



Artist: Cochrane, Tom

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Tom Cochrane taking time to play

By JENNY FENIAK - Sun Media

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EDMONTON - Tom Cochrane seems to literally drink in the world around him. From his trips to Africa to Christmas in Kabul with Rick Mercer, he accepts it all and somehow, shares it with the rest of us in an honest, yet gentle, way.

It's been eight years since his last studio record and in that time, he's built his cabin refuge on the "intoxicating" shores of Georgian Bay, he's dug into new Canadian talent like Broken Social Scene and Kathleen Edwards and has tended to some unfinished business on his latest release, *No Stranger*.

Cochrane was supposed to tour his new material in December, but postponed it for another trip to Africa, this time to a deep, dark corner of Rwanda explored in a literary sense in Joseph Conrad's famed novel, *Heart of Darkness*. But the rescheduled tour kicks off today, bringing Cochrane and his old Red Rider bandmates to the Winspear Centre Monday night.

"It's nice to be out here, the mountains are inspiring," Cochrane says, obviously imagining the splendour of the Rockies because he was in Edmonton yesterday, doing preproduction for the concert. "I've always believed you get a certain amount of energy from exposed rock, which I get up in northern Ontario at my studio/retreat."

Although Cochrane's been playing with Red Rider guitarist Ken Greer for the last few years, this is the first time back in Alberta together since mending fences broken long ago.

"We're probably better friends now than we ever were in the early Red Rider days and you can write that off to too much testosterone when you're young, like rival bulls," Cochrane says, believing it to be fate. "These things choose you and there's a timing and synchronicity to everything."

The group's reunion was the silver lining of a joint tragedy several years ago. John Garrish, their band tech back in the '80s, was stabbed to death in Toronto and a tribute performance for him was organized and offered some healing ground for the members.

"I hate to say it, but maybe age is a part of it. You tend to mellow a little bit and become a little more philosophical about things and not as quick to fly off the handle," the 53-year-old Cochrane admits.

Age aside, it may be partly to blame for Cochrane's sprained ankle, possibly hampering his signature moves on stage next week.



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"I've been wearing these Chuck Taylor sneakers that don't really have a lot of support," Cochrane says of the Converse shoes popular with many young rock bands and kids in general. "If I was going to give some advice to these young artists out there, young rockers, don't be on stage dancing with Chuck Taylors. You need more support than that."

Good advice, but probably better directed at the older rockers following the trend. About his ankle, he promises, "It's not bad, I won't be a gimp there."

Although he should stick with sturdier footwear, Cochrane has drawn from a bottomless well of worth from the youth of the world, starting right here at home.

"I don't think I would've made (No Stranger) without the inspiration from bands like Broken Social Scene and Arcade Fire. I think those records were really inspiring records," he says, adding Broken Social Scene's Kevin Drew has asked to sing Cochrane's Boy Inside the Man on his 31st birthday.

That may have been Cochrane's push, but the depth came from his life's unfinished business. No Stranger binds together his first brush with courage when he was eight, to Louisa, an African girl who's mother died from starvation while Cochrane was visiting them, to the song Northern Star, inspired by Cochrane's eldest daughter Cody, who did the sketches inside the album's booklet.

But on the whole Cochrane says, "It's important people can read between the lines."

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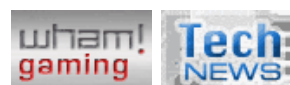
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