

Astrid Young rocks Dickey Lake



By Nate Snelle

Musician, author, painter, screenwriter, composer, actor and wine expert are a few of the titles one might find when first discovering the music and art of Astrid Young.

Since her career began in the early 1980s she has fronted bands such as the glam metal group Sacred Child and the psychedelic rock band iST. During this time Young released her first solo album, Brainflower, in 1995 which was followed up by the album Matinee in 2002 and her latest One Night at Giant Rock which came out in 2014. Throughout her career she has also collaborated with a long list of music legends that include greats like Johnny Cash, Nancy Wilson of Heart, Booker T and the MGs and her brother Neil Young.

Before her performance on Saturday, Feb. 7 at the 4R Music Retreat on Dickey Lake in Gilmour, Young sat down by the fire with Bancroft This Week to talk about her lifelong passion to create music, art and a more loving world.

Of all the different forms of artistic expression she indulges in, for Young the music has always come first. Since the first time she was moved by music, she is used music to interpret the world around her and to communicate with others. Young said she has often thought how if she could talk only with music, and still live and work amongst people her soul would be very happy.

"Music is very, very personal to me," she said.

"I'm trying to convey emotion but I'm also trying to make a sonic statement in a way. It's a language without words, so much more effective at conveying one's true thoughts and passions. When you take away words, and the need for them, it's much easier to connect with the infinite. Meanings and intent can never be misconstrued. I used to hate language for that reason, sometimes I still do."

As her primary means of creative expression, Young said that music has defined her as a person. It is also helped her connect more deeply with her own sense of spirituality. Recognizing that words often fall short in describing the true nature of what she cares about most and why she cares, Young sees music as a clearer and more authentic way to express ourselves.

"Some words are so overused," Young said.

"Love is perfect example. People use that word for so many things that don't have anything to do with what that word actually means. The concept of love is so huge that when you squish it down into a little four letter word it is like taking the universe and

putting it into a little cube. It's more of a state of being than I think it is a thing, a word, a verb or anything like that.?

By enhancing our understanding of the concept of love through music, people learn how to express love more creatively and compassionately with one another. In this way music acts as a uniting force that brings individuals and communities together.

?It starts with your home and then it branches out to your neighbourhood and your community and so on and so on,? said Young.

?The bottom line I think is that if you have goodness in your heart and you're aware of how to live a good life than it rubs off on people. You can't get out of bed in the morning and say I'm not going to do this because I can't do it the same way this other guy is doing it; you do what you can.?

She said her brother Neil?who has spoken out repeatedly against the Canadian tar sands on his Honour the Treaties tour?is doing a really great job expressing his compassion for the planet through his music. Young said she admires artists who use their platform as an opportunity to spread a good message to their audience.

?I think in North America we have a much lower opinion of ourselves in that sense because Europe is so far ahead of the curve in terms of green energy and stuff like that,? she said.

?They actually don't even allow GMO seeds to be planted over there because they are aware of the impact to the environment. We are just now waking up to the fact that like 80 per cent of our crops?whether it's feed, fuel or food are all GMOs. It's destroying us, it's causing different kinds of cancers, it is killing species of animals, insects and birds. It's just mind-boggling.?

?We're ignorant to it,? Young added.

?I think we are just starting to wake up that there are companies like Monsanto's who have been claiming that they are making more food for more people in more countries, but they are specifically ignoring the negatives. They've been outed by people like my brother and many other artists who are trying to get this point across.?

Young believes the unique ability that music possesses to inspire social change through individual action is being lost as more and more music and art programs are cut down and out of the education system.

?Just look at the state of the world today, the state of primary education - the first thing to get cut are arts programs, and for the first time since I was in school, kids are coming out of schools not even knowing how to read, much less knowing how to play an instrument,? said Young.

?It [music] helps you think differently, more creatively, to understand and feel things at a deeper level. I don't know if music could save the planet, but it certainly couldn't hurt. Music is medicine, meditative, healing, empowering...that can't be bad. I do believe that depriving our children of music in schools is going to lead to a de-evolution on some level. I think it's already happening.?