



West Australian
06/11/2008
Page: 7
Section: Today
Region: Perth Circulation: 195033
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 136.00 sq.cms
Frequency: MTWTFSS-

An older sense of being, yet sheen of social activism remains

STEPH KRETOWICZ

Classical acoustic guitarist Jose Gonzalez is a glutton for knowledge. While some of what the Swedish-born indie folk singer/songwriter says gets lost in translation, it's clear there is a lot more to the trilingual rhythmic finger-picking master than just beautiful melodies and eloquent lyrics.

Born of ethnic parents who had escaped the political turmoil of Argentina in the 70s, Gonzalez is mostly interested in "fun tours" through Australia via China and South Korea as he brushes up on his English with books on evolutionary biology and bioethics.

"These were topics that I got into mainly because of what was happening in the world and the discussions that caught my attention; like religion and science and ethics and morality," Gonzalez says of the inspiration for his 2007 album *In Our Nature*. "Also deeper philosophical questions like, 'How does consciousness come about?' And where you have that line where science really hasn't caught up with these philosophical questions that have been around for hundreds and hundreds of years . . . It seems very interesting to see how much neuroscience knows about consciousness but there are still parts that haven't been solved."

It appears because of his distance from religion in his life, spiritual belief both captivates and perplexes him. "It became a big interest to follow that

discussion but it's more like it's weird that up to 80 per cent of the world population believe in a higher being that can listen to our prayers and is almighty."

Nurtured in a South American household displaced by governmental strife and claiming the politicised music of Cuba's Silvio Rodriguez as a major influence, one can see the reactionary effects of social upheaval evident in Gonzalez' lyrics. Although he says he doesn't take anyone's position, he admits to being drawn to a tradition of reactionary beliefs, which he agrees has a lot to do with his past in the thriving Swedish hardcore scene of the early to mid-90s. Moving on from his band *Back Against the Wall* to focus on his university studies Gonzalez cites his own maturity as a reason for his shift in interest to the "cheesy home recordings" of his solo material.

"Part of it is probably also growing older and not feeling the urgency of trying to make yourself hurt through spinning and playing very loudly," Gonzalez chuckles, saying that while his tastes may have changed, the sheen of social activism remains.

"I think that it affected me and many of my other friends who were into hardcore music and now some of them don't bother at all but some of them still have similar ideas but a bit more sophisticated."

It could be a strange dichotomy of someone who appears so musically sensitive to be so sceptical. Yet it appears that in his scientific

exploration of spirituality these two apparently conflicting ideas merge.

"I feel like coming from a biochemical background and reading about the brain and how consciousness comes up. I feel like I'm a bit of an infant and don't really know where to draw the line but I definitely think it's important to think about sentient beings."

So while the hardcore tag fades and the semi-vegetarianism remains, Gonzalez finds himself a little more informed in regards to what he will and will not eat: "I certainly believe in the self-consciousness that you find in primates and mammals, which you probably don't find in shrimp."

Jose Gonzalez plays the opening night of the Beck's Music Box on February 14 at 8.30pm, with the Optimo DJs performing after 10.30pm. Tickets from BOCS and perthfestival.com.au



Jose Gonzalez