

Cockburn comes thru

BY Siobhan and Gerry Laskey

Three things stand out about the concert Bruce Cockburn gave at Fredericton's Playhouse last Sunday night.

The first is that Cockburn lays his whole self on the line in a concert. How this one man manages to hold an audience for two hours all alone, with only his guitar, his voice, and some wind chimes is a beautiful mystery. His musical ability never becomes repetitive, cliché or boring. His guitar can laugh and cry, carry you from hard earth to the sky and stars, take you from concrete cities to wilderness, speak to you in languages of Canada, Spain, Asia, Africa and Amerindians.

Secondly you feel very much in the presence of a true artist. Cockburn not only has controlled the drive to produce "hits" and create mediocre work, he has never let it enter his work. There is no alienated labor here, it is true free creative self-expression. One senses a great respect and reverence for the music and the audience. You also can see in the glow Cockburn gets on his face that this man still truly loves what he is doing. This is his life and he is anxious and honored to share it with us. If he were only a poet we would be greatly enriched but he is also blessed with a great ability to put his poetry to music.

Thirdly, something which is intangible and hard to describe, but something we definitely felt was a certain magical atmosphere created by the man and his music. This probably comes partly out of the intensity of the experience of the sole musician and his powerful lyrics but there is something elusive and unique in his art. He is like a tribal shaman introducing us to the mysteries of life and allowing us to share the common sense of awe. There is a sacramental element in Cockburn's craft. All the senses are invigorated and renewed. When the audience was on its feet applauding (the first time, that is), we could really feel the magic of being there together in the presence of this Christian shaman, feeling his love and wanting the communion to last all night.

Gilbert & Sullivan presents

Victorian Cabaret

The Gilbert and Sullivan society of Fredericton will be presenting a "Victorian Cabaret" at Memorial Hall, UNB, Nov. 8, 9, 10 and 11th. This autumn's production compiled and directed by Prof. Edward Mullaly, will include, an olio of popular Victorian Music Hall songs, an abridged version of the great temperance Melodrama, "Ten Nights in a Bar-room," and the celebrated musical by W.A. Gilbert and A.S. Sullivan "Trial By Jury". The Society has included for the first time, music by other popular Victorian composers which should add appeal to an even larger audience. Producer Fran McDougal feels confident

that the production will be enjoyed by all due largely to the variety this year. Tickets may be purchased from members of the Society, Westminster Books and the Pic'n Puff.

At this point we must apologize to you true Cockburn aficionados. Although we have a great love and empathy for Cockburn our knowledge of some of his music is lacking, especially some of his earlier work. If we fail to mention some pieces because we don't know the name or our memory fails we must beg your indulgence and hope you write our editor. We must swear the amateur critics oath and state that we know what we like, and we hope that it's art.

Cockburn started the concert with an interesting instrumental called "Red Ships Take Off In The Distance." (the artist said he didn't know what it meant either.) From this point or perhaps we should say from his reception on an engaging the stage, the audience was his all night. A reverie came over it that went without interruption.

Next Cockburn played what he called his "most profound" song, with the main message, "the blues got the world by the balls." He asked if we "got it" on finishing. Cockburn then did "Silver Wheels" which is an examination of prairie city environment as seen through the automobile. Cockburn in this song sees the rape of our urban communities with "distant stacks that shout feed on demand," and "neon spelling well known names - USED TRUCKS* DIRTY DONUTS* YOU YOU'RE THE ONE." He followed this with the song "Outside a broken phone booth with money in my hand," which is a study of urban alienation in full flight of imagery.

One of the most interesting pieces of the night is a recent one called "Laughter". Cockburn got the audience to join in the chorus - ha, ha, ha, ha, - wo-o-o-o. This song is a sort of prayer - Therapy. It is exorcising the devils that cause our sense of pain by laughing (sometimes nervously) at them and celebrating our joy despite it all and within it all. We laugh at ourselves: "A Laugh for the man of the world, who thinks he can make things work - set out to build the New Jerusalem, and ended up with New York." We laugh (choking back tears) at the insane powers that be with their fingers itching to hit the panic button: "A laugh for the nuclear

good time boys, numbering all our days."

Another highlight in the evening (to us anyway) was the piece called "Nanzangi" (guessing at spelling) which was inspired by a visit to a Zen Buddhist temple in Kyoto on Cockburn's recent tour of Japan. He said it was "a place of great magic, mystery and wonder." From what we know of Zen, Cockburn has given a remarkable communication of this mystical tradition which attempts to see through life, to see the holy wonder of the here and now. We say remarkable because the Zen tradition is beyond mere words. Not only does the music of this piece evoke the spirit of Zen but the lyrics also capture that "Beyond words" of Zen. The live "I walk on the voices of nightingales," expresses the sense of the song. Truly a beautiful work.

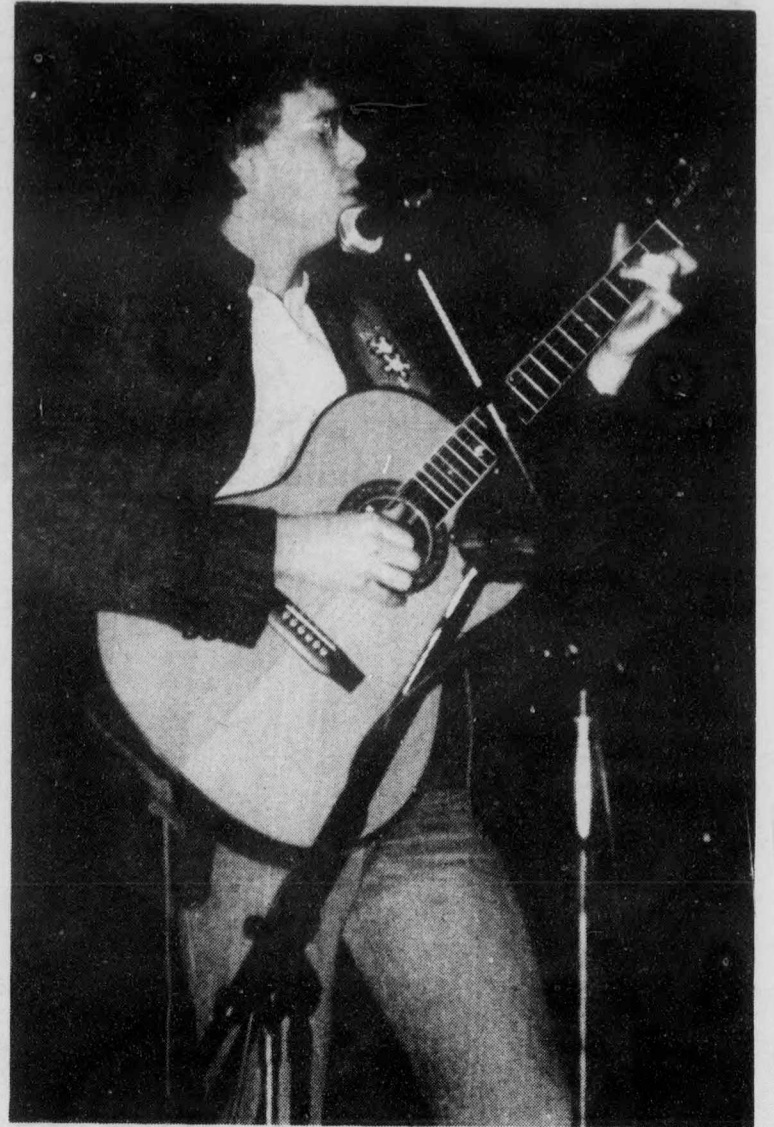
Next Cockburn played a favorite of ours from the last Fredericton concert he gave. It is called "joy will find a way" and Cockburn said it was inspired by a traditional Ethiopian song. In it he used his guitar and wind chimes clanging from his elbow (quite a feat in itself!). At the last concert he played this with a dulcimer, but unfortunately he did not have it Sunday. Cockburn followed this with an instrumental and another piece using the wind chimes called "Rainfall".

Cockburn then played perhaps his most overly religious work - a hymn of praise really-called "Lord of the Starfields." The powerful imagery of this song speaks for itself, and for the deep and loving faith of Bruce Cockburn: "Voice of the Nova," "Smile of the Dew," "O Love that fires the sun, keep me burning."

Next came an instrumental called "Water into Wine" which goes from a classically Spanish style to pure Cockburn-we say "pure" Cockburn because there isn't such a thing as "typical" Cockburn.

Another audience participation song was "Bright Sky" which Cockburn did after describing his adventures at a folk festival given each year in Faroh (Yukon) a mining company town of slightly over 1000 souls. Cockburn described how an old blues singer couldn't get out of bed in the town "Filtin Hilton" because his feet were too high in the air. (the buildings leave on the frost).

A real treat for us was his next number, a new piece called "Feast of Fools" inspired by the book of the same name by the radical Christian Theologian, Harvey Coss. The feast of fools, he said, was a medieval European practice when the class barriers came down a bit and the majority who were "Lying with their faces in the manure most of the time while a few got to merrily run over their barks" got a chance to thumb their nose at them. It is an ancient-modern song which speaks to us of "faceless kings of Corporations" being faced with the awe of the universe and life. "It's time for the silent criers to be held in love". "It's time for the diggers of graves to get one last



Bruce Cockburn photo by J. Kilfoil
shout." Fascinating and strong stuff. Cockburn followed this with a piece called "Can I Go With You?"

Cockburn ended the concert with the lovely "Festival of Friends" which seemed to strike a responsive chord in everyone present. "Festival of Friends" is quite simply Cockburn's vision of paradise.

The audience got to its feet and called Cockburn back from the wings and he then played a really beautiful new song en francais, called "un homme brulant" (A man on fire) which is a mystical love-religious song. The audience again summoned him back to play "Dialogue with the Devil" an older song which is a triumph of conscience from hedonistic self-abasement to a true celebration of joy.

Cockburn just seems to get better and better. His music is ever-expanding and diversifying. He is one of the few artists worth paying \$6.50 to see in our opinion. Cockburn is not a singer of "protest" songs in the sense of the yah-yah "sixties ilk", but he is very definitely in a state of active rebellion against this insane world of ours. We think of him as a sort of Christian existentialist visionary anxious to awaken the kingdom of love within us. The Zen experience seems to have had quite an effect on his latest work although tendencies in this direction were very evident even at the last concert. Perhaps this is his power as a poet. His gift for singing reality is one we should be grateful for. The attempts of a Dylan or Comparable singers

seem to pale in comparison. Cockburn sings consciousness-reality.

p.s. Only one bad thing to report. I don't understand Radio CIFI'S way of "promoting" a concert such as this. Besides album and ticket give-aways they did nothing. No Bruce Cockburn special all week. The day of the concert they had a special feature on Elvis Presely!

The CHFC hosts WRBB

BY Pam Saunders

The Folk Collective hosted the White River Bluegrass Band at Memorial Hall, Sunday October 22, and a great time was had by performers and audience alike. The band is made up of five very competent musicians: Bob Cusson, mandolin player and fiddler, Wolfgang Poll, banjo player, Sid Guillick, guitarist, William Bland, fiddler, and Dianne Rennie, upright bassist.

The group showed command over a broad range of music, including bluegrass, French and Celtic folk songs, road songs, and everything in between. Their sound was tight, and instrumentation imaginative. The mood was mainly upbeat, and songs such as "Hello City Limits", "When the Bees Are in the Hive," and "Willy of the Mountains" encouraged rhythmic clapping and stomping.

con't pg. 17

Care for Your Lungs
it's a matter of life & breath

