



Robbie Robertson

Contact From The Underworld Of Redboy

As a child, Robbie Robertson spent summers on a reservation with his mother, who is of Mohawk descent, and on *Contact From the Underworld of Red Boy*, he is setting out to recover a part of his own past.

He's also advancing the cultural project that he began with his 1994 soundtrack album, *Music for "The Native Americans."*

Robertson is determined to elevate American Indian music to an essential place in our nation's heritage. But because *Contact* is a personal journey, he has the freedom to incorporate all the varied music that has been important to him – from the enduring roots rock he created with the Band to the atmospheric narratives of his solo albums to the up-to-the-minute programming wizardry of mixers Howie B and Marius de Vries, with whom he worked on *Contact*. The result is a haunting, richly textured blend of ancient spirituality, rattle-the-walls guitar and hypnotic beats.

For example, "The Sound Is Fading," the album's opening track, samples a young American Indian singer from a 1942 Library of Congress recording, constructs a keyboard melody based on her vocal and bathes both of those elements in synthesizer swirls and storms of Robertson's guitar. "Peyote Healing" colors the mesmerizing chants of a peyote ceremony with subtle keyboard, guitar and percussion touches.

"Sacrifice," the album's showpiece, features a chilling telephone conversation with American Indian activist Leonard Peltier, who describes the shootout at the Pine Ridge Reservation, in South Dakota, in which two FBI men and one American Indian were killed. Despite his proclamations of innocence, Peltier has been imprisoned since 1976 for the murders of the agents. Nonetheless, his faith in his cause is unshaken – and inspiring: "There's a lot of nights that I lie in my cell and can't understand why this hell, this hell and this terror that I've been going through for twenty-one years hasn't ended.... [But] I've gone too far now to start backing down. I don't give up. Not until my people are free will I give up."

Sacrifice

Written by Robbie Robertson.

Album: Contact from the Underworld of Red Boy.

*You know we have a million stories to tell
I'm just one of a million or more stories that could be told*

Chorus:

**Sacrifice your freedom
Sacrifice your prayer
Take away your language
Cut off all your hair
Sacrifice the loved ones
Who always stood by me
Stranded in the wasteland
Set my spirit free**

*My name is Leonard Peltier
I am a Lakota and Anishnabe
And I am living in the United States penitentiary
Which is the swiftest growing
Indian reservations in the country*

*I have been in prison since 1976
For an incident that took place on the Oglala-Lakota Nation
There was a shoot-out between members of the American Indian Movement
And The FBI and the local Sheriffs State Troopers
Two agents were killed and one Indian was murdered*

*Three of us were charged with the deaths of the FBI agents
My co-defendants were found not-guilty by reasons of self-defense
My case was separated and I was found guilty before a jury of non-Indian
people
**The prosecutor stated that they did not know who killed their agents
Nor did he know what participation Leonard Peltier may have played in it
But someone has to pay for the crime***

*There's a lot of nights that I lay in my cell
And I can't understand why this hell this hell and this terror
That I have been going through for twenty-one years hasn't ended*

Chorus

*But yet I know in my heart that someone has to pay sacrifice
To make things better for our people
The sacrifice I have made when I really sit down to think about it
Is nothing compared to what our people a couple hundred years ago
Or fifty years ago or twenty-five years ago have made
Some gave their lives
Some had to stand there and watch their children die in their arms
So the sacrifice I have made is nothing compared to those*

*I've gone too far now to start backing down
I don't give up
Not 'til my people are free will I give up
And if I have to sacrifice some more
Then I sacrifice some more*