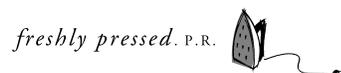


# BRUCE PENINSULA

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## PRESS KIT

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AUX TV / July 27, 2011

<http://www.aux.tv/2011/07/bruce-peninsula-announce-the-release-of-sophomore-album-open-flames-get-set-to-tour-the-east-coast/>

## Bruce Peninsula announce the release of sophomore album 'Open Flames,' get set to tour the East coast

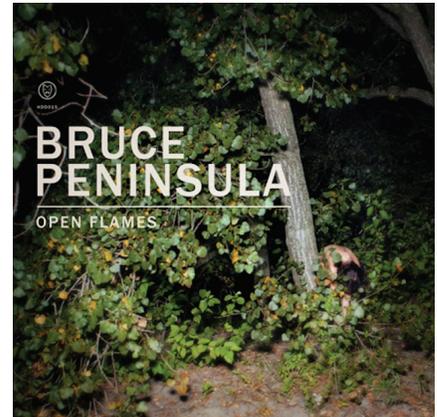
Nicole Villeneuve

After announcing the Bruce Trail Fire Sale music series earlier this year as a stopgap while vocalist Neil Haverty completed cancer treatment and recovery, Toronto's Bruce Peninsula have finally confirmed that their much-anticipated new album *Open Flames* will be released on October 4 via Hand Drawn Dracula.

With Haverty's cancer in remission (he was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia in December 2010), the band is also set to tour behind the new album and has announced a slew of dates for September (Ontario) and October (the Maritimes,

including a stop at the Halifax Pop Explosion).

Full Tour dates as well as a sneak peek at some goosebump-giving music from *Open Flames* can be found below.



EXCLAIM.CA / July 27, 2011

[http://exclaim.ca/News/bruce\\_peninsula\\_return\\_with\\_open\\_flames\\_book\\_canadian\\_tour](http://exclaim.ca/News/bruce_peninsula_return_with_open_flames_book_canadian_tour)

## Bruce Peninsula Return with 'Open Flames,' Book Canadian Tour

Alex Hudson

The last few months have been rough for Toronto roots rockers Bruce Peninsula. Shortly after finishing their sophomore LP in late 2010, their release plans ground to a halt after frontman Neil Haverty was admitted to hospital with leukemia. Luckily for all, Haverty battled hard against the illness, and the group are now getting ready to drop the new LP.

The record is called *Open Flames*, and it will be out on October 4 via Hand Drawn Dracula. The album promises to offer more of the same genre-bending alt-gospel that made 2009's debut *A Mountain Is a Mouth* such an instant favourite.

A press release says that the new disc contains "10 new, sprawling songs, drawn from the skin of a drum and sung from deep down in the gut." Listen to some clips of new music in the two brief teaser videos embedded at the bottom of this page.

To promote the release, Bruce Peninsula will be heading out on an extensive tour of Canada's eastern half. The jaunt will have them on the road for much of September and October, so check out the schedule below.

To read about Haverty's battle with cancer, check out Exclaim!'s previous interview with the singer. During his recovery, Bruce

Peninsula tided fans over with Bruce Trail Fire Sale, a series of free digital B-sides that the band released for free via their website.



## SNOB'S MUSIC / July 27, 2011

<http://www.snobsmusic.net/2011/07/bruce-peninsula-reveal-details-of-new.html>

# Bruce Peninsula reveal details of new album "Open Flames", tour dates

Nicole Villeneuve

Toronto indie rocks band with Gospel-leaning Bruce Peninsula have their sophomore full length album in the can. The record, Open Flames, has been set for an October 4th release on Hand Drawn Dracula.

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## LONDON FREE PRESS / July 27, 2011

<http://www.lfpress.com/entertainment/music/2011/07/27/18476321.html>

# Bruce beckons

James Reaney

Acclaimed Toronto "prog-gospel" band Bruce Peninsula is heading for downtown London this fall. The band announced Wednesday it is playing Oh! Fest 2011 on Sept. 17. The free fest is set for Sept. 16-18. More fest

details about venues and bands are expected soon. Bruce Peninsula releases its sophomore full-length album, Open Flames on the Toronto indie label Hand Drawn Dracula on Oct. 4.

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## INDIE MUSIC FILTER / August 2, 2011

<http://www.lfpress.com/entertainment/music/2011/07/27/18476321.html>

# Open Flames

James Reaney

Bruce Peninsula are set to return with their sophomore full-length album, Open Flames October 4th (via Hand Drawn Dracula). The multi-musician "alt-gospel" ensemble will give us "10 new, sprawling songs, drawn from the skin of a drum and sung from deep down in the gut".

Prepare to be teased.

The band spent a lot of last year hard at work writing new music, with a focus on writing quickly without second-guessing, while pushing musical boundaries beyond their signature, progressive-gospel sound. By the end of the year, the band had a slew of new material which they planned to release in the Spring of 2010. But, in December, the band were suddenly sideswiped when lead shouter

Neil Haverly was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia. Haverly got treatment and is officially in remission, ready to join the band again.

Great news for a great band. I'm really excited to hear this new record.



NOW MAGAZINE / August 12, 2011

<http://www.nowtoronto.com/daily/music/story.cfm?content=182211>

## Bruce Peninsula back to form

Richard Trapunski

It's been a slow return to active duty for Toronto's Bruce Peninsula since lead singer Neil Haverty was diagnosed with a rare (beatable) form of leukemia. Their Summerworks show was just their second back, but their live performance hasn't missed a step.

If Haverty was feeling any weakness or fatigue it wasn't obvious. His stage moves were as unhinged as ever and his gruff voice was still in tact. Then again, he had at least six other singers to bail him out, including Misha Bower, who seems to have shifted into a

co-leader role, handling a lot of the lead vocals and the bulk of the banter.

The nine-piece used the width of the floor stage to its advantage by setting up all in a row and though they spent much of the time singing and screaming together as a barn-burning irreligious gospel choir, they also accommodated quieter, more atmospheric instrumental and vocal passages (it helps that nearly every member of the band is an accomplished musician in his or her own right).



SOUND SALVATION ARMY / August 26, 2011

<http://www.soundsalvationarmy.com/at-the-latter-i-was-informal-at-the-former-i-wore-my-suit/>

## At the latter I was informal, at the former I wore my suit

The days of summer are waning (in theory; it's still really warm in Saskatchewan right now) but it's never too late for a terrific summer jam.

I've been playing Bruce Peninsula's "The Swimming Song" since it was put up for free download by the band four months ago via SoundCloud as part of the band's "Bruce Trail Fire Sale," an effort to hand out some rare performances/tracks/videos to fans in the run-up to the release of their new record *Open Flames* (out in October, keep your eyes peeled for a review on this site). This cover is among them, a song originally written and performed by Loudon Wainwright III on his *Amputated Moustache* album (a record whose genius title is only surpassed by the genius cover art).

As far as covers go this is, admittedly, less of a drastic re-imagining and more of a faithful, albeit slightly tweaked, performance. The pace is only marginally slower, allowing band leader and lead singer Neil Haverty more time to showcase the delightful vocal melody. Originally sung by Wainwright and his then-wife Kate Mcarrigle, there are more than

enough willing back-up and harmony vocalists in Bruce Peninsula's 10 to 13 person line-up. Loudon and Kate's double banjos are replicated here, augmented by some helpful acoustic guitar and a downright-ebullient bassline. The reduced tempo also allows the band to pick it up in the bridge, moving into double-time to increase the energy.

But you guys, why would they even need to? It's a song about swimming! And it's a brilliant one at that. Haverty takes Wainwright's descriptions of summers spent lounging, breaststroking, and frolicking in every kind of watering hole you've ever imagined and wraps his smokey tenor, hoarse from years of hollerin', around it. He holds the melody so tight it might as well be a length of rope tied to a tall tree branch that he's using to swing into a lake. "Last summer I went swimming/in a reservoir and a pool," he reminisces, "at the latter I was informal/at the former I wore my suit/I wore my swimming suit." It's wordplay of the highest order, a true storyteller's lyric that holds up 38 years later and also sounds just at home coming from Haverty as it did from Wainwright.

So yeah, it's just one song and it isn't an original and whatever and who cares, but it's a wonderful song any way you slice it and it's more than enough to get me excited for another amazing Bruce Peninsula album (especially considering Haverty's medical issues, which delayed the release). The hard part will be waiting until October. Perhaps I'll pass the time by whiling away the remains of summer at the pool.



## HAMILTON SPECTATOR / September 8, 2011

<http://www.thespec.com/whatson/music/article/590623--graham-rockingham-s-best-bets>

### Graham Rockingham's Best Bets

Richard Trapunski

"BRUCE PENINSULA is a mind-blowing blend of churchgoing gospel, delta-born blues, dancing gospel, delta-born blues, dancing West African guitar and prog-rock ambition. The 10-piece band, which features Hamilton's Neil Haverty on vocals and Steve McKay on drums, performs Saturday at Christ's Church Cathedral (252 James St N.)

as part of the third annual Supercrawl. They'll be debuting the new CD, *Open Flames*.

*Snowblink* opens at 4:45 p.m. Expect the BP chorus to make full use of the cathedral's acoustics."

[www.bruce-peninsula.com](http://www.bruce-peninsula.com)

LISTEN NOW: *In Your Light*

## TORO / September 22, 2011

<http://www.toromagazine.com/music/interviews/933b6077-bd32-e0e4-bd80-c7342a0fb731/Bruce-Peninsula-/index.html>

### Bruce Peninsula

Jesse Skinner

Frontman and founder Neil Haverty was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia; APL patients have a 95 per cent survival rate, but Haverty was still hospitalized for a month and underwent chemotherapy, delaying *Open Flames* and pushing his creative pursuits aside.

Now that he is in remission, Haverty and his bandmates have rediscovered their passion for the *Open Flames* material and kicked off their first tour in a long while. We spoke with the man behind Bruce Peninsula about the road to release and recovery.

How does it feel being back on the road?

Slow to start, but it's actually been perfect. We played some shows in the summer, will play eight in September and all through October. So we're revving up the engines slowly.

Will the material from *Open Flames* be making a long-awaited live debut?

We were playing two or three of the songs before I got sick. A lot of it is just coming out. We wrote and recorded really quickly between February and May (of 2010) but now we're trying to relearn it. It's kind of exciting. The songs are written and now we have to interpret them (for concerts.) They were studio creations in a lot of cases, so now I have to figure out, "OK, how do I play

guitar and sing this at the same time?" Takes practice.

In comparison to *A Mountain is a Mouth* (2009), which grew on me over time, *Open Flames* is very immediately accessible. Was this intentional?

That was a conscious decision. We had written *Mountain* over two years but this one is a glimpse of a short period of time. We were working very fast and the songs matched that. There wasn't a lot of (arguing.) And where *Mountain* had a lot of transitions in

the music, we wanted *Open Flames* to be very tidy and streamlined.

The instant power of the record is just as effective as the more patient pace of *Mountain*, but for a different reason.

I'm glad to hear that. Lyrically this record is denser so I was worried I was asking too much, like there were too many ideas. But the music having clearer A and B points makes the lyricism okay. The melodies and rhythms have a forward momentum; the record pushes itself along.



Has Bruce Peninsula become more democratic? You've reduced your role as lead vocalist a bit for Open Flames.

That's in service of the songs. I've written what the girls are singing but there was never any thought about me needing to be at the front. We just made 10 songs we wanted to sound good. "Warden" was a song Matt (Cully), Misha (Bower) and I had worked out a three-part harmony for, and performed it that way a couple times. But we thought it didn't sound right. Matt and I gave our parts to Ivy (Mairi) and Tamara (Lindeman) and it all really blended together. So I think musically Open Flames is more democratic in terms of what will suit the music best.

We're lucky to have so many singers. Mountain was about us singing together all the time, that was the statement then. We wanted to be more selective this time. A lot of (the singing) is just me and Misha because we spend the most time on the band but we were conscious about letting other people lead. Logistically having 10 people in a band can get kind of crazy but the reasoning is to have all these beautiful voices that we get to use. Not to take the people out of that because they're all amazing.

The music of Bruce Peninsula is sometimes classified as folk-rock but that's not really accurate. There's a cacophony and intensity to it and with that I wonder how the songs sound stripped down, in their original forms.

It sounds weird stripped down or played just by me. There aren't many Bruce Peninsula songs I can play solo. When I'm writing I anticipate what the other musicians will do, especially rhythmically. Rhythm is inferred while writing. We did a show the other night without drums and we did a section of "Open Flame" that (on record) has a 5/4 drumbeat over a 4/4 part; all of a sudden the song had a different feel and it didn't work, honestly. Picking everything apart doesn't work.

The songs by design invite the audience to sing along. Have you had the experience of pitting your choir of trained vocalists against a roomful of off-key fans?

It would be cocky to anticipate that. There are people who know the words and that's a great feeling. But honestly I'm surprised there isn't more of it. Every time we play "Satisfied" I think "This is a no-brainer! Everyone should be singing at the top of their lungs!" Being inviting was the whole basis for the band. We were comfortable singing in a big group.

What did you think of the way A Mountain is a Mouth was received?

It was amazing for us. It turned out to be a lot more attention than we expected. But after about a year there was a drop-off, people really stopped paying attention. That was okay though because we could take seven months off and not worry about keeping the iron hot.

I don't think that's so unusual. In my case I listened to the record a lot and put it aside when I felt I was starting to get sick of it. I just kept the band in the back of my mind and awaited more material.

I'm like that as a listener also. You can definitely run a record into the ground. It was just a bit strange, like "Where did everybody go?" Bruce Peninsula is always in the forefront of our minds.

You have an advantage in that you don't sound like any other band. You don't have to worry about being part of any wave that will eventually roll by.

That's a great argument for doing something unique. For all the time you spend writing and recording ... what if you spent two years working on a record and in that period your kind of music has its moment, then falls off? Chasing after a "sound," you see that all the

time. A dance-punk band arriving a little too late. You have to be in your own environment.

I'd like to ask about your recent health scare. Although I'm sure you're weary of going on about it ...

I knew as it was happening that I'd have to talk about it. I'd never shut off about it. It's important and people are affected by cancer everyday so I'm ready and willing.

What role has music, your own or by others, played in your recovery?

That's still an ongoing question mark for me. My relationship to music has changed though I'm still figuring out how. When we finished Open Flames we were talking about touring for years, being a fully legitimate band. But when I was in the hospital initially music didn't matter at all. I was obsessed with music and working constantly on it for 10 years and that thing I had alienated friends and family for ... it was like "Who cares?" I found it very liberating to not give a shit about music for that period of time. People have asked me if I wanted to immediately write a hit or make my Dilla record on a laptop in a hospital bed. But it was the furthest thing from my mind.

I'm so lucky the record was done and I had a reason to get back together (with the band.) We rented a cottage on the Bruce Trail, and when we did it was just fun, all of us as friends cooking together and goofing off. Music is fun and when you play it with your friends it doesn't have to have pressure all the time. Now that we're playing shows ... first show I didn't know how I felt about it, second show I was like "Yeah, okay..." third show I was like "Oh yeah, this is a lot of fun." I'd like to update you at the end of our tour because I'm sure I'll be back to full-fledged musical obsession.

NXEW – September 21, 2011  
<http://nxew.ca/?p=6199>

## Album Review: Bruce Peninsula's Open Flames is beautifully controlled chaos

Brenda Lee

About ten seconds into *Open Flames*, you'll note that this won't be a politely quiet album. Toronto's Bruce Peninsula have made a name for themselves by being larger than life, both in their live shows as well as their membership. With a formidable choir that has called Taylor Kirk (Timber Timbre), Katie Stelmanis (Austra) and Casey Mecija (Ohbijou) members, Bruce Peninsula is a difficult group to contain and classify. And with *Open Flames*, the group stomps, claps and hollers with a controlled strength, like waves crashing against a cliff, or a hoard of buffalo, recalling animalistic force and wild beauty. It's one thing to comment on a singular singer-songwriter's control and creativity, and a whole other ball game to witness the unique vision that's united this diverse, oft-morphing collective to stunning effect.

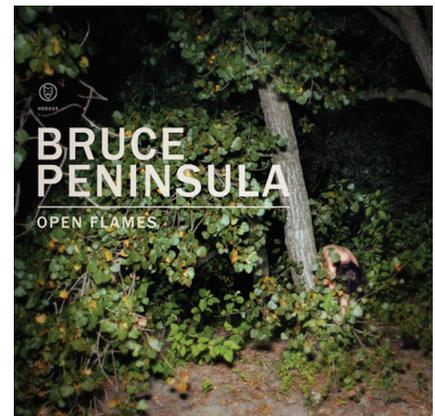
*Open Flames* is anthemic despite itself. Harking to the technicality of prog rock and improv jazz, many of the tracks in the ten-track album are based upon uncommon

time signatures. Despite the inability to bob your head casually, the punctuated, thundering drum beats jolt listeners from casual inattention and demands your full attention. Opening track "As Long As I Live" combines these percussive elements with gospel-y backing vocals and the sandpaper growl of lead singer Neil Haverty. Instrumentally, the band dabbles in motivational stompers like "In Your Light," transition from mournful to raucous in "Say Yeah" and sonically march off to war on "Cliffs & Coves."

Equally commanding as the driving percussion are the diverse voices. Haverty's grainy growl is complemented beautifully by Misha Bower's soulful, almost R&B-like vocals, which in turn are supplemented by the immaculate Bruce Peninsula choir (which contains members of The Weather Station, Snowblink and more). The expansive, echo-y chorus is best demonstrated in "Or So I Dreamed" and the tail end of album closer "Chupacabra." In title track "Open Flame,"

two female vocals twist together and apart sinuously before Haverty's, a definite vocal highlight in an album chockfull of them.

We here at North by East West want you to get your hands on this excellent album. Enter our Bruce Peninsula *Open Flames* ultimate package contest!



NXEW / September 21, 2011  
<http://nxew.ca/?p=6195>

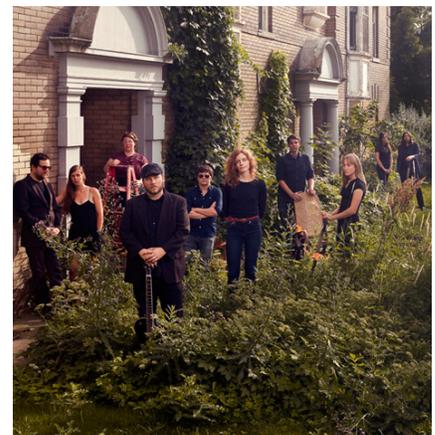
## Contest: Bruce Peninsula - Open Flames ultimate package

Brenda Lee

The ever-expansive Bruce Peninsula, in both members and sound, will release their sophomore album *Open Flames* on October 4, 2011 via Hand Drawn Dracula. Alumni and current members of the critically acclaimed band include Taylor Kirk of Timber Timbre, Katie Stelmanis of Austra, Tamara Lindeman of The Weather Station. Read our glowing review of *Open Flames* here.

In celebration of the release of this excellent album, we here at North by East West want to give you the ultimate *Open Flames* package! Courtesy of Bruce Peninsula and Freshly Pressed PR, the contest winner will receive a copy of the album in the format of

your choice (CD/vinyl), a band T-shirt, and to top it all off, guest list spots for you and a guest to one of their upcoming shows (see dates below). Just comment below with your name and email address to enter the contest, and tweet "I've entered to win the @bruce\_peninsula *Open Flames* contest on @NxEW! <http://nxew.ca/?p=6195>" to double your chances. Winner will be notified via email October 3.



## QB4IM / September 21, 2011

[http://www.quickbeforeitmelts.com/2011/09/lighting-fires/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+quickbeforeitmelts%2FyluG+%28Quick+Before+it+Melts%29](http://www.quickbeforeitmelts.com/2011/09/lighting-fires/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+quickbeforeitmelts%2FyluG+%28Quick+Before+it+Melts%29)

## Lighting fires

With just a day shy of two weeks to go until the October 4 release of their sophomore disc, *Open Flames*, Toronto's prog-gospel collective Bruce Peninsula are making like Humpty Dumpty and getting ready for a great fall. They'll be gigging non-stop from now to November, with a stop tomorrow night in Kingston, Ontario to play St. James Church, before heading down to my neck of the woods for a show at St. Catharines' Mansion House on September 29. Dates for the next two months are as follows (\* indicates Snowblink will be opening, ^ has The Weather Station as opener, and # means it will be a BP revue show, with members playing solo and swapping songs):

October 01 – Peterborough, ON – The Attic\*

October 04 – Toronto, ON – Soundscapes In-store#

October 05 – Montreal, PQ – Casa Del Popolo^

October 06 – Montreal, PQ – Phonopolis In-store#

October 07 – St. John, NB – Pepper's Pub

October 08 – Sackville, NS – George's^

October 09 – Halifax, NS – Khyber#

October 12 – Cornerbrook, NL – Backlot^

October 14 – St. John's, NL – The Ship

October 15 – St. John's, NL – The Ship

October 16 – Port Rexton, NL – Two Whales Cafe#

October 19 – Sydney, NS – St. Patrick's (on Esplanade)^

October 20 – Riverport, NS – Confidence Lodge^

October 21 – Fredericton, NB – Capital Bar

October 22 – Halifax, NS – Halifax Pop

October 23 – Charlottetown, PEI – Baba's^

October 24 – Moncton, NB – Plan B

October 25 – Fredericton, NB – Charlotte St. Arts Centre

October 26 – Sherbrooke, QC – La Petite Boite Noir^

October 27 – Toronto, ON – Lee's Palace

November 17 – Ottawa, ON – Raw Sugar#

November 24 – Hamilton, ON – Casbah

Lead single "In Your Light" is now available to stream and download as you see fit, further fanning the flames of anticipation for *Open Flames*, which is being released by the cooler-than-cool Toronto label Hand Drawn Dracula on October 4.



## EXCLAIM / September 27, 2011

[http://exclaim.ca/Reviews/PopAndRock/bruce\\_peninsula-open\\_flames](http://exclaim.ca/Reviews/PopAndRock/bruce_peninsula-open_flames)

## Bruce Peninsula Open Flames

Ian Gormely

There's no mistaking Toronto, ON's Bruce Peninsula when you hear them – the group's indie rock meets gospel choir sound is one of the few musical amalgams to not attract a slew of imitators. Therefore, it's not surprising that the band stuck with the sound that brought them to prominence in the first place. Opener "As Long as I Live," with its pounding drums, is a clear highlight and the refrain from the choir on "You Can't Hide What You Are" provides a visceral, haunting counterpoint to Neil Haverty's raspy verses. The rest of the record lacks the first track's sheer forcefulness, but the group have honed their songwriting while keeping the choir,

which included members of Snowblink and the Weather Station, and the pounding drums centre stage. On the album's best songs, like the Misha Bower-led "Warden," they help create a thrilling musical catharsis. *Open Flames* was finished before Haverty was diagnosed with leukaemia this past winter, but it's hard not to read into the themes of redemption and morality that have always been at the heart of Bruce Peninsula's music. Still travelling a singular path, *Open Flames* plays to the band's many strengths without a bum note in between.

Do the themes of redemption come from

your old folk and blues influences?

Vocalist/guitarist Matt Cully: Absolutely. I think when it comes down to writing lyrics, it's a very difficult prospect, for us. It's nerve-wracking, not only because you're not expressing necessarily a personal point of view – in some cases, I'm writing for Neil – you're trying to get a Birdseye view of the story. It's always been interesting, to me, to talk about philosophical points of view or things aside from "I love you," "I want to sleep with you" or "I hate you."

Vocalist/guitarist Neil Haverty: I think we were drawn to that music because of those

themes that everyone can buy into. It's not that we started writing about that because that music did, it's that that music spoke to us, because we were obviously thinking about those things.

Do you individually bring songs to the band?  
Haverty: Matt and I have lived together for five years. One of us would be working in the basement and the other would be listening through the floor. We've always got a leader on the song. That seems to be the way it works for us. Then slowly it unravels - you're imagining the choir, you're imagining what the drums are going to do.

After a long delay, your second record is finally coming out.

Haverty: Yeah. When you hold the real thing in your hand it's a lot different. We've had the master for a long time and that was exciting in itself, but holding the records themselves is a whole different experience. We picked up people on the way to a show the other night and every time someone got into the car we were chucking them a CD and everyone was smiles.

Some of the songs from the record were in *Small Town Murder Songs*. How did that come about?

Haverty: [Writer/director Ed Gass-Donnelly] asked us to do music for his film, sort of vaguely, so Matt came up with "As Long as I Live," which is the theme song sort of for *Small Town Murder Songs*. The idea was to write a few things for him, but I think we were in the middle of making this record. We ended up sending him every single recording we had and he systematically replaced songs that were already in the movie from other bands with songs from *A Mountain is a Mouth*. It worked out for us; we didn't have to do much extra work and we got a song out of it for the new record. But it sort of became an hour-and-a-half music video for us.

Was "As Long as I Live" written with the film in mind?

Cully: Yeah; we sat down specifically to write it for that film. We had seen a cut of it that ended up being completely different, in the end, but, thematically, the film deals with the redemption of the main character with a shady past who has to come to grips with what he's done to become a better man. And that sort of applies in a weird way to a lot of the themes we deal with on the first record and to this record too.

Haverty: The lyrics were definitely written with his voice in mind. That song was using him as a conduit.

Was "As Long as I Live" the first song written for the record?



Cully: No, there were two songs that we wrote, "Chupacabras" and "Moon at Your Back," which isn't on the record, and it took us a while to write those songs. It was right after getting back into writing after *A Mountain is a Mouth* and we got kind of bogged down with those two songs; it ended up being very helpful in writing the rest of them. We decided we wanted to do everything really fast and let it come through us fluidly and not second-guess ideas. "As Long as I Live" was one of the ones that came pretty quickly. From the time it was demoed to Mish [Bower, vocalist] coming over, putting some vocals on it to us being in the studio recording it, that's only a few weeks time and that's very fast for us.

Do the songs start out on guitars?

Haverty: I think more often than not we're not playing the guitar. It's more of a demo process where we're making weird sampled drumbeats. Or in Mish's case, she writes free-flowing lyrics.

Cully: Mish wrote four songs a cappella.

Do you listen to a lot of gospel or choir music, Misha?

Misha: My music listening is pretty influenced by a scattering of things, based on what the person I'm with is listening to. I definitely gravitate to a bluesier style at the outset, but I don't know where it comes from.

Haverty: I think early on it was clear that it wasn't about what we were listening to. Especially because we've been working in this language of Bruce Peninsula for four or five years, it's never been about hearing something and turning it into something that works for Bruce Peninsula. We all sort of aspire to be individual in our music making.

Cully: One of Mish's strengths is that she

doesn't over think things and she doesn't have an ego about it; it's not about refining the blues chops.

Not smoking to get a raspy voice?

Haverty: Ah, guilty as charged.

Cully: What you end up with is intuitive and very honest on whatever she feels, and usually that offers a really awesome jumping off point.

Did working quicker change the sound of the songs?

Haverty: That's hard to say.

Bower: Yeah. I think that any member of the band with the previous album had a hard time throwing a description out there. I would have been in the category of here's a hyphenated [description]. This time, I'd say we're a rock band with a choir. I like the straight-aheadness of its feel.

The record was finished last fall, but then Neil was diagnosed with leukaemia. Was anything changed in the process?

Haverty: No. We got the master the day before I went to the hospital. The master means locked and done, and I think we were adamant at that point that it stay that way. I think if we'd left it open-ended at that point, I don't think it would ever have been finished; it was good timing that it was finished the day before. If it was a half-finished record, I don't know if we'd be sitting here talking about it. When I got sick, we just had a talk about it. At first you don't talk about it at all; it's just like friends being, like, "Shit, this is terrible." But then a week later, Matt came to the hospital and we said, "well what are we going to do?"

You organized the Bruce Peninsula Fire Sale in the interim, which as well as offering up a lot of unreleased material from the band, saw

a lot of the individual members contributing material.

Haverty: It was a good place to put my wandering mind. There were a couple steroid-fuelled nights where I had Word documents about how we could structure the Fire Sale.

Bower: It's one of the most productive convalescences.

Haverty: It also allowed me to streamline video making before I got back into playing music again. My energy levels were really low, so sitting at the computer and rendering video is fine. I'm really happy it happened that way.

At the time, I wasn't sure about putting out all that stuff first, but it's fine. It's a very long lead up to this record.

Cully: It's interesting because it's not necessarily representative of what the record sounds like, but that's not a negative. We've always been a band that are multifaceted, but I think it took me a few years to understand how we can exploit the individual strengths. Each person has their own individual project, but is also a contributor. So, how do we be different kinds of bands instead of this one monolithic one with a certain sound?

Haverty: All that Fire Sale stuff was supposed

to show a different side of us.

One of the covers was a Jon-Rae Fletcher song. Was his work with the River in any way an inspiration for Bruce Peninsula?

Cully: We're all very influenced by Jon-Rae.

Haverty: That period in Toronto too. The Constantines were playing Hidden Cameras and Jon-Rae showed that a bunch of friends can get together and make this emphatic music. It was these little travelling posses. I think Jon-Rae should get credit for that.

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## EXCLAIM / September 27, 2011

[http://exclaim.ca/MusicVideo/ClickHear/bruce\\_peninsula-open\\_flames\\_album\\_stream](http://exclaim.ca/MusicVideo/ClickHear/bruce_peninsula-open_flames_album_stream)

## Bruce Peninsula 'Open Flames' (album stream)

Sarah Murphy

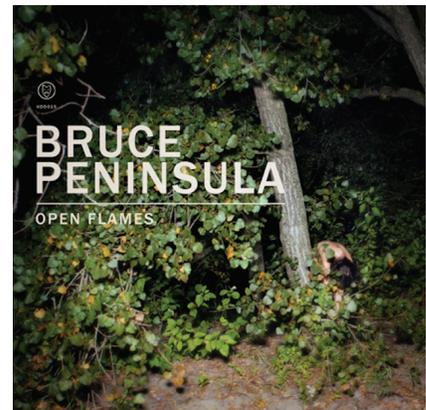
The long-anticipated second album from genre-bending Toronto collective Bruce Peninsula, *Open Flames*, is finally set to be released on October 4 via Hand Drawn Dracula. You can stream the album in advance, though, right now at Exclaim.ca.

The record has been completed since late 2010, but frontman Neil Haverty's battle with leukemia put things with the band on hold for a while. Now, having triumphantly recovered from cancer, Haverty and the rest of Bruce Peninsula are set to get back in the swing of things. With *Open Flames* about to hit shelves and a fall tour in the works, the

band are clearly back in the game.

*Open Flames* isn't the kind of record that easily fits in to any specific genre. The alt-gospel group showcases a number of influences and stylings. From low-key, melodic tunes like "Open Flame," to toe-tappers like "Pull Me Under," Bruce Peninsula refuse to be pigeonholed.

Down below, you'll find Bruce Peninsula's upcoming Canadian tour dates, as well as *Open Flames* streaming in its entirety.



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## NOW MAGAZINE / September 29, 2011

<http://www.nowtoronto.com/music/discs.cfm?content=182919>

## Disc Review Bruce Peninsula - Open Flames

Richard Trapunski

*Open Flames* has been a long time coming for Bruce Peninsula. Originally primed for release almost a year ago, it was shelved indefinitely when lead singer/founding member Neil Haverty was diagnosed with leukemia. Now that he's officially in remission, the band is finally unveiling the long-awaited second album.

The hype around *Open Flames* is understandably amped up, and the album doesn't disappoint. While their debut often leaned too heavily on hooting and hollering, here they reel in their trademark gospelish choir and use it as one colour in a rich prog-folk palette.

You wouldn't expect subtlety from a

10-person band, but the dense arrangements are as distinctive for their sophisticated time signatures (held together by seriously excellent drumming) as for their multi-part harmonies. Misha Bower's soulful voice often shares top billing with Haverty's gruff croon this time around. Bruce Peninsula's glut of talented singers manage to share the wealth.

## SOUND SALVATION ARMY / October 3, 2011

<http://www.soundsalvationarmy.com/as-long-as-i-live/>

### As long as I live

Bruce Peninsula's new record represents a new lease on life, literally, even if it wasn't entirely intentional.

The "alt-choral" group has returned with its second full-length album, but it wasn't easy to come by. The group, helmed by lead singer Neil Haverty, made a concerted effort in mid-2010 to work up a group of songs that added more detailed musical elements to their unmistakable sound. According to press materials and interviews, the group wrote quickly, embracing its instincts and not over-working the songs. *Open Flames*, the result of those sessions, was originally ready to go for spring of this year. But Haverty was diagnosed with a form of leukemia in December and the record was put on hold while he received treatment. When the leukemia went into remission Haverty emerged from potential tragedy armed with a newly-assembled group of singers and released the album.

While there's nothing in the press materials that indicates Haverty was aware of or anticipating any kind of medical distress the lyrics of *Open Flames* certainly reflect the undeniable fragility of life. The group's first record was sprinkled with apocalyptic lyrical tableaux, Haverty's words portraying mountains as mouths eating the sky and bodies of water actively working to overwhelm the land. The implication of inevitable decay is here in spades once again, but turned inward. "As Long As I Live" starts the album as a bold statement; the thunderingly percussive track is as mighty a musical arrangement as Haverty has produced. His gruff singing tells the story of an overgrown, crumbling earth calling his name. He admits that, "my hand was a hammer and my heart was a stone...my heavy heart now a phantom limb for as long as I live." A primarily-female choral vocal persists throughout the song's remainder, insisting, "You can't hide what you are."

The troubled sentiment persists, through the next song and beyond. "What am I if not just dust?" he wonders during "In Your Light," a song whose bright, polyrhythmic guitar figures and convoluted bass line betray the underlying worry of that question. "Pull Me Under" is an obvious one, as Haverty laments, "I can't keep my head above the water." "Say Yeah" sees Haverty's voice return

after several numbers carried by female singers. He sounds wearier and more drawn than before as he sings, "What has come to collect you soon will come to protect you." He sounds more than ever like he needs that protection. "Open Flame" is a cry for purification, a plea for something to burn away the darkness, "if only your body can stand for you." "Cliffs and Coves" reflects the earthly imagery of the first album, imploring "Oh mountain, resist," even as the waves of a great body of water unyieldingly slam against its base, slowly eroding that which makes it whole (a more apt cancer metaphor I have yet to find). The album ends with "Chupacabra," in which Haverty concedes, "I don't know where my body goes."

It's an overarching tenor that would seem prescient if the music hadn't come before the illness. The idea of a heart as a phantom limb (a syndrome where someone who has lost an arm or leg feels in their mind that the limb is still there) is, in particular, an incredible metaphor, suggesting a kind of impossible loneliness or isolation. Still, Haverty and The Bruce Peninsula aren't overcome by the dour nature of some of their words. The defining elements of their music ensure that simply cannot happen.

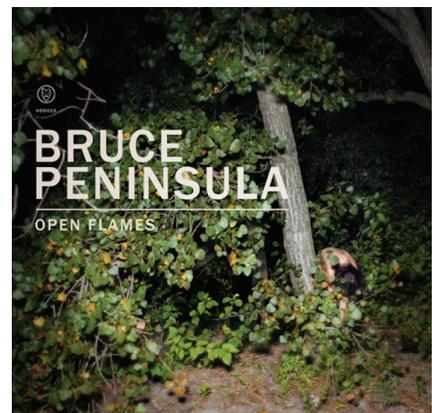
For the uninitiated, their music is generally constructed around a varying degree of minimalist folk and/or rock instrumentation, but impeccably-layered vocal arrangements and a big-tent, choral atmosphere give them a unique kind of immensity that pushes each song into its own brand of maximalism. Think of the arrangements of a band like Explosions In The Sky but instead of the consistent, building intensity being generated by the instruments an ever-swelling tsunami of human voices layered and piled on top of one another is responsible for creating the dramatic peaks and valleys. To a person, every voice you'll hear on this record is imbued with a remarkable kind of passion, their tenor and tone conveying the emotional edge of the song one syllable at a time. Haverty's sandpapery lead vocals serve as counterpoint to the inevitable tenor of polish a choral arrangement demands, lending an incredible character to each number.

Haverty also knows when to give up the reins. His new choir, which has been in the past as high as ten people during live

performances (one imagines there's no cap on that number when they're working in the studio), is anchored by strong female vocalists like Daniela Gesundheit (better known as Snowblink) and Tamara Lindeman, whose own "band" The Weather Station is gaining a lot of steam right now. Haverty surrenders or shares the lead with these powerful, expressive singers on most of the record's middle half; the fantastically-constructed "Say Yeah" sees them harmonizing throughout. The song's dynamic melodicism benefits not only from their performances but also a series of rhythmic shifts that run counter to the preciousness of the verses. It's something altogether new for Bruce Peninsula, the vulnerability of those verses betraying the electric guitar and pounding drums that finish out the song in a punishing fashion.

It's those signs of growth that help *Open Flames* succeed. It's the inherent power of Haverty's lyricism, the unequivocal feeling and passion in the singing that is the defining characteristic of the band, and the unique approach to rock music that continues to allow it to stand alone in its own corner of the music world. It's an undeniably powerful record that never seems repetitive, routine, or rehashed.

But *Open Flames* is not an album about death; that would be too simple. It's an album about life, about honesty, about embracing that which makes us human. Even with a dark cloud hanging overhead it's about as joyous a cautionary tale as you'll ever hear and it's a stand-out record in a year that threatens to overflow with them.



DAILY MOTION (AS LONG AS I LIVE PREMIERE) / October 3, 2011

<http://dai.ly/pnaLdx>

## Bruce Peninsula - As Long As I Live

HandDrawnDracula

From: Open Flames (2011) | Director: Lara Mrkoci and Neil Haverly | Label: Hand Drawn Dracula - <http://handdrawndracula.com> | Theme song for feature film "Small Town Murder Songs"



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EXCLAIM "Click Hear" / October 4, 2011

[http://exclaim.ca/MusicVideo/ClickHear/bruce\\_peninsula-as\\_long\\_as\\_i\\_live\\_video](http://exclaim.ca/MusicVideo/ClickHear/bruce_peninsula-as_long_as_i_live_video)

## Bruce Peninsula "As Long As I Live" (video)

Sarah Murphy

Toronto alt-gospel collective Bruce Peninsula finally release their sophomore album *Open Flames* today (October 4) via Hand Drawn Dracula. Marking the occasion, the band have added to the goodness with the brand new video for "As Long As I Live."

The "As Long As I Live" video is a gorgeous nature-filled, split-screen clip. Along with

being included on *Open Flames*, the track is featured as the main theme for the film *Small Town Murder Songs*.

Stream the new album and check out the band's upcoming tour dates here. Watch the video for "As Long As I Live" below.

CONCORDIA (THE LINK) / October 3, 2011

<http://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/1886>

## Out of the Woods - Bruce Peninsula Return Tighter Than Ever

Colin Harris

Bruce Peninsula were riding high on the success of their Polaris-nominated debut LP, but the Toronto-based band's recording of their sophomore record ended on a darker note.

Their gospel-infused indie sound was something fresh, and the country was taking notice. And as winter was settling onto their hometown, Open Flames was ready for pressing. But everything came to a halt the morning after celebrating its completion when lead singer and guitarist Neil Haverty was diagnosed with leukemia.

After chemotherapy and the support of friends, family and fans, Haverty has made a full recovery. The record will finally be shared, over a year after being finished, now that the band can once again focus on the music.

"It's a relief and a little surreal, insofar as it's been done for a really long time," said guitarist Matt Cully. "As a listener of the album, we almost get that itch to start writing and to start discovering a whole new set of songs. It's strange because the public hasn't even heard this one."

With Haverty back, the band is hard at work, already pulling together ideas for the next record. Each release sees a tightening of their hybrid sound, combining an orthodox indie lineup with an all-female choir.

"I think that there's always opposing forces at work in the kind of music we write," said Cully. "On the one hand, we're dealing with a more traditional style of songwriting, a people's music that focuses on stories and melody. In terms of the arrangements, we try to challenge ourselves to tell a story musically as well."

Since their first recording in 2008, the band

has been experimenting with these two elements, and with each effort they intertwine all the more tightly, forming a huge, entrancing sound.

"I definitely think we tightened up the loose ends a little bit, and put them into a four-minute little package, instead of having passages that dwell in one [sound] or the other," he said.

For their fall tour supporting Open Flames (which happens to begin in Montreal), the band is trying out more than new material. They'll be playing a different kind of unplugged show in some of the cities they visit, as they will on Thursday at Phonopolis.

"The Phonopolis show is an example of something we're trying to do more of, which is sort of a review style show, where we have each member lead a song, and is collaborating or being backed up by other members," said Cully.

Such versatility attests to the talent in this group, something evident in the band's whole approach to their multi-faceted sound. They don't genre-hop, instead creating their own place musically. It's folk, but it's heavy.

Haverty's voice leads the choir through their complex arrangements in perfect harmony, an element that will be all the more in the spotlight at their acoustic show. It's another way the band is forging a connection with the audience deeper than the average song.

"Getting past the wall of the cynical listener, the one who's 'heard it all before,' which is kind of commonplace, trying to break that down, to give them something authentic is probably our main goal, and something we try to do with each show."

Bruce Peninsula / Oct. 5 / Casa Del Popolo (4873 St. Laurent Blvd.) / Oct. 6 / Phonopolis (207 Bernard St. W.)



## THE GRID / October 4, 2011

<http://www.thegridto.com/culture/music/the-gospel-according-to-bruce/>

### The gospel according to Bruce

Dave Bookman

Bruce Peninsula are surely one of the most unique and interesting bands in the city, with their mix of progressive musical ideas and heartfelt gospel-choir vocals. This week, the band follow-up their acclaimed 2009 debut, *A Mountain Is a Mouth*, with the release of *Open Flames*, a record that was initially put on hold in late 2010 when vocalist Nell Haverty was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia. With Haverty now in remission, the band is ready to take its 10-member-strong crew on the road. They'll kick things off with The BP Revue Show, a special in-store performance tonight (Oct. 4, 7 p.m.) at Soundscapes (572 College) that will see members of the band playing solo and swapping songs from the album.

#### NU MUSIC NITE TURNS 18!

Circle Tuesday Nov. 8 on your calendar and grab your party pants: Nu Music Nite at The Horseshoe will celebrate its 18th birthday with a line-up packed full of presents for music fans. Appearing will be Winnipeg's *Imaginary Cities*, fresh off more touring with the Pixies and the Australian release of their debut LP, *Temporary Resident*. Joining them will be Vancouver's garage soulsters *Chains of Love*, who had the town abuzz during NXNE and trusted troubadour Rob Moir and The Great Lates. It will be a homecoming show

for Moir, who returns from a solo "couch surfing" tour run across the UK and Europe in October. As always admission is free when accompanied by a positive vibe.

#### A THANKS-GIGGING THOUGHT

At this time of year, I like to send a note of thanks to the rich harvest of passionate folks

who make our music community so plentiful. From those behind the music, behind the scenes and behind the bar, to those who wear their hearts on their sleeve with unrelenting support of the artists and the community, we all have much to be appreciative and be grateful for. So, thanks!



## THE NEWFOUNDLAND TELEGRAM / October 7, 2011

<http://www.thetelegram.com/Arts---Life/Entertainment/2011-10-07/article-2769510/Bruce--Peninsula-brings-talents-to-the-Avalon/1>

### Bruce Peninsula brings talents to the Avalon

Michael Gregory

It's all beaming smiles and laughter for members of the eclectic-gospel band Bruce Peninsula. The 10-member group is touring its new highly anticipated album "Open Flames," and celebrating the return of frontman Neil Haverty, who's in remission from a recent bout with leukemia.

"I'm more or less back to normal. Occasionally I've had aches, but so far it hasn't gotten in the way at all and it's been fun to start

playing again," Haverty said.

Ontario's Bruce Peninsula is made up of a five-person band and an accompanying choir.

The band first learned about Haverty's turn of fate last year, the morning after a party for the then newly finished "Open Flames." The band decided to hold the album's release date, and once they knew his condition was improving, decided to focus energy on a new

project labelled "Bruce Trail Fire Sale" - a collection of songs that were in various stages of completion, but hadn't been part of the record.

"Neil made the videos for them online, that was all part of while he was getting better," Matt Cully said about the material, available through the band's website.

Bruce Peninsula also collaborated with the

online music site Southern Souls to produce several videos of band members performing solo cover songs.

"In our mind that made it something very special, and purely and directly for the fans," Cully said.

The Southern Souls project brought to the surface creative possibilities for how the large group could perform and continue to explore their musical talents.

They're now "doing some shows where we swap songs and we play on each others songs - we're just opening up the idea of Bruce Peninsula a little bit more," Haverly said.

Complete with a new choir, "Open Flames" is a booming 10-track follow-up to group's "A Mountain is a Mouth" album that received international praise. Bruce Peninsula's weaving of influences creates music outside the scope of any label or genre.

"We don't want it to be reduced to any particular sound," said Cully. "Making modern music, you have the ability with the Internet and (other) resources to take from all kinds of sonic palettes and formats and put it into one song."

Haverly said he was pleased with the pace in which "Open Flames" came together last year.

"We were musically communicating very fluidly," he said.

Bruce Peninsula also placed more emphasis on planning and pre-production to improve on small details that stuck out in the 2009 album.

"There was a lot of cymbal wash on 'A Mountain is a Mouth' and so Steve miraculously learned to play all the drum parts without the cymbals," Haverly said. "We found by having the cymbal wash we couldn't get a booming snare drum and tom and this time it's separated."

Bruce Peninsula recorded separate takes to showcase the choir section, whereas with the last album it had all be done over two days in

a church. The change has created more depth to each song, making it all that much more impressive to listeners.

The debut single off the "Open Flames" album is the second track "Into Your Light." The song features a steady rock style beat, mixed with the choir's smooth vocals and Haverly's signature raspy voice.

Bruce Peninsula has four stops across Newfoundland this month, starting in Corner Brook next Wednesday and including a double-bill at The Ship in St. John's Oct. 14-15.



## GLOBE AND MAIL / October 8, 2011

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/music/disc-of-the-week-bjork-bursts-the-convention-of-an-album/article2194401/singlepage/#articlecontent>

## FOLK-ROCK - Open Flames

Bruce Peninsula / Hand Drawn Dracula

"\*\*\*You don't just listen to a Bruce Peninsula album, you experience it – as if a 10-person musical mob were to lift you onto their collective shoulders, rumble through a mountain forest and throw you from a cliff, into a pool of water below. On its rousing second album, Ontario's mother-earth-choir veers to a folkier and more focused sound than the wilder "prog-gospel" of its debut.

We hear a little less of Neil Haverly's husky throat; a little more of Misha Bower's stoic croon. The energy is often ecstatic, thanks to the Huns-at-the-door drumming. This is roof-top shouting at its life-affirming finest."

–Brad Wheeler

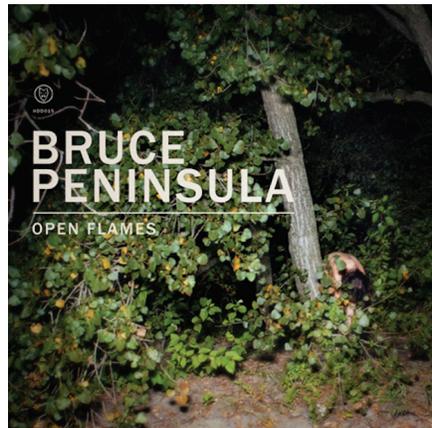
Bruce Peninsula, currently touring Eastern Canada, plays Toronto's Lee's Palace on Oct. 27.

## SPILL MAGAZINE (review) / October 2011, 2011

[http://www.spillmagazine.com/html/album\\_reviews.HTM#BrucePeninsula-OpenFlames](http://www.spillmagazine.com/html/album_reviews.HTM#BrucePeninsula-OpenFlames)

### FOLK-ROCK - Open Flames

Their new album, *Open Flames*, which comes out October 4th, continues their musical journey right where they left off. But upon completing the album in late 2010, the band's journey derailed when Haverty discovered he had Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia. The band decided to take a hiatus while Haverty dealt with his medical issues. Thankfully, in late spring of this year, Neil learned that he was in remission and soon reconvened with his band. "After the hiatus, we actually went to Bruce Peninsula and rented a cottage in the woods to re-familiarize ourselves with the songs on *Open Flames* before releasing the album and going on tour." It seemed very fitting for the band to return to the roots of their collective history to reacquire themselves with their music before they once again started their musical adventure.



## THE BROKEN SPEAKER / October 11, 2011

<http://thebrokenspeaker.com/2011/10/11/concert-review-bruce-peninsula/>

### Concert Review: Bruce Peninsula

Bruce Peninsula are a cornucopia of talent. The band had eight members in tow for the show in the upper room of the Khyber. With all the solo projects of the Bruce Peninsula members, it was like having an intertwined show of 9 bands.

They started off their show with Misha Bower reading a short story titled "Naked Women on the Beach". She read it with feeling, painting vivid images as each word was spilled with meaning. The story showed the connection between speaking and music, two different vessels that can bring the same message.

From here on in, they alternated between Bruce Peninsula songs and songs from the various projects of the band members. Ivy Mairi displayed her stunning vocals while her bandmates surrounded her in harmony. Andrew Barker sat on a chair with his guitar and played one of his the Lake Vernon

Drowning songs. Drummer Steven McKay, who spent the night using a cup and his feet as a drum kit, took the guitar for a song and had the crowd singing along with his fa la las. Both he and the rest of the band had ear to ear grins as Ivy provided harmony on the song via whistling. Tamara (the Weather Station), Neil Haverty, Kari Peddle and Matt Cully also had an opportunity to showcase some of their material.

Although the band is touring in support of their new album *Open Flames*, they played songs mostly from their other releases. Familiar older songs such as "Shutters" and "Shanty Song" took on a life of their own as the focus was almost entirely placed on the vocals.

Near the end of the show, they said that it was one of the top ten shows they have done. A special night that was equally about the individual members and the band as a whole.

The members of Bruce Peninsula were all smiles as they shuffled around the room sharing a their songs together. It felt more like witnessing close friends hanging out together than a concert.

If you missed them, fear not, they play at the Bus Stop Theatre on Saturday October 22nd as part of Halifax Pop Explosion.

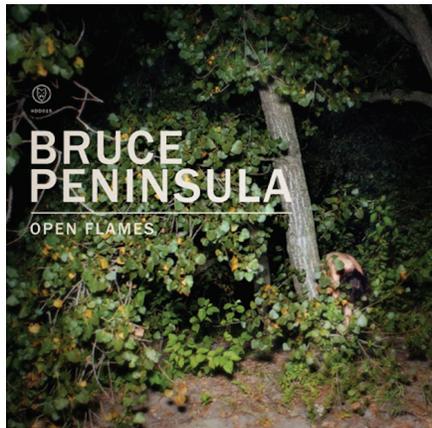


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AUX TV (HALIFAX POP) / October 22, 2011

<http://www.aux.tv/2011/10/hpx-2011-questionnaire-bruce-peninsula/>

## HPX 2011 Questionnaire: Bruce Peninsula

Nicole Villeneuve

When I get Bruce Peninsula singer Neil Haverly on the phone, the band is getting bagels and coffee on the road in Newfoundland. After a tumultuous year, the band is back on the road for their first tour in a while, for new album *Open Flames*, and it sounds so far to be full of a sense of renewal and spirit.

We'll have more with Haverly on the past year next week, but for now, he gives us his Halifax essentials in our HPX 2011 Questionnaire.

AUX: What would be in your Halifax Pop Explosion survival kit?

Neil Haverly: I don't know what you call them, but, lobster crackers? You know, the metal things that break open the lobster shells? Yeah, that's all you need. Maybe some Caesar rim salt. Some Clamato and celery and vodka.

Who or what are you most looking forward to seeing at HPX?

Unfortunately I don't think we're going to see much, because we have so many shows next week. But Ivy [Mairi], one of our choir members, is opening the show with her solo project. And I haven't seen that yet, so I'm excited to see that. And Tamara [Lindeman] is playing across the street with the Weather Station. I'm excited to see them on their own in exotic environments. I'm going to try to squeeze in Rituals and RatTail, who are some friends of ours from Toronto. If I can, I will. It's hectic!

If you're familiar with Halifax, what is something you love about it? If you're not, what is something you're curious about seeing or learning?

We've been a few times now. The diversity of people isn't something I'd clued into before. But we played with a guy named Nick Everett, who lives in Halifax, and he said 'Halifax is anything you want it to be, depending on where you put yourself.' If you wanted to be club-ish, you could. If you wanted to be hippie hacky-sack style, that's there too. It seems to have every little

subsection of people in one relatively small place. It's weird and maybe dangerous sometimes, but it's interesting and cool to be around.

Tell us why your show is the show everyone should make sure to see.

We're nine people. We have strength in numbers. But also, when we play, which you can probably hear in my voice, which I'm losing already, we go as deeply into it as we can. We try and leave everything we've got in the club. You're not going to get half-stepping from us. We're not going to half-ass it. You're going to get our whole ass. Bruce Peninsula's whole ass. Nine whole asses.

Who is your favourite Halifax band/artist, and why?

I have a lot, actually! North of America and the Plan and all the glory days of the math rock scene really come to mind obviously. But I'll give Nick Everett another shout out, because his set really touched me. But there's a lot. Back in the early 90s I was all over Halifax. I imagined myself living there. When I was a kid I ran a zine [Elbow Magazine],

and we did a road trip to Halifax. Somehow I managed to set up an interview with Mike O'Neill from the Inbreds. And I was like, I can't believe that Mike O'Neill is not only going to talk to be, but is going to show me around Halifax. I have like 40 pictures of him just walking around with a backpack (laughs). Halifax is very near and dear to me, musically.

What's happening for the band after HPX?

We were going to go west, but I wanted to see how touring was, as far as my stamina and everything is concerned. We're playing in Ontario a bit more. There's a couple of more recorded secrets that we're going to try to unveil. And who knows what's going to happen in the New Year. We're pretty easy going about everything right now.



## THE COAST (HALIFAX POP) / October 20, 2011

<http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/bruce-peninsula-gets-fired-up/Content?oid=2751116>

### Bruce Peninsula gets fired up

After a trying hiatus Open Flames has arrived, and it's worth the wait.

Allison Saunders

Bruce Peninsula was supposed to be on this tour last March. The record was done, the dates were booked, the celebrations had happened. And then frontman Neil Haverty was diagnosed with leukemia. After a hard winter, and teasing fans with videos for B-sides and covers (better known as the Bruce Peninsula Fire Sale) BP back to where it should have been last winter, piled into a van arguing over whether Iron Maiden of Les Mis should be their driving music. "It was always a really great goal for the future and having it to keep my mind on was very helpful," says Haverty, who's in remission now. "It feels almost like I'm officially in the clear 'cause i'm in the van." Rich with themes of redemption and letting go of the past Open Flames came together fast following their Polaris long-listed first LP *A Mountain is a Mouth*, which Haverty says took a very detailed oriented year-and-a-half to make. And while timing didn't pan out as planned this time, he says the distance may have worked in BP's favour. "It's like brand new when you listen to it again. We barely knew the songs at the time, we wrote and recorded them very quickly, so it has been really nice to try them on again."



## CANADIAN INTERVIEWS PUBLISHING / November 23, 2011

<http://www.canadianinterviews.com/interview/index.php?ID=956&SECTION=101&type=music>

### Interview with Neil Haverty and Matt Cully

There was an air of gratitude emanating from the stage when the Toronto band Bruce Peninsula played to a packed room at Lee's Palace on October 27, 2011. This was not merely a reflection of the enthusiastic response that the large ensemble received from the audience that night. More precisely, it felt as though the nine members of the group were truly experiencing some sort of heightened joy in making music together. This might not be a notable triumph under normal circumstances, but the recent history of the group had been anything but ordinary.

In spring 2010, the members of Bruce Peninsula were busy making a new album to follow on the heels of *A Mountain is a Mouth*, their 2009 debut record that had earned the band a Polaris Prize long-list nomination. All signs pointed to the second record being ready for release in spring 2011. Fans were looking forward to discovering what direction this fresh material would take. Nothing else on the musical landscape in Canada quite resembles what Bruce Peninsula offers. The sound of the band is rather difficult to categorize. Listeners may identify

elements of rock, gospel, soul and blues all bundled up together in songs that seem to wander restlessly until uncovering just the right moment to explode.

All the energy that the band was putting into making music was interrupted cruelly in December 2010 when lead singer Neil Haverty was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia. This rare form of leukemia is thankfully highly treatable, carrying a cure rate of about 95%. The young musician underwent chemotherapy, and over the

course of a long winter, he managed the exhausting process remarkably well. By the spring, he was pronounced officially in remission.

Watching the band perform at Lee's Palace, the sense of relief was palpable. All the members of Bruce Peninsula appeared conscious of the fact that a great challenge had been overcome. The new album, *Open Flames*, had been released on October 4th, and the band had already completed an ambitious schedule of twenty-four tour dates around Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland, and the Maritimes. For those unaware, it would have been hard to imagine what the group had endured.

### THE ILLNESS

Early in September 2011, Neil Haverty and band-mate Matt Cully sat down for a drink with Canadian Interviews at the Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto. The release of *Open Flames* was about a month away, and the tour dates had yet to start.

Haverty explained that the toughest part of his treatment was over. He was still taking a drug called ATRA, which aids in the maturation of blood cells, and had to deal with the prospect of a bone marrow exam every three months for the foreseeable future. "Basically, the tough stuff is over," he smiled. "As far as residual symptoms and things, I only have two problems left, which are occasional headaches and then I have a 'whooshing' in my ear. My right ear makes a kind of whoosh-whoosh heartbeat in my head sometimes. ... As time goes on, the headaches and the 'whooshing', it's all slowly going away. My energy level is getting better."

Contemplating the ambitious schedule of tour dates facing the band, there was some uncertainty in his voice. "I'm just going to go for it in the fall," Haverty stated. "That's basically what it's going to have to be. As real life comes back in, I have to start just dealing with it. I try not to say, 'I've got a headache' – because it's like, how bad of a headache do I have? It's not so bad if it's just a little one."

While undergoing treatment, Haverty observed that the physical exhaustion he felt was more or less matched by his mental fatigue. Although the process of recovery can be potentially life-altering, the prospect of returning to 'real life' can play tricks on the mind. "You do have all these moments where you think it's all going to be different," he explained. "You're going to change all the things that you don't like about your life, and you're going to cherish all the things that you do like about your life." Once the time for introspection and self-analysis passed, Haverty came to realize that another challenge was

waiting to emerge: "All those mini-epiphanies, all those things that you said you were going to change – that's not as easy as all that."

So what got him through the long, challenging days at the hospital? "Well, this is kind of funny," he revealed sheepishly. "I watched a lot of BET. On a real surface-level, that's what got me through at the hospital – a lot of really bad videos!"

The songwriter found reading to be aggravating to his senses – even *Life*, the Keith Richards autobiography, was too much to handle. One album, however, proved to be significant: *Creep On Creepin' On* by Timber Timbre. Taylor Kirk, who helms the Toronto folk-blues band, provided a copy of the album to his friend in advance of the official release date. "He gave me his record right when I got into the hospital," Haverty recalled. "It's pretty dark and creepy. I would listen to it at nighttime when everyone had left me alone, almost to intentionally creep myself out, to intentionally get me to that 'pondering the dark stuff' place. I wouldn't necessarily recommend that to everyone in daily life, but in that context, it got me close to some thoughts that maybe I wouldn't have gone to otherwise. It's funny now because unfortunately that ruined Taylor's record a bit for me; now, whenever I listen to it, I will think of the hospital. But you know, records have their place that way."

Cully, who plays guitar in Bruce Peninsula, was given the task of communicating with the rest of the band and other friends throughout this challenging period. In addition to playing music together, he and Haverty had been roommates for five years. He learned quickly how to spin the situation most effectively. "I did have, by the end, this bad news-good news angle in terms of the kind of cancer that he had," Cully stated, "because we knew by that point that it was treatable and that it was probably going to be fine. So, the uncertainty wasn't overwhelming. In terms of the band, once we realized that Neil was out of the hospital and that he was getting better, we made good on the idea to continue recording, or finish recordings that had been done around the same time as *Open Flames*, and we would start to get those together in order to release them. We released them as the *Fire Sale* songs online, with videos that eventually Neil was able to make. We put those out."

Bruce Peninsula kept on track. When the traditional album release cycle was delayed, band members took the opportunity to gauge how much fans would embrace the music coming through an online forum. "So much of music now is interacting with fans or even consumers over the Internet," Cully noted. "It was interesting to gauge how that would

work for us, how hosting these things and getting feedback that way would be – and although we put money into it, it was all for free – and just seeing how that works, and what it does for our band."

### OPEN FLAMES

The ten tracks on *Open Flames* were recorded before Haverty was sidetracked by his illness. "We recorded very quickly, actually, in basically the month of May last year," the singer disclosed. "There was mixing and stuff to come afterwards, but it was a pretty concentrated three-week period in May last year." Consequently, listeners searching for lyrics motivated by his hospital stay will have to wait. "I'm trying to wade those waters," he acknowledged. "I've tried to write some songs since, and you do end up in a Hallmark card zone. I just have to figure out how to let it come into the songwriting without being overbearing or heavy-handed or something like that."

In many articles and even in the press material for the band, the Bruce Peninsula sound is regularly referred to as 'progressive gospel'. If this type of music is 'progressive', does that mean that it stands in opposition somehow to 'conservative' gospel – the powerful music of the churches full of calls for faith, redemption, and mercy? Cully says that some members of the group – including him – grew up singing in church. Describing the impact of this early experience, he stated "certainly this idea of a congregation of people who are joined in song is something that influenced me, and influenced the kind of sound that I crave, that my ears crave, this rough-around-the-edges but very powerful, very poignant sound."

Filling in the blanks, Haverty added, "I think for us it was never about God. It's the spirit of song. I think song is what's important to us." "Or music," Cully rejoined, "being musicians, being people who create art, this sort of thing, and living where we do, and the struggle of that that all artists go through, trying to make a living – all that stuff is coming out in a live performance or on the record. It is weird because it's a paradox: it's secular, but it's gospel. It at least has the aesthetic of gospel. It's not about one particular message. It's about celebrating all these differences and all these conflicting feelings that you have, but then letting them all erupt during this powerful experience that we're all sharing on stage."

Two tracks stand out right away. The opener, 'As Long As I Live', serves as a good introduction to the rollicking, complex sound that the band is capable of delivering. The choir enters forcefully, singing 'you can't hide, you can't hide / you can't hide what you want.' As one

ponders the full weight of this message, it is hard not to feel shivers. What are the consequences of denying our instincts? When Haverty comes in with the words 'under all the overgrowth', it is clear that the aim is to dig deep into our fears and desires, the ones that perhaps we forgot we had buried.

In the most haunting piece on the album, 'Open Flame', the vocal work of Misha Bower is front and centre. Her tone and expressive intonation feel drawn from centuries past, as though she might be singing in the courtyard of a dark medieval castle. On the track, thematic elements present across the album crystallize as she intones, 'whatever you've got, whatever you've got, whatever you've got to burn / throw it on the fire, throw it on the open flame.' The essential message seems clear: there are moments when it is necessary to exorcise whatever burdens one carries along through life. "I think there is an undercurrent throughout the whole record of not letting your baggage weigh you down," Haverty

remarked, "of trying to drop things behind you and leave them there and keep moving."

#### IN CONCERT

The Bruce Peninsula live show is often referred to with descriptive phrases such as 'big tent revival' or 'rolling soul revue'. It is fascinating to identify symbols of religious thought and practice in the music, and then watch as the band inverts any dogma of organized belief in order to emphasize the straightforward inspiration of song. At the Lee's Palace show, perhaps the most compelling example of this came during the performance of 'In Your Light', the second track off *Open Flames*. In the lyrics, Haverty attempts to give some definition to the term 'sanctuary', tracing the outline of whatever might constitute a temple, a spiritual dwelling: 'an open window with the wind blowing / right there right then / your sanctuary is / the way the light hits the

undersides of your eyes / between the iris and the eyelids.'

Neil Haverty maintained the power in his voice throughout the concert. Beads of sweat rolled down his face. He thanked the crowd and his fellow band members. It felt as though the songs had lifted a weight off his shoulders and dispensed some measure of ecstasy. For a brief moment, Lee's Palace seemed like a true sanctuary.



## EXCLAIM.CA (Pull Me Under PREMIERE) / November 23, 2011

[http://exclaim.ca/MusicVideo/ClickHear/bruce\\_peninsula-pull\\_me\\_under\\_video](http://exclaim.ca/MusicVideo/ClickHear/bruce_peninsula-pull_me_under_video)

### Bruce Peninsula "Pull Me Under" (video)

Alex Hudson

Now that we've had a few weeks to soak in Bruce Peninsula's *Open Flames*, the Toronto-based collective have unveiled the latest video from their sophomore LP. This one is for the expansive, gospel-tinged stomper "Pull Me Under," a track that boasts some lush choral harmonies and thundering drums.

The accompanying video is a kaleidoscopic mind-bender that's largely made up of quickly intercut water and forest imagery. It's a visually compelling clip, despite the fact that it's almost impossible to make out what's going on. In other words, this isn't your average performance video.

The video was directed by Lara Mrkoci and BP's own Neil Haverty, who offered up the following statement about this clip:

The whole idea for the video came from one very windy day on the ferry between Toronto Island and the city. The water was so violent and this big boat was moving so aggressively through it. The day before the water had been totally still, and the change in attitude was very surprising. I became obsessed with taping bodies of water after that and ended up with tons of footage.

We debated how to get the band into the video. At one point I was planning on spraying everyone in the face with a hose and filming it. In the end, we decided we could get something good and keep dry.

Reflection was something I had wanted to try for a long time and I definitely got excited

about it. Maybe I even went a bit overboard. But I'll never do again; the editing process took way longer than it should have. If you look at these images for too long, too close, you definitely start to feel a little crazy. I'm proud of it, but I'm very glad it can leave my brain now.



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<http://www.viewmag.com/13965-Hamilton+Music+Notes.htm>

## Bruce Peninsula's Open Flames

Ric Taylor

Both Neil Haverty and Steve McKay had honed their skills in Hamilton's all-ages indie rock scene. But the pair have become a part of a Toronto collective that features at times, a 10-musician sprawl, stirring up a groundswell of fans and some international press. With Bruce Peninsula returning to Hamilton this week, it was time to catch up.

"The band originally started as a folk duo with Misha Bower and Matt Cully in 2006 and although Neil was there, he was just a spectator," recalls McKay. "I think they did maybe one more show and then he made his way into the band and they did a couple shows as sort of a noise/folk combo.

"At the same time, I just happened to move to Toronto, and Neil and I had been talking for years about how we would reunite in some capacity," adds McKay. "It had been about eight or nine years since our days at the Local Transit Union hall at Wilson and Hughson opening for Chore and the like. I came out and saw them play and it was cool, so I joined – as the bass player. Eventually our drummer quit, but I was so jazzed about being the bass player that we auditioned for a new drummer. It didn't work out, so I caved and took over and we brought in Andrew Barker on the bass and we've never looked back."

Taking from their math rock and psyche-folk pasts, Haverty, McKay and company began Bruce Peninsula dubbed a prog-gospel collective by their growing fans.

"You might be able to hear our individual contributions," notes McKay. "Similar percussive approach and some synth influences from me, Neil's songwriting is still similar to his old stuff at times.

"The best way to describe it, we've found, is

just to say 'rock band with a choir,'" adds McKay. "We love group singing and the folk thing, but at the same time we're into more progressive stuff. It turns out that when you put the group singing thing together with a prog-rock quartet, you get this exciting new sound."

Bruce Peninsula's debut, *A Mountain Is A Mouth*, was released in February of 2009 to critical acclaim and after a wealth of touring, the band was eager to release the follow up – but in late 2010 a bombshell hit BP when Haverty was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia.

"When Neil told us that he was sick, we all got together to discuss how we would handle it and decided to just keep working," explains McKay. "Neil couldn't tour, but his brain was still coming up with all kinds of ideas, so we tried to put them in place. We updated the website, recorded some new tracks, Neil made some videos with his girlfriend Lara – it was all about keeping the fire going until Neil recovered.

"From my point of view it was more about possibly losing one of my oldest and closest friends, rather than the band," he confides. "It was definitely a blow to the release of our new record – and we're thankful that we are back on track – but really we were all just worried about Neil getting better. And he did. And now we're trying to pick up some momentum again – trying to do justice to the record. It's a relief, for sure, but we're still working through it."

After a near year of treatment, Haverty is officially in remission and the band's sophomore disc, *Open Flames*, was officially released last month to rekindle the band's resolve and satiate fan demand.

"We have a song called 'Open Flame,' the chorus is 'an open flame to rid of whatever you've got to burn, throw it on the fire'" offers McKay on the album title. "Lyrically, each song fits under the umbrella of that sentiment, so it's like each song is its own open flame. It's about change, and how we tried to do something different for this record than ever before. Every song on *Open Flames* sounds epic and expansive – it's no wonder the gospel moniker is bestowed upon the more indie rock structures but for the band's return to Haverty and McKay's hometown, they plan to ramp up that large sound.

"We did a show at Christ's Church Cathedral at Supercrawl that was more stripped down, but this show is going to be big, like the record," assures McKay. "Secret Heights and The Weather Station are opening, both which are straight up folk acts, so we might start out on that tip, but eventually it will be full-blown yelling and drumming.

"It's incredibly fun," adds McKay on the band's return to his hometown since he and his wife have recently bought a house in Hamilton. "I have tons of friends in Hamilton and I love the Casbah. In my opinion, we haven't really played Hamilton enough over the years. It's only recently that we hit our stride in this town. You never know, now that I own a house here, the rest of the band may start moving here too and then we'll all be Hamiltonians."

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<http://www.lfpress.com/entertainment/music/2011/11/22/19005826.html>

## Bruce Peninsula close to heart of indie music Mecca

The Bruce Peninsula is an important part of Canada -- and Bruce Peninsula is becoming an important part of the Canadian music scene.

The Toronto-based band has come a long way since the 2009 debut full-length, titled *A Mountain is a Mouth*. The album made its way to the coveted Polaris Prize long list, and to many an indie music fan's playlist.

Tunes such as *The Leaves* soothe listeners,

and are perfectly suited for fall days. Though the band pays tribute to summer days, too, as in *The Swimming Song*: "This summer I went swimming / This summer I might have drowned / But I held my breath and I kicked my feet and I moved my arms around / I moved my arms around."

Bruce Peninsula will play at APK Live, and will be joined by *The Weather Station*, a project by Tamara Lindeman. The Toronto-based songstress recorded her sophomore

album on Toronto Island, which carries a warmer and pared back sound. It follows the album *The Line*, which she promoted while on tour with the notable *Timber Timbre*.

The feisty *Lonnie in the Garden* will round out this triple-act Friday night. This 19+ event -- presented by *Half a Dino* -- starts at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$5 advance or \$12 at the door.