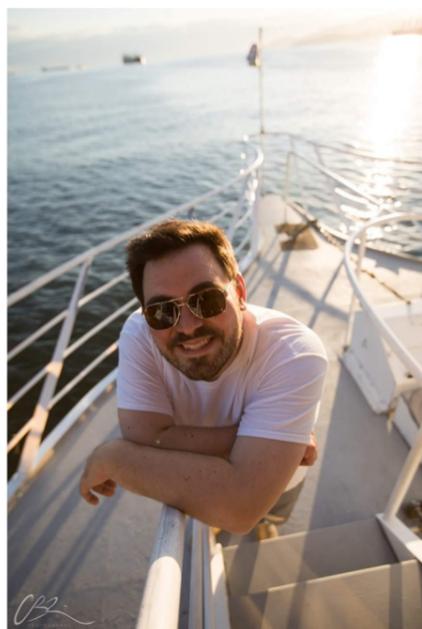


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Best of Richmond: A moment with Rob Fillo

Richmond News

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Rob Fillo. Photo submitted

In this week's print edition of the Richmond News, we published a 32-page special section called Best of Richmond, where local businesses and services were voted for best in category by you, the readers. (Digital version available here <https://issuu.com/richmond-news/docs/rmdthu20200924bestofrmdfeature>).

You will also see profiles of some of our city's finest folks, from the worlds of business, sports, the arts, first responders and volunteering.

Rob Fillo is a local song writer and multidisciplinary artist, born and raised in Richmond. He utilizes his many talents to create songs, videos and visual arts to reflect society and his experiences. Rob has seen Richmond change from a farming and fishing town into a booming metropolis and has a lot to say about it. His projects come from a place of love in search of wisdom, but he pulls no punches when important things need to be said. Rob's works have been recognized internationally and his circle of supporters has been growing exponentially after a successful music tour that just wrapped up on Vancouver Island this summer.

1. What do you like best about Richmond?

At this point, my memories outweigh the current reality. If I had to say what I liked best about Richmond, it was my peaceful childhood running around the South Arm area happy and free. Richmond was very safe then with much fewer people and less cars. When I was growing up, there was also a lot more grassroots community interaction among young families and a lot less reliance on the City of Richmond to guide and provide community events and entertainment. People used to trust each other here and reach out to their neighbours. I remember large gatherings in South Arm Park, community driven barbecues and a lot more nature still existed to explore. Being a child in Richmond was idyllic in many ways. There was always something to do and explore; So many barefoot wanders, frog catching in the old ditches, and fishing off the old three road pier. It's not the same place it was back then, but where is?

2. How do you stay healthy in Richmond?

To remain healthy, I would recommend looking to some of the dwindling slivers of nature and going for a walk. Personally, I walk for hours when my schedule permits. I will often be found late at night, after the city is asleep, going for long and winding walks through the lovely old super-block neighbourhoods that Richmond's main traffic arteries were designed around. The well-kept yards and protected trees provide a refreshing sensual experience. Almost all super-blocks also contain hidden parks and small natural refuges to explore.

3. What's your favourite sliver of nature in Richmond?

My all-time favourite "sliver" of nature is very near South Arm Park. There is a strip of green, alongside an old ditch, that stems from a crosswalk leaving the park at its south central point. It would have been the continuation of Garden City Road if Garden City Road plowed right through the park. It's only about 500 metres long and as wide as a road, but it's such a

peaceful and quiet refuge. The homes that back onto it are lovely and vintage, not these ridiculous mansions. When I walk that little piece of paradise, I feel like I've gone back in time to when Richmond was much more peaceful.

4. What song best describes Richmond?

My Hometown by Bruce Springsteen. It's not word for word my experience, but it captures a certain je ne sais quoi. A lament for times past and childhood memories. Unless you're a rich person, Richmond is no longer a welcoming place. It's very hard to find work for us aging townies and rent is outrageous. The Walmart or Tim Hortons wages simply won't cover the cost for a one bedroom rental apartment, not to mention all the other essentials. It's no wonder homelessness is on the rise in Richmond, and now with COVID-19... I feel very lucky to have the talents and opportunities I have had to be able to stay afloat here, for now.

5. Where in Richmond do you like to take out-of-town guests?

My place! I live in the fledgling arts district of Richmond in the Capstan Village area. I have worked very hard to get my space functional and fabulous. In recent months, I have had a lot of time for home improvement and my place looks great. COVID-19 has puts the breaks on many of my public events and outreach projects, but it's also given me time to re-evaluate my artistic priorities and focus on what I love most, songwriting. Hopefully with future local arts and community developments in the area, it will soon be a good location for more collaborations and creative spaces. Right now it's a loud and crowded construction mess, but times are changing. I have positive hopes for the future of the area.

6. Is there an adaption to COVID-19 that's been made you'd like kept. (i.e, working from home, one way traffic in Steveston, automatic walk signs)

I would just as soon forget COVID-19 ever happened, once it's gone. I sincerely hope it goes away soon. I really didn't enjoy the Steveston adaptations this summer and I don't think it helped business or COVID-19 safety much, but what do I know? One thing I would like to see more of in Richmond is positive social change. There has been some of that during this pandemic. We are all neighbours in Richmond. I want to see us go back to the Richmond I once knew. A Richmond where being neighbours meant something. It's not about flashing your money around or driving fancy cars or steamrolling regulations to make ever larger mansions. A good life and a good city is about community, health and purpose. I hope our citizens and municipal government keep that close to their thoughts and hearts when we are rebuilding Richmond after this pandemic.

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