

CORI BREWSTER

Cori Brewster was born and raised in Banff, the Rocky Mountain resort town in Alberta, where the Brewster family has resided for over 120 years. She began singing with her mom and sisters on Rocky Mountain trail rides. Like all young women do, Cori left home to experience life outside this small town, carrying with her that profound 'sense of place' wherever she went.

Brewster entered Red Deer College to study Physical Education but after graduating from University of Alberta, with a Bachelor of Physical Education, the pull of music was tugging at her soul. Cori moved to Winnipeg to begin her journey, recording her first singles that began her foray into country music. Several of Cori's singles achieved chart topping success.

In 1994, Cori hit the ground running with the release of 'One More Mountain'. Peter North of the Edmonton Sun attests that "*If anyone can relate to the classic country song Blue Canadian Rockies it's Cori Brewster. The singer/songwriter, who was raised on the songs of country pioneers like Wilf Carter and Hank Snow, grew up in Banff listening to songs like Blue Canadian Rockies... In fairly short order the determined and talented artist released her first full-length CD. One More Mountain is a solid collection of originals*".

With appearances at the Calgary Stampede, The Tommy Hunter Show, Merritt Country Festival, Whistler Roots Festival and many hours on the road, 'One More Mountain' was a hit. With a successful tour of Germany, an official showcase at SXSW and a nomination for female artist of the year by the Alberta Recording Industry recognition as a singer songwriter solidified. The response for her video's, 'Spin on a Red Brick Floor' and 'Good as Gone' was great, both achieved high rotation on CMT and Country Beat. Cori's commitment to the music industry was cemented.

In 1998, Cori released her 2nd CD, 'Stones' to wonderful response. Vancouver's 'Xtra West' magazine reported that 'Stones' "*is a collection of fresh and captivating songs by an authentic contemporary Canadian voice*". RoseAnna Schick of Connect magazine in Winnipeg declared that "*Cori is a talented singer-songwriter with country roots and a folk/bluegrass sound... 'Stones' is an album full of feeling and integrity*".

Cori hit the road with Maria Dunn and Jennifer Gibson as the Sonic Sisters touring throughout Ontario and organized a book store tour across the country until the promotion of her second release was cut short by the birth of her son, River in October 1998. Never one to let the grass grow too long under her feet, Brewster says that "*After the birth of my son we ventured to New Zealand where I toured with a local songwriter and I then had the wonderful experience of being a music supervisor for a documentary on Alberta cowgirls, called Pretty Ladies, Fast Horses. We have been lucky to have one of our songs on the television series, Dawson Creek and we are starting to have songs recorded by other artists, which is wonderful*".

Cori's 3rd CD, 'Large Bird Leaving' was released in 2007. Maverick Magazine in the UK confirms that "*Cori is a musical treasure and her CD is captivating and impeccably produced... has you immediately reaching for the repeat button*". 'Large Bird Leaving' was selected as Top Canadian Album at #7 on FolkDJ-playlists for July 2007. Cori toured extensively in Alberta playing all Alberta's major folk clubs and making inroads into rural concert series. Jope Langejans from the Forestburg Concert Series reported that "*Cori touched my heart and soul with her music and her dedication to what is real in the world*".

"I recently returned from an adventure in Iquitos, Peru where I had the privilege of performing on a 112 year old ship (Rio Amazonas) that cruised down the Amazon River. The trip was out of this world to say the least. One of the highlights was singing for children of the Pacaya Samira reserve in their clapboard, one room, school house; seeing their smiling faces reminded me why I love to sing".

'Buffalo Street' Cori's 4th CD reflect her continuing commitment to the craft of songwriting and attention to detail that so effectively evokes a time, a sense of place, a character and of course a range of emotion. 'Buffalo Street' is a collection of beautiful stories inspired by the rich history of the Canadian Rockies and its people. Songs cover a diverse range of subjects and characters from the personal to the historical and from the genealogical to geographical.

Produced by Dave Clarke (producer of David Francey's Juno awarded CD's) and the multi-talented (fiddle, mandola, accordion) Adrian Dolan of the Bills. The project was recorded at Baker Studio's in Victoria and rounding out the studio ensemble was Oliver Swain on Double Bass and Adam Dobres of the group Outlaw Social, Tim Tweedale on resophonic guitar, James Whittall on mandolin, Daniel Lapp on trumpet and Pharis Romero on background vocals.

The rest of the story...

In 2006, I entered 'William Twin,' co-written with Bob Remington, in the Calgary Folk Festival Song contest. It was selected as one of the top entries in the category 'Best song of Alberta,' winning an award for historical relevance. This would become the inspiration for my new project.

When I moved back to the Bow Valley in 2000, I thought it might be time to re-discover my 'sense of place.' My father and my grandfather were born in Banff and my great-great grandfather, John, arrived in Banff in 1886. I was well aware the legacy the name Brewster carried in the Canadian Rockies, with roots reaching back to the days of mountain travel by pack train in the early 1890's. I was also aware that the characters in the Brewster story were among the most interesting and colourful figures associated with the region. They were an independent, innovative and frequently tough group of individuals.

One such character was William Twin. A member of the Stoney band and knew the mountains intimately, Twin was original to the space. He worked for the CPR cutting the trail from Laggan station up to Lake Louise and he played a vital role in my families' [family's?] tourism business. In 1888, he began working for my great-great grandfather at his dairy in Banff. This was seasonal work and William returned to his family at Kootenay Plain and Morley during the off season. In 1892, he was teaching John's boys, Bill (12 years old) and Jim (10) how to hunt, fish and ride when the Banff Springs Hotel hired the boys and William to guide their first trip in the backcountry. Thus began the Brewster legacy of guiding and outfitting. When John Brewster died, William came to Banff to see John's children and said "John gone. God take him. Now me your father". These poignant words reveal his deep personal attachment to the Brewster Family.

I started performing 'William Twin' in my live set and it was so well received that I decided to pursue an entire project of historical songs. After applying to the Canada Council for assistance and then being awarded a grant, I began researching the project which turned out to be a uniquely pleasurable and eye-opening experience.

I spent hours in the Whyte Museum Archives in Banff, looking for the hidden treasures. I searched for the material to draw you immediately into a story, not just the factual information, but the stuff you can touch or smell or, if you're lucky, hear through a tape of someone's voice who has long since passed away, I didn't really approach the project with a list of characters I wanted to write about; I let one story lead me to the next, and that seemed to work well. I let serendipity play a role; the real discoveries seemed to come out of the blue. I had many 'ah-ha moments', when something resonated between the past and the present. I really got the archival jolt as they say.

The stories and the characters on the CD mean a lot to me; their presence in this small geographical pocket of the Canadian Rockies continues to influence my life and the lives of countless people who visit Banff National Park everyday. I completely embrace where I come from, my family ties, my cultural roots and this overwhelming beauty every day.

In the spring of 2009, I entered the Calgary folk festival song contest with a song called 'My Familiar Sky' off the new CD, a song about the secret romance of Peter and Catharine Whyte. Their remarkable courtship letters, written after Peter returned to Banff, provide a gripping story of their deep affection. Written on tissue paper and sent on a regular schedule to avoid raising suspicion, Peter's letters brought to life the eccentric characters and sublime landscapes of Banff to persuade Catharine she would love the Rockies before she arrived. She did. Married in 1930, they built a studio in Banff where they lived and painted their beloved mountains.

As luck would have it, it won third place in the 'Best of Alberta' song category.