



BY CHRIS BOWERMAN

¡VIVA LOPEZ! KEELAGHAN! LOS COMPADRES!

Depression robbed Calgary's Latin guitar hero of music, joy and trust—but not his friends, not his family. Here's how Oscar Lopez found both in James Keelaghan, his longtime musical companion and reunited Compadre.



**I'VE SEEN FIRE.
RAIN.**

ILLUSTRATION BY JULIE MCLAUGHLIN

A HOWLING TEMPEST CALLED DEPRESSION SWEEP CALGARY'S LATIN GUITAR HERO OSCAR LOPEZ TO A DARK, SUFFOCATING PLACE. IT ROBBED HIM OF MUSIC, JOY AND TRUST—BUT NOT HIS FRIENDS, NOT HIS FAMILY. LOPEZ HAD BOTH IN JAMES KEELAGHAN, HIS LONGTIME MUSICAL COMPANION AND REUNITED COMPADRE.

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Okay, here it is: Depression. Like, yuck, right? Bummer. Turn the page. But *wait*. This could be a grim story, but it won't be, I promise. Well, I can't really promise, but I will submit that it's a bit about *you*, or at least about someone you know, and a lot about two particular longtime buddies, musical companions who call themselves Compadres: James Keelaghan, an Irish-Canadian born and raised in Calgary, a student of history, a traveller, a storyteller, a singer-songwriter of enviable skill, a dry, reticent folkie; and Oscar Lopez, born and raised in Santiago, Chile, a refugee from Pinochet, a gregarious, good-lookin' sonuvagun possessed by the nylon-stringed guitar, a virtuoso, a hot Latin import, a world-music export. Another thing: Lopez is a survivor of—no, a *passenger* through, as he likes to say—depression. Which brings us to the heavy part. But don't worry, it's temporary.

Depression “can be described only in metaphor and allegory,” wrote first-class passenger Andrew Solomon in his bestselling tome *The Noonday Demon*—a point, I hope, that absolves me of these next few purple paragraphs. Depression, you see, can be expressed as abject loneliness, hopelessness and despondency. It is a mysterious ancient illness that causes mental paralysis and physical atrophy. It is a chronic, circadian condition with psychosocial origins. Untreated, it metastasizes like a cancer. It is a vortex of pain, alternately manageable, intractable and terminal. It is indiscriminate, undermining three in 10 people, more often women than men. It is an augury of death, the opposite of peace. It is non-linear, uniquely personal to each victim. It enslaves then stands guard. It is confounding—a studied, well-documented but elusive disease unfairly stigmatized and cheapened by words. It begets itself.

The late Pulitzer Prize-winning author William Styron famously documented his own bleak passage in the autobiography *Darkness Visible*. The word “depression,” he lamented, is “a noun with a bland tonality and lacking any magisterial presence, used indifferently to describe an economic decline or a rut in the ground, a true wimp of a word for such a major illness.” Instead, Styron dubbed it an internal *storm*, manifesting as a “storm of murk,” and, at the nadir, a “howling tempest in the brain.”

It raged within Robert Louis Stevenson, inspiring *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It hung Dorothy Parker with “graveyard flowers.” It subverted Leonard Cohen's “psychic landscape.” It even tripped up John Cleese, the Minister of Silly Walks himself. It plagued Darwin, Lincoln, Michelangelo and Beethoven. It ravaged Cole Porter, Mark Twain and Hunter S. Thompson. Faulkner, Kafka, Capote, Brando, Churchill, the

Princess of Wales. It loaded a gun, tied a noose and fixed a lethal dose for Kurt Cobain and Elliott Smith, Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe and Nick Drake, Spalding Gray, Abbie Hoffman, Ian Curtis and Vincent van Gogh. Virginia Woolf called it the “funeral in my brain.” In the end, it filled her pockets with stones and led her to the water's edge.

It is depression, and it just plain sucks. Now... moving on.

Here are the Compadres, together again after a 10-year intermission during which both men were divorced, found new partners, fathered baby boys, lost parents, lost support from their music labels and almost lost each other. For about three years during that span, Lopez languished at rock bottom, almost hermit-like, to the point of hospitalization. Today, he and Keelaghan are their chippy, spirited selves, embarking on a western-Canada tour that brings them back to the Jack Singer Concert Hall on Thursday, Nov. 15—a full decade since the Compadres last performed live together. A night for celebration.

But now, as the duo takes the stage this mid-October night at Hugh's Room in Toronto, a small, stifling basement concert lounge, I can't help but watch with speculative concern. Keelaghan is plainly dressed in black jeans, denim shirt and white tee; Lopez, as always, is bejewelled, sexy in that proud Latino way, wearing all black—black jeans, black striped dress shirt, black leather vest, black sunglasses. They look serious, solemn. Their bandmates—rock-steady Filipino-Canadian percussionist Raphael Geronimo from Vancouver, and multi-instrumentalist Hugh McMillan, a Calgary boy moonlighting from his main gig in Spirit of the West—settle into circumstance. The clatter of plates dissipates, the lights go down and the long-silent Compadres start doing what they do best.

The transformation is immediate. Just a few bars into “Rumba Compadres”—the rhythmical opening salvo from the band's newly released second album, *¿Buddy Where You Been?*—the band's stoic veneer cracks. Keelaghan is foot-tapping in time, then swaying, then smiling, caught up in their spirited, self-coined “Celtino” vibe. Lopez is soloing, seat-dancing, fingers zinging up and down the fretboard, head cocked back, face skyward in what looks like ecstasy. An outpouring of applause follows from the predominantly white, middle-aged house. Then Lopez greets them: “¿Cómo estás?”

“Muy bien!” the crowd bellows back, warm and receptive to this Southern-American hospitality.

Keelaghan, grinning, turns to his compadre. “How are you, brother?” “Fan-tastic, brother!”

WHAT BUOYS ME IS THE TOTALITY OF MY LIFE. I'D GO FURTHER THAN THAT AND SAY THAT THE SHEER IMPROBABILITY OF LIFE ON EARTH BUCKS ME UP CONSIDERABLY.

Lopez and Keelaghan met in 1988 on a plane, en route to Sudbury's Northern Lights Folk Festival. They soon started playing together in Calgary coffeeshops (such as Cover to Cover, the Kensington café where Lopez's future manager, Josh Marantz, first saw him). In 1994, Compadres became a creative entity. It grew into a roots-music phenomenon when, in the summer of '97, the folk troubadour known for his heart-rending story-songs and his Latino pal—whom Keelaghan admired not just for his guitar heroics but for his uncanny gift for melody and chord structure—independently released their popular, critically lauded self-titled debut, filling the Jack Singer and garnering a Juno nomination. Something in the music expressed a most unique and fortuitous yin-yang dynamic, the contrast—like a habanero pepper and a rustic spud—requiring a certain *compromiso*. “Lopez is very heart-on-the-sleeve,” Keelaghan says, “and I am fairly reserved. He's cologne and I am not. But if we chose our friends only because they shared all our attributes, life would be pretty boring. What we do share is a commitment to music, to playing with passion, to trying to live life unapologetically. The friendship took off because we recognized the similarities and thought the differences unimportant.” That tenet keeps their arguments short, and their mutual support whole. There was a glimpse of it on stage in Toronto.

Part of Lopez's pre-show ritual is smoking and pacing, smoking and pacing—“channelling the tiger,” he says. He brings the wild cat to the stage, working his hot-blooded Latin loverboy persona—which is partly the real deal, partly self-parody. The guy likes a laugh as much as anybody. Intoning to the audience, low and slow like some Spanish Elvis, he cranks up the charm: “You guys look so bea-ootiful tonight, so fan-tastic.”

Some guy in the crowd pipes up: “Sleep with me, Oscar!”

Keelaghan, always armed, shoots back: “You're not man enough.”

Big laughs. The crowd is into it. Lopez continues his elliptical banter: “This is *nize*. So happy to be here. You know, I'm 54... but I look good goddammit!”

The same guy shouts back, “In *English*, please.”

Keelaghan: “He looks good in *any* language.”

The joker in the crowd turns out to be Michael Wrycraft, a Toronto designer with a roster of clients that includes Bruce Cockburn, Stephen Fearing and the band of the hour, for whom he designed the artwork for *¿Buddy Where You Been?*—a passport motif that

reflects some of the album's lyrical metaphors: difficult journeys and pleasure trips, searching for answers and then finding them. The wiseacre's sitting at a long table with fellow friends, colleagues and well-wishers. Also in attendance is Greek music star Pavlo, Lopez's “MySpace buddy” whose stage charisma and virtuosity with Arabian hedjaz scales have earned him the nickname “the Mediterranean guitar god.” He rolls in, well-dressed, suave, in a Mercedes sports car (licence plate “Pavlo-1”), voluptuous girlfriend on his arm. Turns out this sly cat is friendly, respectful and complimentary. He's long admired Lopez's career, he tells him. The buddies embrace, speak directly, without irony or jealousy. They talk about mutual friend Liona Boyd; Pavlo's joy at introducing his grandmother to revolutionary flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucía; why Lopez wears sunglasses on stage (“I'm shy,” he says); and playing together. Had Lopez not been touring western Canada in November, Pavlo tells him, he would have been honoured to bring him on stage at Massey Hall to perform alongside his 17-piece ensemble. And in the following days, while Keelaghan visits renowned violinist Oliver Schroer, a good friend battling leukemia in the hospital, the two world-music pals hang out some more, talking music, travel, business and the possibility of a special cameo at Pavlo's April '08 concert at Jack Singer.

Five years ago, tonight's scenario would have been crippling, if not impossible. Lopez was so wracked by misery then, he wasn't just petrified by the notion of performing in front of a live audience, he could hardly leave his apartment. For three years he didn't even reach out to some of the people who most adore him, whom he most adores—like Raphael Geronimo, the quartet's 37-year-old percussionist, whose regular gig is Van-City bandleader of Latin-jazz ensemble Rumba Calzada. “Oscar is like a father to me,” says Geronimo, whom Lopez and CBC Radio 3 producer/Compadres collaborator Don Pennington scouted 10 years ago after hearing how Boying Geronimo, Raph's father, died while both were performing on stage in the Philippines. “I love Raph to pieces,” says Lopez, friend, mentor, peer, back from the crypt.

The only son and youngest of three children born into a middle-class Chilean family, Oscar Armando Lopez grew up the precocious, rebellious one, resistant to his dad's strict Pentecostal discipline. “He was very moralistic, straight, old-fashioned,

scary in his own way—but a *good* man.” Oscar was closer to his mother, “a short, *leettle* lady with an *amay-sing* smile.” She was wise, he says; the neighbourhood people would come to her seeking advice. “My mother was a very holy, compassionate woman. She had so much love and understanding for her family, and she never complained.” And you can bet Oscar was a royal brat to sisters Aida and Ludovina.

Before the repression of Pinochet’s regime forced him in 1979, at age 25, to join his sister in Winnipeg, then Cowtown, Lopez knocked around Santiago, a “street learner” playing guitar with his dad, his neighbours, friends and best pal Migel, usually just jamming on rock ’n’ roll songs. “We played our brains out for hours and hours, man.” They listened to Hendrix, Santana, Led Zeppelin and the Beatles. Lopez started inventing weird chords and developing an intuitive grasp of stringed instruments, starting with the violin. It made a 10-year-old Lopez popular with the public-school administration, which would trot him out to play at special events. The blinding speed and razor precision that are part of Lopez’s signature style were absorbed at his father’s workplace. His dad was a teletypist for an airline and could type—“fingers *blay-sing*”—without looking at the keys. Lopez’s first job was at 12 years old making car antennas, so he knew early on that his life mission certainly wasn’t slogging it out in a factory, or driving a cab, which he did for a stint. “I think I was chosen by the guitar,” he says. Lopez started playing professionally at age 17; he got a taste of stardom shortly thereafter in the Chilean pop group The Grace of the King, which had a hit record in their home country.

Based in Calgary, Lopez made four albums of his own fiery instrumental “new flamenco” on the Narada world-music label before, as Keelaghan jokes, the short-lived “Celtino craze of 1997” took off. (Contractual strings would restrict distribution and touring.) At this time, Josh Marantz was the director of programming at the Centre for Performing Arts; after seeing Lopez play in coffee houses, he approached him to open for famed trumpeter Arturo Sandoval at the Jack Singer. “Oscar said, ‘Don’t take this the wrong way, but I don’t open for anyone,’” recalls Marantz, laughing. Before long the Compadres—together and solo—were booked into the 1,800-seat hall. Their careers were on fire.

Marantz started managing Lopez several years later. This partnership would coincide with the artist’s deepest, darkest nights of the soul. Depression’s shroud covered Lopez in that already depressing fall of 2001. Both men attribute “the slide” to artistic differences over Lopez’s



PHOTO BY MARINA HURLEY; COURTESY THE COMPADRES

solo album, *Mi Destino/My Destiny*. Lopez wanted to recreate his raw live sound; Narada wanted it to be more commercial. “It’s not just a f..king title,” he told his label. “It’s *my* destiny.” In the end, the guitarist’s vision stayed intact and *Mi Destino/My Destiny* went on to win the 2005 Juno for Best Instrumental Recording. It was, Marantz says, “bittersweet.” As Lopez was suddenly unwilling to tour, *Mi Destino/My Destiny* was shelved for two years while he recovered. “I always had the technical expertise playing the guitar,” he says, “but I lost my soul, my spirit or whatever it is. I needed to deal with something inside me.”

“Oscar’s kind of an all-or-none guy,” Marantz says. “He never allowed himself to take a breather, so he was mentally and physically exhausted. Being an artist, your emotions are always right on the sur-

BEING A GREAT ARTIST, YOU HAVE TO LEAVE YOURSELF VULNERABLE TO A NUMBER OF THINGS. OSCAR'S MIND AND BODY WERE FORCING HIM TO STOP. HE CRASHED.

face. Being a *great* artist,” he says, “you have to leave yourself vulnerable to a number of things. Oscar’s mind and body were forcing him to stop. He crashed.” Then the self-confessed homebody’s domestic life was shattered—heartbreak and divorce sent Lopez into a free fall, a three-year downward spiral in which he didn’t record or perform publicly. He stayed home “in a cocoon of pain,” crying, not eating, sometimes drinking excessively to find some comfort, some sleep.

“I was very confused, I had a lot of fear in me,” he says recently at his northwest Calgary home. “I didn’t trust nobody, I didn’t want to see nobody. I closed the windows and doors, even to very close friends like James, my brother. All of a sudden I got to this stage in life—it comes to you and you don’t know how to handle it. All of a sudden everything feels alien, nothing makes sense. It was very hard to come out of that hole because the deeper I was in it, the deeper I was getting in it. There was confusion inside, a tornado. It was like I was drowning myself, beating myself up, trying to see how much pain I could take.”

Lopez delivers his rapid-fire dialogue in a steady stream of emphatic repose, while his body language expresses a sort of anxious enthusiasm at the opportunity to reach out—toes twitching, fingers snapping, hands wringing. He shakes his ring fingers, he rocks in his chair, stands up, inexplicably kneels on the floor as if to pray, then quickly sits back down again. “When I talk, I really mean what I say. I don’t have hair on my tongue to speak my mind. I’m not afraid, I’m not embarrassed or ashamed to say what I went through—depression.”

Later, Lopez testifies, tearing up, emphasizing each syllable—“*I was at the gates of hell*. Anything can happen now but I *refuse* to go down. I don’t want to touch inferno again. *No more!*” He springs out of his seat for a high-five, then, laughing and wiping his eyes, mutters, “I get emotional.”

Lopez contemplated suicide, but he “didn’t have the guts,” he says. “I was absolutely lost, and it seemed like a solution—but it’s not a solution. I knew it was temporary, that I was a passenger, and that someday I would see the light and even be able to help others through my music.”

With the help of his eldest sister, Ludovina Galvez (“the matriarch,” he calls her), Lopez admitted himself to Unit 49, the psychiatry centre at the Rockyview Hospital. His name holds some currency in this town, so Lopez was treated for a month as a confidential patient. “I needed professional help, man. Nobody’s safe.” Not Ray Charles, Eric Clapton, Peter Gabriel, Stan Getz, Tom Waits, Sinéad O’Connor or John Lennon.

Not Chopin, Handel, Tchaikovsky, Noel Coward or Charlie Parker. Except that knowledge was of little comfort, as was the month he spent in a day program “where they teach you to come back to Earth.”

Pharmacology with coaching didn’t sit well with Lopez. “With all respect, that approach is f..cking wrong,” he says. “I told them, ‘It’s not a pill that fixes this—a pill is just a pill. It’s not writing your bloody feelings down, looking in the mirror, doing a family tree,’ and *blaggity blaggity blag*.” (That’s a Lopezian expression for *yadda yadda yadda*.) “People are already confused in there. You are making them more confused. Keep it simple.” He claps loudly to make his point. “Give them some *compassion*, some comedy, so they can laugh. Just be their friend, listen to their pain. When somebody cares about you, that’s the best magic pill there is.”

Lopez’s magic pill wasn’t really a panacea but sweet relief administered in small, kindly doses, starting with the care and attention provided by his doctors-turned-compadres: Rockyview psychiatrist Dr. Elena Petrov, physician (and part-time musician) Dr. Su Chong Lim, and Unit 49 counselor Robyn Van Dusen, who walked and talked Lopez through the ordeal. “He was an eminence,” Lopez says. “We used to dance with philosophy. We danced a lot.”

One day in his private room, Lopez pulled out his dormant guitar. “I started playing and playing and playing, and then I heard a noise outside my door. I looked and it was packed—doctors, nurses, patients—they were all listening.” Realizing the therapeutic power of his own music, Lopez volunteered to play private concerts, just him, his guitar and a small amplifier. “It was an inspiration, trying to see if I could really play again,” he says. “But I played like a million bucks!

“I played for them, and the kids would hug me. Teenagers, old people, smart people, street people, all colours. I was there talking to them, but I was also learning from them, learning how much pain was in their heart, in their soul.” His eyes start welling as he recalls his first visit back.

“It’s good for me too,” I told them.” He played some songs. Afterwards, a girl hugged him tightly and cried and cried.

“How did you find a way?” she asked

“I didn’t,” he said. “I’m working on a way. Listen—you’re not a patient. Do you know who you are?”

“No.”

“You’re a passenger,” he said. “Be strong. Just do the best you can.”

win...



ALBUMS BY THE COMPADRES, JAMES KEELAGHAN AND OSCAR LOPEZ

Enter to win the Compadres CDs and a collection of discs from either Juno-winning solo artist. Tell us in your e-mail if you'd like Keelaghan's albums, or Oscar Lopez's complete discography, from his rare 1991 collector's item *Sueños* to 2003's *My Destiny*, his last solo studio work.

TICKETS TO SEE COMPADRES LIVE IN CONCERT

Enter to win two tickets to their Nov. 15th show at Jack Singer or Nov. 18th at The Eric Harvie Theatre in Banff. Include "Compadres Calgary" or "Compadres Banff" in the subject line.

E-mail swervecontests@theherald.canwest.com. Contest closes Tuesday, Nov. 13 at noon.

Have faith, Find balance, The work eventually has to come from you, It's a process, Learn from it, Simplicity is power... No mere bumper-sticker platitudes but beliefs deeply held by Lopez, who wants to help others like him. "There's always—and I know it's cliché—there's *always, always* a light at the end of the tunnel. Always."

Lopez had himself one helluva 2004. A big dose of goodness was cooked up by Hugh McMillan, then distilled through his Spirit of the West bandmates. The Spirit boys are quite fond of Oscar, Marantz says, so they started work on a song. "One day Hugh called me and said, 'I want to run something by you.'" That something was the band's new CD, *Star Trails*. Lopez was in a club, sitting alone; Marantz, disc in hand, called him outside to a van. He didn't tell him what it was, just said listen, then cued up the stereo. John Mann started singing: "Speed freak, sexy beast, Latin lover, crazy mother, where you been... Smooth-tongued, sun-dipped, full-lipped broken brother, where'd you go... We've been waiting Oscarito, mi compadre, when you snapping back?"

"Oscar's eyes filled with tears," Marantz says, "and me, well, I'm not really emotional, but here we were, two guys crying in a van." Spirit's jangling rocker "Come Back Oscar" would be, Lopez says, "a *geeft*. I mean, that was *beeg*, man!" So *beeg*, in fact, when the pop group invited him to play on the song at that summer's Calgary Folk Music Festival, Lopez found the faith and balance, did the work, kept it simple and rocked the crowd with a surprise appearance. (Music scribe Mike Bell would write: "If there was a dry eye in the house, it was glass.")

That fall, Marantz invited Lopez down to his club, the Ironwood Stage and Grill, to see John Wort Hannam. (Marantz has since sold the venue and gone home to the 'Peg, now Keelaghan's digs too.) Here, Lopez ran into his future partner, Kathi Kramer. That night, jokes Marantz, "I don't know if they closed the deal but they certainly opened up negotiations." An image of their 14-month-old son Nikolas is tattooed on dad's strumming arm—"So I can see him and touch him all the time. He gives me power." On Lopez's left arm is an old, worn tattoo of three owls, one upside down, and reads: "NOBODY'S PERFECT." (The irony is not lost on anyone—Niko was born at the Rockyview Hospital.)

The negativity, the self-criticism and the disorienting cross talk between his real self and his depressive self—the "spirits," Lopez calls them—were dissipating. They didn't creep into his brain as much any-

more when he'd play. In their place returned his creative soul, that which he moved toward through the long, dark years. He alludes to that quest on the title track of the new album: "Searching for the lost ones/I was on the Black Island/Searching for Neruda/Forward, forward without stopping." The passage refers to *la Isla Negra*, the Chilean port where Nobel Prize-winning laureate and South American rebel-hero Pablo Neruda composed his odes to things broken. Here, Lopez sees shades of his compadre. "I compare Neruda and James in a very respectful way," he says. "Keelaghan is a *poet*."

The most striking difference between the two Compadres isn't in their technical skills—the Celt is actually a damn fine guitarist, and the Latino can also sing the underwear off of the entire front row. Nor is it in their songwriting, appetites or vices. It's in their individuality, the ebb and flow, the way Lopez runs and jumps in while Keelaghan surveys the lay of the land. It's a guardedness I can't help but admire, and liken to a famous Damon-Hanks exchange in *Saving Private Ryan* (Pvt. Ryan: "Tell me about your wife and those rosebushes?" Capt. Miller: "No... that one I save just for me.") Keelaghan is a freedom fighter of a different sort—a champion of working-class principles, of coalminers and farmers, refugees and the disenfranchised, international flavours and a certain hot tamale that lost its bite.

In the darkest days of his compadre's life, Keelaghan didn't quit. He called; no answer. He'd call again. He'd e-mail, maybe get a short, elliptic reply. "He never gave up on me," Lopez says. "He persevered."

"Sometimes people go to ground," Keelaghan says. "When they get their heads above water, they'll call. I don't really care about the details—Oscar was going through a process, he was doing work."

Simply put, he says: "You don't abandon friends. Friends are all you have."

Simplicity. Keelaghan has it sussed in a steadfast rule that keeps him above water: "I try to stay focussed on the fact I have a great life," he says. "I am surrounded by an incredibly loyal group of people who keep me honest and aware. I am doing what I want to do. I play, and have played, with some of the most amazing musicians. I have been to parts of the Earth I could have only dreamed of. I get to tell stories and eat food with friends. All that and more flows from the music. It is a gift that music has given me to compensate for the bookkeeping."

I PLAYED FOR THEM. TEENAGERS, OLD PEOPLE, SMART PEOPLE, STREET PEOPLE, ALL COLOURS. I WAS THERE TALKING TO THEM, BUT I WAS ALSO LEARNING FROM THEM.

“Gathering Storm”—Keelaghan’s most personal song on *Buddy*—ends with, “Just remember the things your parents taught you.” The song evokes Tom Wolfe’s line, “You can’t go home again,” and the singer’s own grief over loss—loss of his parents, loss of the childhood home that gained shopping malls but lost its soul. The chorus tells the winds of change, “knock me down and I’ll rise again,” and inspires the duo’s mantra: “Trust in love and do no harm.” And while he’s recently wrestled with his muse—people in his professional camp stopped believing in him, “which brings on a crisis of confidence”—Keelaghan is not comparing himself to his friend. “What Oscar went through is outside of most peoples’ life experience. It is, in the truest sense of the word, extraordinary. I couldn’t, I can’t, imagine what he went through. What I have gone through in the past 10 years has been *life*. It’s going to happen to all of us—loved ones pass on, relationships end, fresh ones start and you learn to take it all in, and weave a life for yourself out of all of it.

“What buoys me is the totality of my life, not one particular moment. I’d go further than that and say that the sheer improbability of life on Earth bucks me up considerably. I mean, if I had to pick one watershed moment it would be when we started walking upright. I think there is too much of the Irish in me to believe that any moment is pure joy or pure sorrow. Every silver lining has a cloud, as they say. The English part of me knows that all problems can be solved with a cup of tea.”

And just like that the Compadres are moving forward, kicking out the jams this night in Toronto, the cross-pollination of their refuge-tour last year together in Australia and New Zealand. The songs showcase Lopez’s gymnastic fills, trills and arpeggios, his fearless bursts of flamenco riffage, and Keelaghan’s wistful folk ‘n’ roll, his bell-clear baritone. There are jazz melodies, four-part harmonies, bluesy rumbles, growing applause, between-song high-fives and the duo’s natural schtick, their brotherly tête-à-tête of swipes and jibes, more often than not aimed at Lopez’s accent, fashion sense, seniority and endearing melodramatics.

“I think I need a tequila or something,” Oscar says.

“There’s time for that later,” Keelaghan responds.

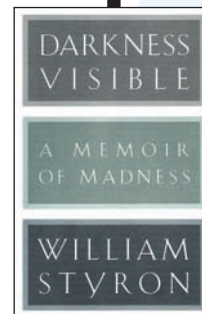
“What? So you’re the boss now?”

“No no no no—but *yes*.”

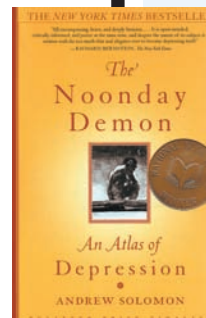
Then Lopez gets serious, but not really. He takes a moment between tunes to acknowledge a special someone here tonight, a someone who was there through good times and bad, his better half, his personal saviour: “And now I’d like to dedicate this song to a very special person... *Me!*” 🎵

we read TO KNOW WE ARE NOT ALONE

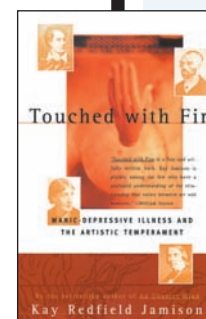
AMAZON OFFERS A WHOLE SCHWACK OF BOOKS
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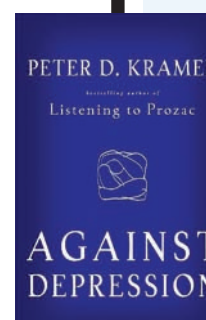
Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness, by William Styron (Random House, 1990). The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Sophie’s Choice* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner* garnered a cult-like following with this intimate portrait of his personal, devastating struggle with depression—the “despair beyond despair.”



The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression, by Andrew Solomon (Scribner, 2001). Spun out of his 1998, widely popular *New Yorker* article on the same subject, Solomon—who struggles with depression himself—gives us an in-depth examination of depression in personal, cultural and scientific terms. A Pulitzer Prize finalist.



Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament, by Kay Redfield Jamison (Free Press, 1996). Do madness and artistic talent go hand in hand? Here, the author examines the lives of such artists as Van Gogh, Byron and Woolf, and draws links between manic depression and creativity.



Against Depression, by Peter D. Kramer (Viking 2005) A decade after writing his bestselling book *Listening to Prozac*, the author looks at the condition antidepressants treat and asks, “If we could eradicate depression so that no human being ever suffered it again, would we?” His controversial answer—possibly not—is based on a well-researched belief that our culture upholds depression as ennobling, a source of soulfulness and creativity, rather than the devastating disease it is.

Local resources for counselling and information relating to depression and other mental illness:

- **Calgary Counselling Centre** is the leading research and knowledge-based counselling facility in Canada. The Centre’s fee structure is based on income—no one is turned away for an inability to pay. **For more information visit calgarycounselling.com or call 265-4980.**
- **AMHB (Alberta Mental Health Board) Mental Health Help Line, 877-303-2642.**
- **Distress Centre 266-1605 (24-hour crisis line).**