

Kicking at the Darkness



By Nate Smelle

Some music makes you want to Get up on the good foot and dance. Some music inspires you to think. Some music entices you to sit back relax and ?enjoy the beauty of it all.? The best music accomplishes all of these states of consciousness and more.

What is it about that certain composition of music that hits you in such a way it causes those heavenly shivers to roam up and down your spine when you hear it? Sometimes these shivers pinpoint their presence even more precisely arriving in sync with a certain line or instrumental solo in a song.

Speaking with the humanitarian and music maker extraordinaire himself following his performance at the Bone Lake Amphitheatre in the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve, I asked him about the first time he experienced such a shiver.

Pausing for a moment to look back in time, he then proceeded to tell me about how he remembered feeling this chilling bliss flow through him the first time he read T.S. Elliot in school as a child.

For me the music and words of Bruce Cockburn bring about such transformational feelings.

As a child my parents and my grandmother would often show up at school to take me out of school for the day to go for a hike and carry on my education outdoors. To make these family outings even more enticing my elders told me we were going to look for the Dagobah system. This made the choice of whether to return to class after lunch or to go exploring with my folks a no-brainer. With no real opportunities to run into Yoda at school the forest always called to me louder than the classroom.

When I was around eight years old I remember my grandmother turning up the Cockburn classic *Wondering Where the Lions Are* on the car radio as we headed for the forest. For some reason which I still don't fully understand I could feel a tingling sensation rush through me. Now when I hear this tune it transports me back to this sacred time in my life when my imagination ruled my daily routine.

Cockburn's music has had an influence on me ever since. Noticing that Cockburn had signed up to perform on David Suzuki's Blue Dot tour thought back to the time when I was working as volunteer at the David Suzuki Foundation while living in Vancouver. Every day I would load his album *Dancing in the Dragons Jaws* into my portable stereo and head out on my walk to the office. It astounded me how well the music fit the context of where I was hanging hat at the time. "That's cool," said Cockburn. "There is a lot of BC that went into making that album." During my time in Vancouver a local city councillor had been caught conspiring to bring a Sprawlmart store to a neighbourhood in Vancouver that was vocally opposed to a multinational corporation setting up shop near their homes and businesses. Also at this time a friend at the foundation had given me the album *World of Wonders*. Hearing the lyrics to his song *Call it Democracy* every hair on my body stood on end. I could not believe how well the one line which had been written many years earlier summed up what was taking place at city hall. The line went like this, "See the paid-off local bottom feeders passing themselves off as leaders. Kiss the ladies shake hands with the fellows, then it's open for business like a cheap bordello and they call it democracy." A timeless message really. Universal wisdom applicable anywhere politics and corruption hold hands.

This album provided the soundtrack for the short time I spent exploring the west coast. I have still yet to find Yoda on my wooded wanderings, but I did manage to track down where the lions are... pacing the cage in the mind of a poet at the end of a forested path on Bone Lake in Haliburton.