

The Audacity of Cope

by **LONN FRIEND**

IT'S JULY 29TH AND I'M LOVINGLY HANDED A *Dad's Birthday Mix* CD as me and my 18-year-old daughter prepare for a long lunch drive. Meg excitedly pops the disc into the deck and for the next hour and ten down PCH to The O.C. I get a taste of what's been capturing my college-bound kid's current aural imagination.

And where the rubber meets the road, yeah/Where the hot meets the cold/Poor meet the soul/Where the young meet the old/Truth be told

I got somethin' on my mind/Y'all gotta know.

Wow. That's good shit. I say it aloud. "Who is this?" "Citizen Cope. He's amazing." Couple tracks later, I'm intrigued again. "Let the drummer kick, let the drummer kick." "Who's that, Meg?" I ask. "Citizen Cope, dad! He has different styles." Two more cool offerings, a Beatle and Floyd (she loves to display her rock heritage) and then, "The sun's gonna rise in a mile, in a mile you'll be feeling fine." She turns the volume way up. My head is jogging, my right foot tapping the accelerator. Feeling good, like music should make you feel when the music is... good.

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It's obvious to me by now that I have been given a far greater gift than a collection of songs. I feel that sensation familiar to those who've had experience with awakenings or epiphanies, moments that transcend the average and catapult one into a higher place.

Next Cope is rapping, more urgent, political, private yet global and the chorus pay off, man, does this guy hit the mark. "What you've done here, is put yourself between a bullet and target/And it won't be long before, you're pulling yourself away." Meg's rockin', her fat plastic sunglasses struggling to stay on her nose. "Dad, the BEST song is coming up!" Last track on the disc, she doesn't go out with a bang, but rather, with a sweet, sacred whisper that she's certain will lyrically knock her old dad... sideways.

Diamonds they fade/Flowers they bloom/And I'm telling you/These feelings won't go away/They've been knocking me sideways.

Once home, I surf YouTube for him and find a video for "Back Together" where he sings of self-discovery through infectious melody and conscious lyric. He is an everyman yet at the same time a rare poet on a concrete walk, musing on the demons he's wrestled and moment he's embraced.

Today the things are going my way/I'm back together again/I'm staring in the mirror and it's been so long/Since I've seen you my friend.

The song sings of hope, finding your way back to the center of who you are. Hope? In these fucked up times? The audacity!

And in the days leading up to Megan's departure for her freshman campaign at George Washington University, I discover some synchronous, human links to Mr. Clarence Greenwood. We have a couple mutual friends, odd and ran-

dom, like Denise Ramos who woks for Derek Shulman in New York, and Toad, tour pianist for Nelly Furtado now tracking with All American Rejects, and the incredible Debi Nova, whose first record deal I helped broker years back. When I found Cope, I sent her a note.

"Yeah, Lon, COPE is DOPE!" she wrote back. "I love him! Listen to the song we did together on my MySpace page, 'Something to Believe In.' Big Hug for you!"

Election Day 2008 and we have a candidate with the audacity to give this battled, scarred nation some genuine new hope. Megan's going to school five minutes from the White House, not too far from where Cope grew up. Citizens all, it's a time to raise our voices, speak and sing our truth. And let the drummer kick. ★



Lonnn Friend is a veteran music journalist and former editor of iconic hard-rock publication RIP. Morgan Road/Random House published his memoir, Life on Planet Rock, in 2006. Copyright Rumi Enterprises 2008.