



Who is This Dave O Guy Anyway? by Anita Olson

Last fall I had the pleasure of chatting with this Dave O guy and was reminded of a sociology paper I wrote about how the Internet fosters multiple selves (not to be confused with multiple personalities, of course). The basic idea is that the self is not a singular but rather made up of a compilation. Sherry Turkle, a big smarty pants at MIT, wrote a book called *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, discussing how "the Internet has become a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self that characterize postmodern life. In its virtual reality, we self-fashion and self-create."¹ In other words, the computer helps us see the multiple selves we possess and can help foster their development. Sitting with Dave O was like sitting with a Turkle case study.

Dave O is an artist, writer, poet, painter, drawer, collager, podcaster, speaker, hockey fan, tree hugger, pot advocate, hiker, documentarian, blogger, storyteller, office worker, daddy, husband, activist, teacher, do-gooder, and sauna sitter but I reckon that there is probably more in him that I missed. Many know him as the infamous Uncle Weed or simply as Dave O... and of course there's Dave Olson.

¹ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen*. Simon & Schuster. New York: 1995

rather than squabbling. I realized out on the blockade lines, the environmental advocates and the loggers both wanted the same thing. They both wanted the trees, they just wanted them for different reasons. These guys wanted them for jobs so they could buy TVs and RVs and those guys wanted them so they could feel good about breathing air. But we need to find a solution so we can all just get along.

So, over the intervening years I hear all this news that it had been turned into a UNESCO world heritage site and I was like, "we won and we changed the world". So I pack up the family (in '06) and it's going to be great, it's going to be like eco heaven. But when we got out there it was industrial tourism. Fucking RVs, provocatively named resorts, swimming pools and Jacuzzis everywhere. While we were there, the city of Tofino ran out of water and they packed up and stopped commercial usage. All the hotels had to pack up all the people and send them home. And I just happened to be there. And because I'm the kind of guy that takes a bag full of books with me on vacation and paints, I just used this as a sort of a catalyst to make a huge amount of paintings and my little recordings. The water outage and my whole tension about the area gave a spark to the whole thing. I brought all these files home and I totally stressed myself out on this vacation because I wanted to document all this injustice of the world and then I misplaced the files. [They were] missing for quite some time...on another computer on another thing...anyway I finally found

Using the Internet, Dave has created different personas each capturing a certain audience. Whether it's talking bud with Uncle Weed, rattling hockey stats as Dave O, or reading literary essays by Dave Olson, he has a lot of virtual ground covered. But having an audience is only half the tale; Dave would like "a paycheck to go with it."

In the two or three hours spent with Dave so many stories flowed that I can only fit a tiny fraction of what was shared that evening. I hope to have highlighted Dave as the artist he truly is. Who better but to have Dave's own words to describe his artistic process, a new project and how he perceives himself as an artist. The following is an excerpt from an autumn chat between RAIN and Dave O.

What he's recently been up to...

DAVE: [I've been working on] some recordings I made in 2006 while visiting the Clayquot Sound area. I was at the blockades in 1993 near Tofino. I was a young 20 something year-old and I stood on the blockade lines and watched everyone get arrested...and out there on the blockade lines I learnt a lot of pivotal lessons, and it's really what got me into hemp and alternative fibers and peaceful activities and bringing people together

the files and thought, this is what I gotta do; I gotta find how to make these into something.

So over the last month I've made them into a nine-part podcast series called "Rain Forest Dispatches." It's a combination of me reading essays, me kind of running on spiels, my own personal frustrations with things, then flashing back to the blockades, and then visiting the friends of Clayquot Sound Organization and having some interviewee conversations. I was wondering what to do with them...it's hard editing your own audio. For one, you sound like a chipmunk and two, it's like, "shut up, we get it dude". I needed something to break it up and stretch it out and the stories were all told out of sequence too. It was totally non-linear but then I started to put together a few bits and pieces of music. A young lady named Becks from Vancouver Island made a song called "Lonesome Traveler" and it was...perfect. I made a little introduction with seaplanes and sounds of waves lapping against the shore. And then I found this guy William Whitmore Elliot. It sounds like he's an old 75 year old man from the delta but he's this nice young college boy from Iowa, sings these great blues songs. And our pal Geoff Berner in "Light enough to Travel" where he sings about smashing the windows of logging companies just to get a little release and these pieces just came together. Labour Day weekend I locked myself in my studio and just edited audio and I started releasing them. I've got five of them out now.

How he describes himself and what he does...

DAVE: I make mixed media story packs... I'm a story maker rather than a storyteller. To describe what I do, it's not really performance art and its not really spoken word and it's certainly not slam poetry. It's more like I sit around a campfire with a very focused conversation about things because everything I do is very, very deliberate...and my presentations, in order to make it look like I'm making it all up, take a tremendous amount of work.

I've made a deliberate point of knowing how to write in every style. Everything from press releases, expository and free prose, and that is what keeps me employed.

I'm a private man and separate my family and day job from the Internet. I only share bits of myself that other people may find compelling in one way or another.

I like sharing stuff...I just don't like organizing it to share it.

But Dave's work is organized in the virtual world. He has a wicked website, www.uncleweed.net where there are links to numerous podcasts, blogs, poetry, essays, pictures, films, paintings, a resume and more...a virtual adventure well worth diving into!

On the otherside of this lovely little insert is a bit of a timeline Dave whipped up for RAIN titled "Flying High." It displays his eclectic style and the thoughtful intention he pours in all of his work. Sharing parts of himself, from a scrawny kid, where he's lived and traveled, paintings, writings and up to what he's currently been doing covers this aesthetically pleasing and informative piece.

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Flying High, the Dave
Olson Boardgame
by Dave Thorvald Olson

The Cyborg: The faces of
Dave O
by Anita Olson