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Cochrane's catalyst
Tom talks about making a new album

By **YURI WUENSCH**, EDMONTON SUN

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When Tom Cochrane sings Life is a Highway, he does so with the recognition of life's many potholes and myriad of detours.

The argument could even be made that ol' Tom took a wrong turn at some point. How else do you explain an eight-year gap between recordings?

Cochrane was in Edmonton last week as part of a national press tour for his new album, No Stranger - it's out now.

Chatting over coffee at Dante's Bistro, Cochrane reasoned there's no point in releasing an album if you haven't got anything new to say. At the same time, he concedes that the album-less hiatus may have seen him coasting on his back catalogue of some 130-140 songs, which include hits like Victory Day, Boy Inside the Man and, his biggest tune, the aforementioned Highway ditty.

'CONCERT CLASSICS'

"I don't know if there's anything wrong with coasting," he said with a smile.

"I mean, I've got a lot of published songs. There are a lot of songs that are considered to be concert classics. People just assume if you don't have a new record out that you've retired."

Now 53, Cochrane isn't ready to hang it up just yet. There have, however, been other things occupying his time. Some things have been more leisurely, like building a cottage studio and flying a

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float plane. Others more serious, like his wife's brain aneurism.

But tending to the "itch he had to scratch again," namely an album of new material, partly owes to the prodding of his buddy and fellow Canadian rocker, Sam Roberts.

"It was just one of those instances where a friend says to a friend, 'You should be doing something; you're an artist,'" Cochrane recalls. "To think that was the one catalyst to push me over the line would be erroneous. But it was one part of a series of things that got me to roll up the sleeves and do a new one."

Cochrane's highway, a seeming ring road, also reunited him with guitarist Ken Greer - the two had been estranged since their days together in Red Rider.

Glad to have mended fences, Cochrane says Greer is playing better than ever, his touch a welcome addition to the new album.

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And if Cochrane and company weren't forced to cancel their Starlite Room show, which was supposed go Dec. 2, because of scheduling conflicts, we would have had a taste of the partially reconstituted Red Rider lineup. He says he'll look at rescheduling an Edmonton date sometime next year.

Instead, Saturday saw Cochrane bound, yet again, for Africa.

SUNshine Girl



Like his first trip to that continent in 1989, his latest trip, this time to Rwanda, is in conjunction with World Vision, one of the world's largest Christian relief and development organizations.

Portions of his trip are scheduled to run as segments on Entertainment Tonight Canada.

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Cochrane says while there are numerous aid organizations doing good work, he's stuck with World Vision because it's maintained a non-partisan framework to provide help for whomever needs it.

His involvement with the organization helped inspire hits like Life is a Highway and he says you never know when such inspirations will hit you - or when.

"That first trip to Africa, when I was in Mozambique, Louisa, who I write about in the second verse of The Party's Not Over (from the new album), affected me quite a bit.

"I remember a woman died in front of us and her daughter looked up at us as if to say, 'Why are you standing there with your notebooks and cameras?' She looked at us like, 'How could you let this happen?'"

"World Vision's philosophy has always been, 'If we can save one person ...'"

"After time, I saw how relevant that was."

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