

Xavier Rudd to make debut at Centre in the Square

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BY ROBERT REID, RECORD STAFF

You don't have to calculate the distance to know Australia is a long way away from Canada.

But for singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and activist Xavier Rudd, the distance is not all that great in a number of respects.

The international roots artist regularly tours Canada. In recent years he has appeared at both the Hillside Festival in July and at Hillside Inside in January.

On Wednesday he makes his Kitchener debut performing in concert at Centre in the Square.

More personally, the mother of his two daughters is Canadian. And his manager/publicist is based in Toronto.

Finally, he feels his activism, which encompasses environmentalism and aboriginal rights, finds a sympathetic ear in Canada, despite the actions of all levels of government at various times in this country's history.

"I feel very connected to the Canadian people because they share many of my concerns," Rudd says by way of a static telephone connection.

"There's a strong (aboriginal) spirit that lives in both nations."

In a nutshell, Rudd's music bridges the vast distance of the Pacific Ocean.

Following in the footsteps of such folksingers as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and Scottish-born, longtime Australian resident Eric Bogle, Rudd uses music to examine social, political and environmental issues.

"My music is an extension of my world and an expression of what I care about," Rudd confirms. "It's how I view the world and what I feel about the world."

Nonetheless, Rudd is not interested in stepping on a soapbox or using his music as a didactic platform.

"Any message in my music is organic; it isn't forced."

Rudd is touring Canada this time around in support of his latest studio album *Koonyum Sun*, released last month. It is his ninth album since his 2001 debut *Live in Canada*.

The new album heralds a fresh musical reawakening and spiritual rebirth for Rudd, who believes the release is his "most personal" to date.

It's also his debut album with his new funky rhythm section featuring bassist Tio Moloantoa and percussionist Andile Nqubezelo of the late Afro-reggae legend Lucky Dube's band.

Under the collective banner of Xavier Rudd & Izintaba (Zulu word for mountain), *Koonyum Sun* finds Rudd moving away from the darker, more sombre, heavier sound of 2008's *Dark Shades of Blue*.

Rudd agrees the new release expresses a happier, foot-tapping, hip-swaying vibe, recalling his earlier albums.

Rudd's globally influenced collage of music has always been a rich stew of reggae, funk, blues and folk, enhanced with deep-rooted Australian Aboriginal. On *Koonyum Sun* Rudd embraces the infectious rhythms of South Africa.

"There's a heavy South African influence," Rudd acknowledges.

"Tio and Andile are very powerful musical characters and they put their individuality into the music and carry it on stage."



Kane Hibberd

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