I want to do anyway."

In conversation, he's no-nonsense, thoughtful, friendly and forthright.

But he also has a dry sense of humour that shines through, which shows up in some of his work.

"I woke up thinking about Turkish drummers. It didn't take long, I don't know much about Turkish drummers," are the opening lines of *Get Up Jonah* from the superb *Charity*.

His tour last year, with band, was in support of his most recent studio album. This time out, his solo show will be a wider-ranging performance that covers a good piece of his career and will likely feature a couple of new songs he has yet to record.

On stage it will just be the songwriter and a collection of his guitars, both acoustic and electric. His lyrics, philosophy and great songwriting skills are what he is known for primarily, but his musicianship is equally powerful. The command Cockburn has over the guitar is no less impressive and can be breathtaking live, especially in a solo format. Depending on how he is feeling on any given night, Cockburn could play just about anything, save for his earliest material.

"The band tours are less stressful because I am sharing the effort and the energy and the attention with other people, so it's not as scary," Cockburn said, laughing.

"There is a kind of communication that you obviously don't get solo. The difference is, on the other side, the solo thing allows for much more intimate contact with the audience and allows for the listeners to focus on the song itself, rather than the performance, which I like. So they both work."

When he's not touring, writing or recording, Cockburn still spends much of his time travelling the world, working on environmental and social causes. He spent February in Mali taking part in a documentary which was being filmed on the desertification of much of the tiny African country.

"This otherwise dry subject matter, no pun intended, is lightened by putting me together with three Malian musicians during the film," he said.

The documentary, being put together by TV Ontario and Vision TV will air some time in the fall.

His environmental crusades do nothing to exorcise his decades-old image of the rural folkie.

In fact, it's been years since he lived in the country. He recently moved to the Toronto neighbourhood that used to be known as Little Italy, where he lives above a restaurant.

“I am an urban person, that’s who I am. You can be urban and value the natural environment. When I wrote about [the country] a lot in the earliest days, I was looking for a language to talk about spiritual things and it seemed to be the imagery of nature provided that language more than anything else that I could see around.

“It’s kind of an on-going attempt to understand the relationship between the each of us, the collective and the universe. At first it was the city against the country and me against the city. And now it’s a bigger picture than that.”

Cockburn Boosts APEC Protesters’ Legal Fund

Bruce Cockburn announced in Toronto his support for the APEC student protesters in Vancouver.

Cockburn, who received the prestigious Governor General’s Performing Arts Award, will donate the \$10,000 prize money attached to the award to the APEC Protesters’ Legal Support Fund.

“The apparent attempt by authority at last year’s APEC Conference to stifle free speech, to prevent dissenting political views from being publicly expressed - represents a clear infringement of the civil rights of those affected. The motivation for these actions must be held up for public scrutiny, especially in light of the Inquiries current suspension,” Cockburn said.

In order for the Inquiry to be above board, the protesters’ voices have to be heard. Canadians need to know where we stand. With this in mind, I have decided to donate money from the Governor General’s Performing Arts Award to the APEC Protesters’ Legal Support Fund. If the government won’t fund the students in one way, it will in another,” he said.

Students who protested the Canadian government’s role as host to Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders in Vancouver in November 1997 were pepper-sprayed by RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) as the leaders met at the University of British Columbia, after government officials assured Indonesian dictator General Suharto that he would not be “embarrassed” by visible protest.

Students filed complaints about the police actions with the RCMP Public Complaints Commission. The Commission was set to resume November 16th.

The federal government has denied repeated requests from the students to fund their legal expenses related to the Commission’s investigation.

Articulating law student Craig Jones, who was jailed for displaying paper signs reading “Democracy” and “Free Speech,” welcomes the contribution.

“As this process continues to unfold, our duty is to keep the pressure on the government to get some answers about what happened that day at UBC and why the rights of Canadians were suspended,” Jones said.

But we can’t do that without the support of the Canadian people who have so far been incredibly generous in donating funds to help us pay our legal fees. This donation from such a prominent artist is humbling, and reinforces the importance of this process to all Canadians,” he said.

B.C. Federation of Labour President Ken Georgetti, who kicked off the fundraising campaign September 11th with seed funding of \$10,000 from the Federation, thanked Cockburn for his tremendous contribution.

“Bruce Cockburn is recognized as an artist who stands up for what he believes in. This contribution is a significant statement from a leading Canadian,” Georgetti said.

Donations to the fund may be sent to:

B.C. Federation of Labour
APEC Protesters’ Legal Support Fund
4279 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC V5G 1H1
Canada

More information can be obtained by calling Craig Jones in Vancouver at 604-641-4869.

Grits and Bacon

Bruce and David in Japan

I spoke with Canadian musician **David Essig** recently regarding an instrumental song he wrote called “Bruce Cockburn In Japan.” This is what he had to say:

It’s on a vinyl LP called *Sequence*, that I did back around 1978. It is out of print, of course, as an LP, but the company I record for in Italy is re-releasing all of the old vinyl on CDs - two albums to a CD. Two volumes are out and the *Sequence* LP is scheduled for the next re-issue which should be out next spring.

The inspiration was indeed Bruce’s trip(s) to Japan - I followed a couple of years later.

I was just trying to imagine the effect that Japanese music would have on Bruce’s and my styles of guitar playing . I created the piece and the title seemed to work. The title is actually a take-off on Berlioz’s “Harold in Italy.”

The piece has inspired a couple of other instrumentals in the same genre, by other Canadians. Scott Merritt recorded an instrumental called “Dave Essig in Elmira,” and Ian Molesworth did one called “David Essig at Ikea.”

Southland Of The Heart (CD-83423). Released on the Telarc label, by Maria Muldaur, 1998.

The title song, written by Canadian songwriter Bruce Cockburn, came from a tape that a friend had sent her, unaware that she was looking for songs for this project. “I immediately fell madly in love with the song, ‘Southland of the Heart,’” says Muldaur, “and even before I picked all the songs, I knew that would be the title. ‘Southland of the Heart,’ to me, is a place of refuge from life’s harshness and cruelty. It’s a place where there’s unconditional love and a place where there’s the time to be personal and intimate. The song itself is where we should all be.”

River Of Sand is a 50 minute video documentary filmed in Mali in February, 1998. It chronicles troubles brought on by the loss of land to the encroaching desert. The program is hosted and narrated by Bruce Cockburn, who spent the month of February in Mali filming this project on behalf of USC Canada. *River Of Sand* is less about trying to explain the scientific reasons for the loss of arable land in Mali than it is about the *people* affected by the loss of this land. This message was beautifully delivered by Bruce Cockburn as he encountered the people of Mali and shared their colorful culture and music. The direction *River Of Sand* takes is to *bring you along* on the journey rather than to simply drop you in a spot at the end of the road, missing all the details that give *meaning* to the journey. Kudos to director Robert Lang for a fine documentary. I wanted to see more.

A percentage of the sales from the video will go to USC Canada. To obtain a copy, send payment to:

River Of Sand Video
Kensington Communications
20 Maud Street, Suite 402
Toronto, ON M5V 2M5
Canada

Prices are \$35 Canadian funds, or \$30 U.S. funds. This price includes postage. Payment should be made out to **Kensington Communications**.

Exit 89, Volume 3 (released 1998). This 15 track various artists CD comes from WNKU and contains a live performance of “Pacing The Cage,” from Bruce’s concert at Greaves Concert Hall in Highland Heights, KY, on June 21, 1997. There were only 1000 copies pressed for the purpose of being used as premiums for supporting the radio station.

My thanks to Roxanne Perrin.

From Me

Please note that Gavin's Woodpile has moved.

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My thanks to all *Woodpile* readers and everyone at True North and Ryko. This issue represents five years. Yikes!