

# Hellstrom Chronicle: convincing

The *Hellstrom Chronicle*, now playing at the Garneau, is based upon the research of Dr. Neils Hellstrom, an American entomologist, who eccentrically maintains that man, the most generously endowed of all God's creatures, will inevitably be superceded by one of the lowliest of life forms --- bugs.

Ridiculous? Dr. Hellstrom doesn't think so. And he has some pretty convincing evidence to back him up.

For starters, Dr. Hellstrom observes that bugs have already managed, not only to survive, but to flourish for over 300,000,000 years. Man, on the other hand, has, in less than 2,000,000 years, managed to bring himself to the brink of extinction. This comparison causes Dr. Hellstrom to note:

"Where there is no intelligence, there is also no stupidity."

Despite the wide

discrepancies between the intelligences of man and bugs, Dr. Hellstrom points out that there are at least some similarities. After focusing on a battle between an army of harvester ants and an invading army of red ants, the severed limbs and headless bodies of both victors and the defeated, Dr. Hellstrom dryly observes:

"Let it be said of the harvester ant that he bears more than a passing similarity to man."

Dr. Hellstrom also notes, rather ominously, that the two most proliferate life-forms on earth are man and bugs.

As the film progresses, Dr. Hellstrom's preoccupation with bugs gains almost manic proportions. The inhabitants of 'Second Kingdom' engage perhaps more of his time and thought than is healthy for any individual. This becomes evident when Dr. Hellstrom describes a black widow spider in terms of "obese sexuality". Perhaps it is a mistake of arrogance to equate size with significance, Dr. Hellstrom, but there is such a thing as going too far!

The Dr. Hellstrom in the *Hellstrom Chronicle*, if you haven't guessed by now, is a fictional character. The facts and observations that he puts forth are, in reality, a compilation of the research of many different scientists. But don't turn off. As factual fiction, Dr. Hellstrom and his bugs are damn entertaining.

Lawrence Pressman as Dr. Hellstrom, the mad scientist, plays his role with conviction, irony and, oddly enough, pathos. As the film progresses, we see him gradually transformed by his obsession from critic to outcast. What begins as his tirade against man's force, ends up as a defence of his frailty.

In one of the final scenes of the film, Dr. Hellstrom stands at the top of a building, looking down on the swarming crowds of the city. "They look like ants, don't they," he says, "Well, they're not. Each one has his own individuality, his own personality, his own life!"

It is as an outcast that Dr. Hellstrom finds himself closest to his fellow man.

But the real stars of the show are the bugs themselves. In colours and details equal to, if not surpassing National Geographic magnificence, they swarm across the screen, waging war, making love, eating and being eaten. Where *2001* exploded upward to explore the significance of the immense, of space, the *Hellstrom Chronicle* implodes downward to explore the immensity of the insignificant, of bugs. At once savage and beautiful, terrifying and hilarious, the latter act out their jacobean micro-dramas before a camera which is both informed and (Disneyphites, take note!) unflinching. In doing so, they throw man's position in the universe into a surprisingly shakespearean perspective. While watching bug eat Macbug, one begins to realize that justice, like Dr. Hellstrom himself, is merely a fictional reality --- that the true

nature of the universe is chaotic. Yet even within this chaos there is a unity --- the unity of ecology. For nature is nothing more than a series of vital links between life-forms. The world is a co-operative society.

And as Dr. Hellstrom notes: "In the co-operative society, the fate of each is the destiny of all."

NOTE: The shorts preceding the *Hellstrom Chronicle* are well

worth missing. They are trite, tedious and overly long. For those of you who might want to pass up a bad thing, the main feature begins at 7:25 p.m. and 9:34 p.m. respectively.

W. N. Callaghan, Jr.



by David Schleich

I saw the sinking sun catch the broken clouds. I was perched, temporarily, on a cliff-side, high in the mountains. Like some ancient traveller I had stopped to rest on my way through the magic mountain pass. I stared long and carefully as dusk and grey of waning day burst suddenly into layers of luminous and golden vermillion. In the southwest a roaring fire sent its light up the sky and as the sun-fire sank even more deeply into the earth, it burned more fiercely across the sky. The clouds, layers of soft pink and red, were like silken down for sky people to rest upon at the end of day.

There was a climax of colour and then a rapid grey filled the centres of those luminous clouds. The ebbing sun disappeared suddenly underneath a distant ridge. Not quite dark. The sudden contrast captured me. I watched and waited for new glows. But soon, like an ancient shaman, I wanted to burn an enormous pile of wood, a speckful song to the departing light and warmth. A call for their return. A prayer for new day. For how was I to know, on that mountain, like the ancient mountain men, that the day would come anew? I thought of men watching days grow shorter and shorter and nights longer and colder. Those shortening days and dawns must have frightened early men. For, I dreamed, are these darker dusks not signs of the dying, retreating sun? From where will men and beasts draw their life if not from the sun? I understood that terror, stark on a cliff, near night. And I wanted to explode a million dead-dried logs in blazing supplication to the sun. As shamans did, long ago, at the winter solstice.

I knew that the night would be upon me quite soon. And, so far from our camp. Dreaming men are foolish on mountains. Still, I dreamed on. And suddenly I saw forty tiny pyres all around the valley below me. And I heard voices, far, far away, chanting quietly, with the driving, unrelenting thrust of ancient drums. All the little flames far below twinkled in the dark and at the dark. And with the thickening black the voices strained. I heard the growing fear. I heard the plea, the prayer. I wanted to go down, to descend into the ancient camps and to sing with those men. I wanted to tell them that the sun would surely return. Go to rest, I would tell them. And in a few hours it will be back, bright and powerful to fill your lives with light and to warm your muscles in your labour.

Still. Stark, cold, indifferent peaks and stubborn trees which scratched patterns in the night on distant slopes. Dark, dark, dark. I huddled against a large rock. I thought of my few square feet of stone. Some animal might see my eyes, wide and white with strange, new fear. I was cold. I waited long, long for the day my memory told me would return. In the heavy dark I heard distant animals moan or shriek. All slowed. The gusts of mountain drafts, the piercing whines of wolves. All slowed. Still. And finally, not even these. The saw a shadowy panorama. All silent, beyond and below. Just there, indifferently. I wished, for a moment, that I were a tree, rooted and secure in that stark place with no independent hope for more than the wind might bring with its whims. But as I wished, I saw the moon, a tattered crescent at first, through the clouds. I venerated the moon and soon my dancing, singing flames called out on that mountain for the sun. Come back and splash your light all over us! The trees, the wolves, the ancient men in camps below. I trusted the sun and I knew my fire-prayer was stro. Through the night I learned that an unchanging brilliancy of light would have made me fall, like Phaeton, through the air to the earth. Buy a rhyming rolling sway of night and day taught me, on that mountain face to celebrate the night as well as the day and with faith, to wait for warmth, in the dark and cold.

## Cockburn coming



Bruce Cockburn was born in Ottawa in 1945. During his early life, spending most of his time on his grandfather's farm, Bruce learned to love the forest and the rural way of life. Taking up the guitar in high school he went on to study piano and theory.

After graduating from high school Bruce went on to the Berklee School of Music for 2 years to study composition. He left early though, and became a part of several rock bands including the Esquires, Olivus, and 3's a Crowd.

He wrote many songs during this period and finally realizing that they sounded better acoustically and alone, Bruce Cockburn left the pop music scene to embark on a solo career. In the two years that followed he wandered in and out of various folk clubs hoping to be discovered. He finally was and in May of 1970 Bruce Cockburn's first album, simply titled *Bruce Cockburn* was released.

The album was easily one of the most praised during 1970. It contained one of most beautiful singles (*Musical Friends*), to be released in Canada which, unfortunately, sold a grand total of about 10 copies.

As more and more people became aware of Bruce his reputation grew and at the end

of the year he was recognized by his peers as one of the finest singer-songwriters on the contemporary scene. He was awarded R.P.M. Juno Award as Canada's top folksinger and voted the top male folksinger on Canadian Campus.

Early this fall Bruce Cockburn's second album, *High Winds and White Sky* was released. The album seems much more musical than the first while, at the same time, losing nothing in lyrical content. After constant listening to this album it occurred to me that Bruce Cockburn's songs are so personal that I was intruding upon his private life. In fact all songs on this album were taken from true life experiences as Bruce travelled across Canada in his camper which he calls home.

Everyone will have an opportunity to experience this folk phenomenon knows as Bruce Cockburn Friday, Dec. 3, when he appears, 8 P.M., in the Dinwoodie Lounge. Tickets are \$2.50 at the SUB info desk or at the door. Also appearing will be Valdi who was here with Delaney and Bonnie.

With both his albums receiving world distribution 1972 seems destined to be the year of Bruce Cockburn.

by Lawrence Wilkie