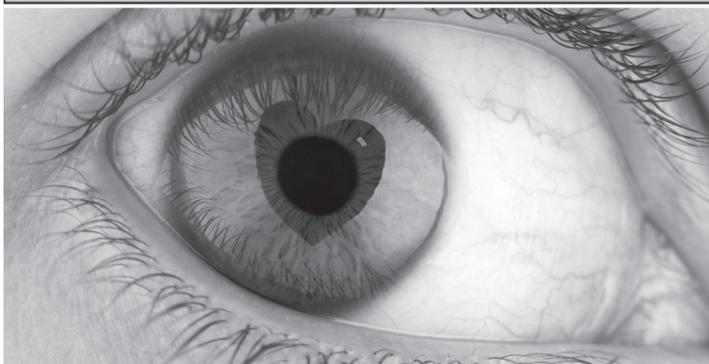


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Watson finds Paradise in travels

Patrick Watson

With Sleeping Girl and Tim Gilbertson
Tuesday, 27 March at 8pm
Victory Lounge

MARIA KOTOVYCH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Riding the ferry from Seattle to Vancouver, Patrick Watson constantly marvels at the beauty of the open sea and snow-covered mountains. Unfortunately, there aren't any whales in sight. The waves, on the other hand, are like a lullaby.

The members of the band Patrick Watson have completed their tour of the American Deep South and are currently touring Western Canada, including a stop at the Juno Awards in Saskatoon, thanks to the band's nomination for New Artist of the Year for their album *Close to Paradise*.

Even though the band's name is Patrick Watson, Watson emphasizes that they're very much a band, with everyone collaborating in writing and performing. The band's development was gradual, Watson explains, and the

album actually started off as music for a book. Later on, though, these small beginnings led to music that held its own voice.

"Each song has its own story, and we tried to give each song its own character as much as possible," Watson says. "We're all inspired by film and art."

Watson says that most of the album has a "cinematic edge" to it. Even some of the band's videos, including "The Great Escape," tell a story, both visually and musically.

Some of the images apparent in the band's art are trains and hot-air balloons. According to Watson, they came from a cartoon he had in his head of a guy who has the weight of the world—symbolized by the hot-air balloon—in his hand.

"Even though the guy wants to let go, he knows that if he does, he'll let everyone down," Watson says. "However, by holding on, he drags the balloon down to the ground, and he ends up going nowhere."

As he speaks, Watson makes numerous references to the ability of music to tell a story. For instance, in

describing the band's sound, Watson states that while they still create a type of pop music, they incorporate a number of different influences in telling a story.

Music also tells a story for Watson when he listens to it. For instance, he really enjoys a lot of classical music and he'll generally pick a few albums each year and really listen to them.

"Sometimes it's nice to sit down and actually listen to music, whether it's in your car or taking a walk in the woods," Watson says. "[You get] the full effect when you really engage with the music and it becomes part of your background and kinda tells the story for you."

The album's title, *Close to Paradise*, came while Watson was travelling in Vietnam; the phrase "close to paradise" is a Vietnamese expression that refers to the feeling people might get when they're walking and walking and just don't feel like they're going to make it.

"[It's] based on a painting my friend made in Vietnam—an individual that really inspired me," Watson says.

Sharkwater baits our intervention

Sharkwater

Directed by Rob Stewart
Starring Rob Stewart, Paul Watson and Erich Ritter
Princess Theatre
Now Playing

KRISTINA DE GUZMAN
Arts & Entertainment Staff

From baby seals to panda bears, there seems to be a sudden interest—almost to the point where it's becoming a fad—in saving certain endangered species. But barely a splash has been made to save the sharks, which according to Rob Stewart, Canadian filmmaker of the award-winning documentary *Sharkwater*, are in graver danger of becoming extinct. And the consequences that our planet will face if they do will be severe.

Bearing a very close resemblance to Keanu Reeves, Stewart is like the main character in a work of fiction, whose motivations and journey manage to capture your interest almost instantaneously. *Sharkwater* begins with him talking about how he's always loved sharks. He also criticizes the media's obsession with portraying these animals as killers, when in reality they're afraid of humans.

The audience gets a visually stunning history lesson on evolution, making them aware that sharks have been around for 400 million

years having remained "essentially unchanged." Various black-and-white clips are shown of how sharks have been portrayed negatively by the media throughout the years, giving viewers an idea of just how ridiculous the beliefs that have come about from such portrayals really are. A clip that stands out is a lesson on how to avoid getting ripped to shreds by a shark if one comes within a metre of you. The suggestions lack so much common sense that they're extremely funny. Later on, Stewart joins Captain Paul Watson of Sea Shepherd, an organization that fights against the hunting of marine animals, on a mission to save the sharks in the two remaining shark centres of the world: the Cocos Islands of Costa Rica and the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador.

Stewart does an absolutely amazing job turning this film into more than just your average documentary, a genre often known for its dry and uncreative approaches to informing people about important issues. The music, the visuals and the cinematography in *Sharkwater* go beyond to project the beauty of the ocean and its inhabitants. An equally exceptional job is done to reveal the horrific actions of the line-fishing industry and the failure of governments to impose laws to protect the ocean ecosystems.

There's a point in the film, though, where Sea Shepherd's mission becomes

a little too self-righteous. When they discover an illegal hunting boat at the Cocos Islands, they use destructive tactics in an attempt to get the long-lining fishers to surrender. The folks from Sea Shepherd won't stop harping on how those on the hunting boat are on the waters illegally, but no attempts are made to understand why people in South America hunt sharks. The possibility that the shark hunters might be placing fast money on top of environmental concerns on their priority lists because they're living in poverty isn't explored; they're simply painted as criminals.

However, Stewart's ignorance can be forgiven as he's later shocked by the Costa Rican government's failure to punish the line-fishers. He's even more shocked when it turns out the government wants to arrest him and his crew instead. It's then that Stewart discovers that the government is actually profiting from the sale of shark fins and that it's done nothing to stop the "shark-fin mafia"—money is too important.

Despite some flaws in perspective, *Sharkwater* is a revelation of misconceptions, failures, individual power and of protest. Future consequences are why we need to change and act now, rather than later, when the damage that humans have incurred on this planet will have become irreversible.