

Lifestyle

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A potter makes earthenware oil lamps in preparation for the upcoming Tihar festival in Bhaktapur, on the outskirts of Kathmandu. — AFP
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On Neil Young's new 'Colorado' album, amped up rage - and hope

At 73 years old, Neil Young could be reminiscing about his legendary past, but the classic rocker instead has his sights set squarely on the planet's future with his latest album "Colorado." The album out Friday sees Young, a long-time crusader for the environment, reunite with the loud, raggedy band Crazy Horse, which has recorded and toured on and off with the superstar for half a century. The prolific Canadian-born artist gathered the latest iteration of Crazy Horse high in the Colorado mountains, where they shredded in between hits of oxygen to avoid altitude sickness.

The album opens with Young's harmonica twang in "Think of Me," on which he croons: "I'm gonna live long and I'm happy to report it back to you," dispelling any notion that the septuagenarian with more than 40 studio albums to his name might slow down. Young's signature bleeding amp reverb persists throughout the rugged album, as the rocker's singular oscillating voice rings out with a tender fragility on weighty themes like the climate.

"We heard the warning calls / Ignored them / We watched the weather change / We saw the fire and floods," he warbles in the environmental ballad, "Green Is Blue." "We saw the people rise / Divided / We fought each other while we lost our coveted prize," Young sings over a pounding piano riff. It's on brand for the rocker, who has long bared his environmentalism musically, most notably with 2015's "The Monsanto Years" that saw him attack the agricultural corporate titan over its genetically modified seeds.

The following track, "Shut It Down," begins with chaotic guitar and a heart-pounding beat akin to battle march, as the chant "Gotta shut the whole system down," loops throughout. Nils Lofgren—a rock world mainstay and



member of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band—recently returned to the Crazy Horse lineup, having teamed with Young and the band in the 1970s.

The Arizona-based guitarist, who earlier this year released a solo album including songs he co-wrote with the late rock visionary Lou Reed, said the rawness of "Colorado" speaks to "the horrible place we're in, not only as a country, but as a planet." "The idea of the wealthy becoming, you know, mentally ill with the disease of greed, money and power—now it's at the expense of literally the planet itself, life itself," the 68-year-old said.

Soulful hoping

But near the album's end, the track "Rainbow of Colors"—a feedback-heavy song played in the romantic triple time of a waltz—hears the band sing the chorus as a unified voice. "There's a rainbow of colors / In the old

USA / No one's gonna whitewash / Those colors away," they sing, in an obvious swipe at Donald Trump administration. "We'll always be strong / When the people have spoken / And the walls are all gone," Young sings.

For Lofgren, the jagged edges of the album's sound contrast with "beautiful sentiments" throughout, a "kind of emotional, soulful hoping." There's a feeling of "let's all wake up and do what we can and move this thing forward," Lofgren said. The album's recording in a secluded "recording studio in the clouds" outside of Telluride is documented in the companion film "Mountaintop," set for release Tuesday. Young, who's known for cranky tendencies during recording sessions, at one point rails over the sound volume-too low-in the documentary.

The artist's emotional outbursts aren't so much anger, Lofgren said, as they are evidence of "extreme frustration." "When you know you're on the way to something magical musically, you want to get there sooner," he said. "Sometimes you get more upset about it than others." "I take that as excitement and emotion. I mean that's what you need in the song. That's what you need from the guy who wrote it."

A tour with Crazy Horse was in the works for this fall, but the recent death of Young's longtime manager Elliot Roberts put it on ice. Lofgren is hopeful for a future series of live shows, when he says Young's innate talent shines. "Unlike some writers who kind of lose the edge in front of audience... he's got that bug," Lofgren said. "Something going on in front of an audience that you're just born with." "You just gotta get out there and exercise that part of your musical soul." — AFP

World's loudest bird sings heart out in pursuit of love

In the mountainous northern Amazon, a tiny white-plumed suitor turns to face his would-be paramour and belts out a deafening, klaxon-like call, reaching decibel levels equal to a pile driver. Meet the white bellbird, which has just beaten out its rainforest neighbor, the screaming piha, for the title of the world's loudest bird. Biologist Jeff Podos at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Mario Cohn-Haft of Brazil's Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazonia described the record-breaking finding in a paper published in the journal Current Biology on Monday.

The researchers wrote that its calls are so loud, they wondered how white bellbird females listen at close range without damaging their hearing. The feat is all the more impressive given the species' diminutive size: they're about as big as doves, weighing around half a

pound (a quarter of a kilogram). The males are distinguished by a fleshy black wattle adorned with white specks that falls from the beak, while the females are green with dark streaks and wattle-less.

Podos told AFP he was lucky enough to witness females join males on their perches as they sang. "He sings the first note facing away, and then he does this dramatic, almost theatrical swivel, where he swings around with his feet wide open and his wattle is kind of flailing around," he said. "And he blasts that second note right where the female would have been, except the female knows what's coming and she's not going to sit there and accept that so she flies backwards" by around four meters.—AFP



This image obtained courtesy of Anselmo d'Afonseca shows a male white bellbird (Procnias albus) screaming its mating call. — AFP

British-born Nigerian actor hopes black skinhead film will heal pain

British-born Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje was taken into foster care by a white family near London as a baby in the 1960s. As a youth, the unthinkable happened: the black boy joined a gang of violent white supremacists. Now an award-winning actor, he has brought his story to cinemas in his country of origin - Nigeria. He hopes his directorial debut will be part of a "healing" process for people who sought foster care to give their children a better life.

Farming, the film's title, takes its name from a term used to describe the practice of Nigerian immigrants fostering their children to white families in Britain so they could work, study and save money. It refers to the idea that the children were "farmed" out. The aim of the practice, mainly prevalent from the 1960s to 1980s, was for the immigrants to eventually return to Nigeria.

"Perhaps this can provide a healing in some sense but ultimately a re-evaluation of our child-rearing processes," Akinnuoye-Agbaje told Reuters at the film's Nigerian premiere on Saturday in the country's commercial capital, Lagos, after first being screened in London last month. "I'm hoping that it will create a dialogue and a collective therapy for those that are still suffering, and a healing because many of the Nigerian farmers don't actually go back for the children that were fostered," he said.

As a six-week-old baby in 1967, Akinnuoye-Agbaje was left in the care of a white family in Tilbury, a southeast England town around 20 miles east of central London. And, as a youth, he joined a gang of skinheads - a far-right subculture often associated with racist violence in Britain. Membership in a gang that previously tormented him ended when his biological father, who had relocated to Nigeria where he worked as a barrister, paid for him to attend a private school in the affluent English county of Surrey.

That step was taken after he was contacted by Akinnuoye-Agbaje's foster mother. "It is an important part of British history as well as Nigerian culture, so to be able to bring a story that I have harboured for so long home to the Nigerian audience is... a wonderful sense of accomplishment," said Akinnuoye-Agbaje. The film - which cost 3 million pounds (\$3.89 million) to make and stars British actor Kate Beckinsale as the foster mother - was greeted with cheers and applause in a packed cinema hall in the upmarket Lagos district of Lekki.

Thousands of Nigerians leave the west African country each year in search of a better life abroad - often in Europe and the United States. Some of those who attended the screening said it was interesting to see a depiction of life overseas that differed from their expectations.—Reuters