



BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

BY DYLAN TUPPER RUPERT

Fred & Toody Cole of Dead Moon

For 48 years Fred's and Toody Cole's lives have been completely intertwined, their partnership evinced in the crucial output of Dead Moon—their iconic, long-running Portland punk group. If you want an emblem of what it means to be a lifer, look toward this duo. You'd be hard pressed to meet another pair as dedicated—to each other, and to rock and roll. The Coles are the grandparents of Portland punk. They've stuck it out for over four decades of family raising, touring, and running a music shop that became home base for a town's entire scene. In light of a 10-month hiatus while Fred recuperated from heart surgery, the Coles dissected the inseparability of their lives and their creative work.

ON THEIR 24/7, LIFELONG TOGETHERNESS:

TOODY COLE: It's a weird thing, no matter what you're doing. It is pretty spectacular. We're lucky. It always worked—from the very beginning. We both like working hard. We both like money. We both like accomplishing something and building something from scratch. We've done all right. Put a lot of hard years in.

FRED COLE: We're very seldom ever apart.

TC: When we are, we freak if it's more than about an hour. Every once in a while we'll take off in a different vehicle and run errands, say we'll meet each other back here, and if either one of us is late we'll start freaking out.

FC: And I'm deaf as hell so I can't hear on a phone if she were to call. So I don't even have one.

TC: It's when we're not doing stuff together when we have problems.

FC: We get disjointed.

TC: We really need to feel that connection.

ON GETTING STARTED:

TC: The kids were older. Our youngest was 10 or 11.

FC: She's been playing bass since then. I started playing guitar on stage. Before I just was a lead singer. I finally had it with all these guitar players, every one of them was into playing this hot shit.

TC: Fred talked me into learning how to play bass when I was 30—when we started our first band, The Rats. It was my first experience with playing music, getting up on stage. I was incredibly shy. I thought, "I can't do this!" And Fred would say, "Yeah, yeah, you'll be fine. Punk rock is simple."

FC: I played the basic guitar stuff and had Toody play the basic bass stuff. I'd never played guitar in a band; Toody had never played bass in a band. That's how it started out.

ON FAMILY AND LIFE:

FC: We met when we were 18.

TC: I think it was three kids by age 22? [cackles] Catholic high school girl. Didn't know anything about birth control.

FC: We always worked together. We never had regular jobs. We'd clean apartments, be in funky little businesses. We had our music store, Captain Wizard.

TC: I used to fix cars at one point. I took in sewing, just whatever.

FC: Self-employed to stay alive.

TC: We were in Portland 90 percent of the time. We did a couple different stints in L.A. for a year and a half or so, because in the late-'60s and mid-'70s, you had to go to L.A. to do anything. We went up and did homestead in the Yukon territories for almost a year with the first two kids. We were gypsies. [laughs]

FC: I was playing in bands the whole time.

TC: Either that or trying to get one together. When they started school, that's when we settled down and opened up Captain Wizard, our music store downtown, and stayed in Portland. [Fred] got bounced around a lot as a kid, starting a new school every other year, and he was like, "I'm not putting my kids through that shit."

FC: We ended up buying this lot. Nothing on it. No buildings. Not even a road. We were living in a tent with our kids, building a house out of salvaged lumber we found downtown in dumpsters. We'd come out here, camp all weekend long, build the house, then suddenly we had enough of a roof over our head. We've lived here ever since.

ON FINDING HERSELF IN DEAD MOON:

TC: It was my first band that I absolutely fell in love with right from the get-go. I had the best time of my fucking life. Great chemistry right from the start. We just starting playing cover songs and whatever else we knew. Making friends over there [in Europe], playing huge gigs, little gigs, dinky gigs, this and that and everything in between. Dead Moon was life changing for me. Gave me incredible confidence, changed my whole attitude. It was my life as woman, not a young girl and a mother. It was a whole different phase.

ON OPPOSITES ATTRACTING:

TC: If you're too, too much alike, at some point you get bored. I'm glad I don't have a particular talent for songwriting, for example. Dabbling with lyrics and stuff—that's his thing. If we both did, that might be a problem.

FC: You need to feel you're your own individual.

TC: And that support and respect is there for what the other person is doing.

FC: I used to hate that whole trip with Elvis, for instance, who used to make his wife dress exactly the way he wanted, to dye her hair, or the guys who do that to women ... Same with chicks who do that to guys, tell them to do this or that. Hey, you are who you are. It kills me that, if you fall in love with somebody, they're perfect to begin with. Then as time goes on, you start to notice issues. Realistically, you should be happy with that person as time goes on instead of all of a sudden realizing, "She's not quite as pretty ... She's not quite as nice ..."

TC: It's much easier to grow up apart than it is to grow up together. Not that everything's been smooth sailing, but it's cool. We've been pretty fortunate to make it over the rough spots.

FC: Believe me, they exist.

TC: Those times in your life where you're not on an even keel—and you both work through it—you know when the other person is worth it. ✍