

[Back to previous page](#)



document 1 of 1

No labels, please! Music is evolutionary process for Cockburn

Meyers Sharp, Jo Ellen. **Indianapolis Star** [Indianapolis, Ind] 25 Oct 1994: C.5.

Abstract (summary)

Despite nearly 25 years in the music business and superstar status in his native Canada, the 49-year-old singer-songwriter is both an unknown and an anomaly in the United States. Down at the bus station Shark grins and sandpaper conversations Men's faces women's bodies on the magazine stand And a headline about Sarajevo and Tehran.

Full Text

JO ELLEN MEYERS SHARP

Bruce Cockburn

Where: The Vogue, 6259 N. College Ave.

When: 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Tickets: \$15 in advance, \$16 day of show; (317) 259-7029.

The inability to pigeon-hole Bruce Cockburn and his style of music can make him a hard sell.

Despite nearly 25 years in the music business and superstar status in his native Canada, the 49-year-old singer-songwriter is both an unknown and an anomaly in the United States.

He gained some recognition in this country with the release in 1984 of Stealing Fire and the protest anthem If I Had A Rocket Launcher. His popularity, however, has increased in recent years

with the development of adult album alternative stations on radio. Bloomington's WTTS-FM (92.3), for example, has regularly played cuts from Cockburn's latest disc, *Dart to the Heart*, and his 1991 release, *Nothing But A Burning Light*.

To cultivate the new fans, Cockburn and his band have been touring cities they've never played before, including Indianapolis.

Versatile and distinctive

Cockburn, who lives near Toronto, is hard to categorize because his music has been an evolutionary process. Each of his 22 albums has a distinct sound, and typically is influenced by what is going on in his personal life.

What unites his work has more to do with his voice, his guitar playing and what he calls "informed lyrics" than any style of music. He's evolved through folk, rock, jazz, protest and world styles. He's been labeled a Christian musician as much as he's a protest singer. None of the labels stick, however.

Cockburn acknowledged a spiritual quality to his music. He was speaking during a telephone interview from Sedona, Ariz., while on the road.

"It's a basic approach to life that informs the songs. Some songs are purposely about (spiritual as in religion), but others are more of an accident."

Urban life is topic

Elements of those styles are evident in Dart. Despite a totally different topic, Dart comes from the same place as Cockburn's Inner-City Front, a cold 1981 chronicle of urban life, and the pastoral yet reflective Gavin's Woodpile from In the Falling Dark, released in 1976.

The message has been an important part of Cockburn's style since high school, he said in a telephone interview. That's when he first started putting music and words together.

He credits writers and poets from the beat generation, citing Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac for his interest in lyrics.

Their influence can be heard on Inner-City Front's Loner, which came out in 1981:

Down at the bus station

Shark grins and sandpaper conversations

Men's faces women's bodies on the magazine stand

And a headline about Sarajevo and Tehran.

In another disc, Stealing Fire, Cockburn praises the poet in the song Maybe the Poet. He urges, "Pay attention to the poet, You need him and you know it."

The emergence of singer-songwriters John Lennon and Bob Dylan in the 1960s gave him the courage to merge his love of poetry with

a growing interest in music, he said.

"They were saying something that was going beyond standard songwriting," Cockburn said.

Fussy about lyrics

In his creative process, lyrics almost always come first, in "brilliant ideas" that he writes down in a notebook "that becomes the resource material that is developable into a song. Other songs come . . . all at once, in a relatively short time. I've been paying closer attention to lyrics more lately because I've gotten fussier about them as I've gotten older."

The lyrics on Dart continue Cockburn's intense examination of whatever is on his mind. This time it's matters of the heart, from recognizing the emotion of love in All the Ways I Want You, to the pain from death of a friend in Closer to the Light.

Dart and 1991's Nothing But A Burning Light were produced by T-Bone Burnett, but Cockburn doesn't expect the collaboration to continue.

"I think we got the most out of our ourselves for now,"

Cockburn said.

Cockburn, however, is still writing. He's been playing at least one new song in the current tour, a two- hour sampler of his 24-year repertoire.

Illustration

Caption: AT THE VOGUE: Canadian singer Bruce Cockburn, 49, draws on his personal life to influence his music.

Copyright 1994 - Indianapolis Star - All Rights Reserved

Indexing (details)

Subject	Poetry; Musicians & conductors; Singers; Spirituality; Musical performances; Poets
Title	No labels, please! Music is evolutionary process for Cockburn
Author	Meyers Sharp, Jo Ellen
Publication title	Indianapolis Star
Pages	C.5
Publication year	1994
Publication date	Oct 25, 1994
Year	1994
Section	SUNRISE
Publisher	Gannett Co., Inc.
Place of publication	Indianapolis, Ind.
Country of publication	United States
Publication subject	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN	19302533
Source type	Newspapers
Language of publication	English
Document type	News
ProQuest document ID	240087866
Document URL	http://search.proquest.com/docview/240087866? accountid=46127
Copyright	Copyright 1994 - Indianapolis Star - All Rights Reserved

Last updated 2012-12-29
Database Indianapolis Star

Copyright © 2015 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved. Terms and Conditions