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November 15, 2006



## LOWDOWN with Karen Bliss

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### Cochrane excited by new label

By KAREN BLISS -- For JAM! Music

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Tom Cochrane's first album in eight years, "No Stranger," and first for Universal Music Canada, debuted on the Canadian retail charts at No. 25 with first-week sales of just over 3000, according to Nielsen SoundScan Canada. This week, it scanned just over 1400 copies.



The first single, "Didn't Mean," was serviced to rock radio 12 weeks ago and peaked at No. 18 on the rock chart, according to Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems (BDS), and in two weeks Universal plans to work two singles, "Party's Not Over" and "Out Of My Head," simultaneously to different formats, rock and adult contemporary, respectively.

"I actually do watch those things," says Cochrane, referring to chart positions. "It's a force of habit and if I want my music to get out there, I want people to hear it and I've got to admit, I've got an ego and I want people to like the music -- otherwise just make a thousand copies for your friends and be done with it."

Cochrane, who has been playing between 30 to 50 shows a year since 2003 and has been heavily involved with humanitarian visits to African nations with the charity World Vision,



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casually worked on his new album up at his cottage studio in Parry Sound, ON, as well as Metalworks Studios in Mississauga, ON.

"I'd say this whole process took about two-and-a-half, three years, and there were sketches before that," Cochrane says of writing and recording "No Stranger."

In May, before the album was completed, he signed with Universal Music Canada after more than 25 years with EMI Music Canada, initially for his band Red Rider, then for his solo career.

With EMI, Cochrane became one of the top singer-songwriters in Canada, netting seven Juno Awards, earning a rare diamond award (signifying sales of one million copies in Canada) for his 1990 solo album, "Mad Mad World" and eventually being inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 2003. EMI's president Deane Cameron remains a great friend of Cochrane's and godfather to one of his daughters, Cody, now 23.



"But sometimes you run your course at a place. I think change is good," says Cochrane, whose last studio album with EMI was 1998's "X-Ray Sierra."

Earlier this year, Cochrane also got a new manager, Lorne Saifer, a Winnipeg native who has been based out of Los Angeles for the last 30 years. He represents Randy Bachman and handles Lionel Ritchie's publishing, and now co-manages Cochrane with the singer's wife, Kathy. "He's fantastic," says Cochrane.

"So I said to Lorne, 'Okay, here's our first line of duty. Let's tackle four songs and take them to Universal.'

"I really feel that they're like a huge indie in terms of their attitude," he says when asked why he wanted to approach that major label in particular. "They have immense respect for the artist and respect for the artist's autonomy and opinions to a certain degree and I think that they're very hip that way. So I wanted to be there."

Randy (Lennox, Universal Music Canada's president and CEO) was instrumental in nominating me to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, and I have nothing but respect for him. I think he's done an incredible job over there at Universal. How can you deny their track record over the last few years? Interscope has Beck and Sheryl Crow, artists of that nature. I think it's a pretty vital place to be. That's not to say that EMI isn't, but it's just like a hockey player changing teams, sometimes it just sparks you."

Lennox's relationship with Cochrane began at the time of the Hall of Fame induction. He says that in his capacity on the board of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (CARAS), which presents the Juno Awards, he felt that it was time for Cochrane to be given the Canadian music industry's highest honour at the 2003 Junos in Ottawa.

"I was getting to know him because I really respected his contribution, his music and his humanity, so I was interested in him as a person on that basis alone," says Lennox. "I didn't have an agenda is my point and I didn't even know if he was available."

"So then Lorne Saifer called a number of months ago and it was only then that I knew that Tom was available (to sign with Universal). So given the vibe we had getting to know each other in the last several years, there wasn't a millisecond of question."

"The minute that Lorne came in with these four songs, it was very evident. I was immediately taken with the strength of Tom's voice, his songwriting and the structure of these songs, although they were very early renditions of songs that would end up on the album."

Lennox says he played the four demos to other people at the company, including Allan Reid, senior vice-president of A&R; Sarah Norris, senior vice-president of Universal Music Canada's Interscope label stream; and Ivar Hamilton, vice-president of Interscope.

"Clearly, there are massive fans of his in this building, a whole group of individuals that I knew loved Tom's music," says Lennox. "(The songs) generated the enthusiasm that I was hoping it would. In other words, the will to work with Tom was always there, but the fact that these songs were so great and was reinforced by the known Tom Cochrane fans in the building,

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made it all feel right, so we immediately began to negotiate."

Without the deal, Cochrane jokes that he would have spent "forever" finishing the album, but he wrapped up recording in early summer and mixed it early August, then cut a licensing deal with Universal Music Canada.

"It's a full license," says Lennox. "Put it this way -- we're in the Tom Cochrane business from a full marketing, A&R, and promotion standpoint.

"Tom is a legend," he adds. "He has the admiration of the newer musicians and as a result we are certainly taking a contemporary marketing approach to Tom Cochrane."

From Cochrane's end, he is open and willing to do the work, from promotion to touring. He has already been out with his core band -- drummer Troy Feener, bassist Jeff Jones and guitarist Ken Greer and -- playing dates and will do what he calls more "serious" touring in the new year. He is booked by Toronto's Vinny Cinquemani at S.L. Feldman & Associates.

"I want my music to be heard," Cochrane says. "I would love the record to be successful. If it's not, then it's not. I'm not going to dwell on it. I will definitely do what needs to be done and what's asked of me in terms of doing promo work and things of this nature, but it's nice to be able to do something and say, 'My heart's in it.'

"To me, more than ever, I enjoy playing live and if there was one thing about making this record, I tried to be pretty conscious of how these songs are going to translate live. A lot of this record is fun to play and it's something I want to share with people in a live setting." [More Lowdown stories](#)

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2. Keith Urban: Love Pain...
3. Gregory Charles: I Think of You
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Courtesy Nielsen SoundScan Cda

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