

RIDER OF THE STORM

TOM COCHRANE'S SONGS

TELL OF STRUGGLE AND

JUSTICE — NOT AT ALL

YOUR USUAL ROCK LYRICS

By NEAL HALL
Sun Music Critic

A NOTE to Wreck Beach nudists: No, that wasn't the Chariots of Fire sequel being filmed from a helicopter at your favorite beach. That fully-clothed guy running along the sand Monday was Tom Cochrane, lead singer-songwriter for Red Rider.

The Toronto band spent the last two days in Vancouver filming a rock video of a new song, Can't Turn Back.

The video — intended for MTV exposure in the U.S. — is part of the band's plan to ride its new wave of sudden popularity since the January release of its third and most powerful album, Neruda.

The band has just completed a 60-date American tour with Pat Benatar and REO Speedwagon. And Tuesday night's concert at the Commodore is the start of Red Rider's first Canadian tour in more than a year.

In '81, the band toured with such acts as the Kinks, Doobie Brothers, J. Geils, Marshall Tucker and Journey. Then Red Rider encountered a \$60,000 setback — all its equipment was stolen from their truck parked outside a New York Holiday Inn.

Someone (fingers were pointed at each other) forgot to insure it.

Instead of touring in '82, Red Rider spent almost a year honing Neruda, an album that promises to push the band beyond Canadian sales boundaries into the international big leagues along with Bryan Adams and Loverboy (all three acts are managed by Bruce Allen).

Cochrane, 29, based the album's central character on Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who died in exile shortly after the 1973 military coup that ousted the Marxist regime of President Salvador Allende, who died in the process.

(Doesn't sound like your average Canadian rock album, does it?)

After wrapping up filming of Red Rider's video Tuesday afternoon, Cochrane sat outside enjoying Vancouver's balmy spring weather and explained how Neruda became his inspiration.

"I bought a couple of his books in Edmonton," he said, "just as I was writing the songs for the new album. I became intrigued with Neruda — he was very streetwise and very mystical. I wanted to work that into our music."

Cochrane uses Neruda as a metaphor "for this character who stumbles through the album." He likes Neruda because "he wrote about the people, he wrote about justice."

However, Neruda isn't a blatantly political album. Sure, several songs have political overtones, especially Napoleon Sheds His Skin, which takes subtle shots at right-wing Latin American politics.

Instead, Cochrane has tried to capture the spirit of Neruda's fierce struggle for individuality and freedom of expression.

Cochrane sees a parallel between Neruda's populist poetry and today's rock and roll ("Rock is rebel



IAN LINDSAY

RED RIDER'S Tom Cochrane: waterfront backdrop for a deep thinker

street art"), and he envisions himself as a rock poet rather than your stock cars-bars-boy-meets-girl songwriter.

This political stuff isn't anything new to Cochrane, who studied journalism at Toronto's Ryerson College before turning his pen to rock and roll. Writing about poets isn't new either — he wrote the band's first hit song, White Hot, about French symbolist poet-genius Arthur Rimbaud.

Musically, the tension created by Cochrane's lyrics is translated through an undercurrent of anxiety-laden bass, drums and keyboards — all sliced through by some razor-sharp, yet delicate guitar lines that are sometimes reminiscent of Pink Floyd.

Still, Cochrane says Neruda is simply a "humanist album."

Who says Canadian mainstream rock has to be apolitical?