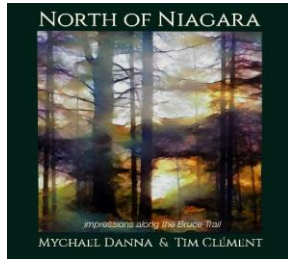


Mychael Danna & Tim Clément

North of Niagara



There are many things that get better with time. One of them is great music. Case in point, **North of Niagara**, a treasury of electronic and acoustic music that was released a quarter of a century ago. With an ongoing nod to the fragility of our natural environment, it has been re-released and it is as timely now as it was then. Frankly, we need the reminder. This twelve track suite, composed and performed by **Mychael Danna & Tim Clément**, takes us along the famous 900 km Bruce Trail, a rugged pathway in southern Ontario that has been delighting outdoor enthusiasts for decades. Danna & Clément have been around for some time, and I do not write of their curriculum vitae as it is readily available elsewhere. Let us focus on the music.

We start at **Cootes Paradise** just as the sun rises. The trail begins just right of that big sassafras tree. On the rocky shoreline we get muddy, but witness the many birds that use this watercourse as a waystation. You can hear the birds in the music. The piano slowly rotates in the piece, opening the sound, echoing off everything. Time freezes as you count the waves lapping at the shore. A momentous beginning.

You can see the black arrow blaze and you follow it all along to **Ravensview**, one of the more spectacular hikes as it takes you to Lion's Head. The music here is electronic with a side order of earthy. The music rolls across the scene like the wind. You can feel it. You can hear it breathe. It is more of an invitation, then a hindrance.

Once used by pioneers and settlers in the middle 1850s to get around the area, **Old Mail Road** is next on our list. If you wanted to get to the post in Collingwood that is the trail you took. The thoughtfully paced music is just this side of mysterious with a cold, resonating piano lead and somber electronic overtones. The tall trees overhanging the pathway, the rickety boardwalk bend under foot, and moss covered rocks are all reminders that we are walking through history. Let's follow along.

The track called **Mount Nemo** seems to be somewhat foreboding. As you travel up this old quarry road, mind the cliff edge. Above us the turkey vultures crawl lazily against the sky. We hike Walker's Line and follow the rugged trail. The old cedar trees stand at attention just this side of the trail. Danna and Clément offer a sinister theme that is just like waiting for the storm to begin. It implies a dark, formidable challenge.

Silent Lake offers up an excellent example of electronic minimalism. Bird calls, crickets, and other twittering sounds introduce this languorous tune of resonant sound as if each note is a ripple upon the lake's surface. You can sit on the shore under the trees and gaze at the water. That one old gnarled pine tree on its own island makes for quiet contemplation as does this tune.

Another tune with a similar vibe is **Headwater Trail**. It may exist here on earth, but the music itself is quite otherworldly. Some kind of twisty, rattling mixed with quavering sound, a loon

maybe in the distance, and a roiling theme make the journey just a bit tense, but we stay on the trail.

Next we head out from Milton. We follow the blue blaze and after hiking for some time, we take a rest at the edge of **Crawford Lake**. The pastoral tune of the same name has an expansive piano score that slows our pace, physically and mentally. It feels like winter here. Dormant trees stand like wooden soldiers, rocks are snow covered mounds, and the water looks quiet. Where glaciers once stood, man now stands in awe. This tune is as peaceful as can be and it immerses us in quietude.

You can hear former raindrops as they have settled into the earth and now fall into a pool. Plink. Plink. Plink. The song **Green River Formation** is a cave exploration. It is the sound of the quiet, the coolness, and the earthy smell of wet rock and soil. The soft, rolling theme suggests that it is not so much as darkness that we experience, but more like muted light. It is a place of succor, a place to rest. A place to truly connect to what we seek.

Other tracks include **Remember Summer, Avening, Crooks Hollow, and Lookout Point**.

For Danna and Clément, even in today's world, it will be more than easy to ignite the passion of nature lovers and those that wish to commune with this organic suite of textural themes. Some music is timeless. This is one of those recordings. Excellent. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews