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## Success grows organically for Aussie performer Rudd

**Cam Fuller**

The StarPhoenix

*Thursday, February 14, 2008*

XAVIER RUDD

7:30 p.m. tonight

Lakeview Auditorium

Sold out

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First there was *Around the World in 80 Days*, now it's *Cross-Canada Without Shoes*.

Xavier Rudd, the Australian musician, surfer, vegetarian and activist, eschews footwear if possible. Unfortunately, in Canada in winter, it's not at all possible.

His reaction to a recent weather report (-24 C) was a simple "aw s--." He was in Colorado at the time, no place itself for bare feet or even surfer huaraches. When he simply must, Rudd borrows footwear from friends.

"Right now I'm wearing Ugg boots," he said.

"My drummer's from Toronto. He likes the cold. He teaches me how to deal with it."

It's not as if Rudd isn't familiar with the Great White North. In fact, Canada means a lot to him.

"My wife's from Canada. My kids are half-Canadian. I've had a start to most of my overseas touring in Canada. Energy-wise it's strong. Spirit of the land is strong. Reminds me of home."

Highly regarded for his live show, Rudd tours internationally on his own ticket and opening for big names like the Dave Matthews Band and Ani DiFranco. He's recorded several live and four studio albums, the most recent being *White Moth*. He's keenly interested in aboriginal issues and includes Australian and Canadian aboriginal singing in his work. The highlight in recording *White Moth*, most of which was done in B.C., was working with Cree elder Kenneth Charlette, says Rudd.

"We had a powerful connection."

Another project is the soundtrack for the Matthew McConaughey film *Surfer Dude*. McConaughey says Rudd is "one of the most original artists in music today."

Without seeming to try, Rudd has built a huge following worldwide. When he comes to town, everyone in the know knows and the show sells out before a single poster is taped to a power pole. As to how this has happened, the laid-back Aussie has no idea.

"I've just toured around a lot and people seem to just come back. More people come to our shows. It just seems to happen organically that way. I'm not really worried about the commercial avenue of music at all. Just stay true to what comes through me. I've been lucky

people support it."

Rudd is also an environmentalist, but not a doom-and-gloomer.

"I feel lucky to be living at this time," he says. "I feel like a blessed person. I'm on an amazing journey. I have some beautiful kids. I live in a beautiful place, it's very untouched. I live in a time where I'm able to enjoy the wonders of this magical Earth that we live in. I feel lucky about that. One hundred years from now it will be a different story. I just like to reflect on where I am and what I have. That keeps me pretty positive. I don't have much to be negative about."

Being a father has also become a huge part of Rudd's identity.

"My kids are a whole other level. The music thing is great and I love doing what I do but there's just a whole other level. I couldn't imagine if they weren't there to go home to, you know?"

Rudd's Canadian tour lasts three weeks, landing him in Saskatoon on allegedly the most romantic day of the year, Valentine's Day.

"I think I'm romantic all the time. Just a romantic guy," he insists. Trouble is, Feb. 14 is not that big a deal in Australia.

"My wife would like it to be more. And she often mentions that I need to be more organized about Valentine's Day because it's part of her culture. I have a Valentine's Day discussion every year. She's taught me well about Valentine's and I get it when I see it. It's a good celebration of connection. A little bit commercial, though."

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