



Kroeker a cultural diplomat

Joel Kroeker

With John Guliak and the New Lougans
Friday, 13 April at 8pm
Victory Lounge

RENATO PAGNANI
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Musicians are similar to professional athletes in many regards: they're rarely at home, they have to deal with living on the road and they often find themselves under the scrutiny of the public eye. However, there's one similarity between the two vocations that's rarely noted: that both musicians and athletes often drop their studies to focus on developing their craft.

Joel Kroeker, however, managed to juggle both at once, professionally playing music while attending the University of Winnipeg. Later, he earned his Masters in Ethnomusicology here at the University of Alberta, which has proven invaluable to Kroeker as a singer-songwriter.

"Ethnomusicology is basically the study of music and culture," the Winnipeg native explains. "It's kind of like the anthropology of music. In comparison to musicology, which is usually based on western music, ethnomusicology is all over the world.

"It's helped me to see past the normal stereotypes that we all sort of see and look more insightfully. If you don't look deeply into something

or research it, you tend to just accept the stereotypes and how music is used in each culture. And not necessarily ethnic cultures, but also singer-songwriters and musicians."

Having lived in Edmonton during his tenure as a graduate student, Kroeker is adamant in his praise for the Alberta capital as both a place to live and a burgeoning music scene. Describing the sense of community that exists in Edmonton between musicians, Kroeker admits to missing his former place of residence and the venues that it contains.

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"We were one of the last bands to play at the [old] Sidetrack Café before it closed," Kroeker fondly reminisces. "I've played there so many times during the three years I lived in Edmonton—I played there constantly. Playing shows with bands like Captain Tractor and all the local bands were a lot of fun. It was just

such a great venue.

"It's like that everywhere in Canada, though," Kroeker continues. "Part of it is related to the music business being confused about how to deal with the situation, which then affects all aspects of music. What's sad about that is that this aspect of culture in the city will be negatively impacted. People need a place to go to experience new things that will blow their minds, and actually feel like they're learning something and seeing something new."

Though he now lives in Vancouver, Kroeker is back in town next week performing at the Velvet Underground as part of CKUA's "Live From Alberta Stages" concert series, as well as to promote his latest album release, *Closer to the Flame*. The album is a surprising contrast when compared to his 2004 effort, *Melodrama*: whereas *Melodrama* chronicled his life as it was falling apart, Kroeker insists *Closer to the Flame* is a much more positive affair, where all the pieces of his life have been picked up and put back where they belong. It has spawned a major hit in Québec with "Déjà Vu," an English/French duet with Québec star Dany Bédar. The track also appears on Bédar's album *Acoustique ... en studio!*

When asked what he thinks has contributed to his success in Québec, Kroeker, ever the good sport, laughs and gives an honest answer:

"Absolute, total, luck."

Stop the spread of syphilis

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Over 200 cases of infectious syphilis were identified throughout the province last year; a 40% increase from the previous year.

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Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection that can cause serious health consequences. It can be detected with a simple blood test and is treated with antibiotics.

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Alberta

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Whitematter Development is seeking students with PHP/MySQL experience for a couple of projects we are working on this summer. The projects are fairly straightforward, involving modifying and extending an existing codebase. Additional projects are also possible. If you only have a month or two you want to fill, we will consider assigning single projects.

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