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My Weekend: Kevin Smith

Alex Wade

Cameron Smith is an intriguing musician. A glance at his website – www.cameronsmusic.co.uk – reveals an impressive array of achievements and a beguiling collection of songs, many of which appear to be about the delights and pains of love. One, *The Sheltering Sky*, is clearly a play on the eponymous novel by Paul Bowles, in which Port and Kit Moresby's attempt to save their faltering marriage in the North African desert founders in an environment that provides everything but shelter. So far, so literary, and yet closer scrutiny of Cameron Smith's website reveals something else. Cameron Smith is, in fact, also a lawyer.



lawyer and singer-songwriter
Kevin Smith, for Law

"I'm something of a Jekyll and Hyde character," confesses Kevin Smith, 31. No wonder, for by day Kevin Smith is a disputes lawyer with international law firm Fulbright & Jaworski LLP. At night and on weekends his alter-ego, Cameron, emerges. That the two are one and the same is hinted at in the biographical details on cameronsmusic.co.uk, where there is a reference to the study of law and, under the "About Me" menu, a CV that bears the unmistakable stamp of a lawyer's professionalism.

"I enjoy the intellectual challenges of the law," says Smith, "but the law doesn't fulfil every aspect of my character. My music is vital to my sense of self. Then again, music alone doesn't fulfil everything either. The two things balance each other."

Smith has been involved in music since the age of five, when he began playing the organ, and started composing when he was 15. He was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta, and his work was first performed onstage as part of a play entitled *Horn of Sorrow*, which ran at a major Canadian theatre festival in 1994, when he was just 18. His mother's family hails from somewhere fractionally closer to mainland Britain – the Inner Hebrides island of Islay. There Smith would spend his summer holidays, hence his musical identity as Cameron.

As a musician Smith has already acquired a CV that would be the envy of many aspiring songsmiths. He has composed the scores for several short films, including a documentary for the BAFTA award-winning filmmaker Stuart Urban, whose own credits include *An Ungentlemanly Act* and *Our Friends of the North*. He has scored a dance musical – *Dance Troupe* – and the black-humoured short *Life's A Bleach*. As well as film scores, Smith has found the time to record two albums in the last five years, *The Hidden* and *The Quixotic Landscapes*. He is signed to Indie label Matchbox Recordings (www.matchboxrecordings.co.uk), and is currently working with producer Julian Chown on his first full album – *Geography* – to be released in July.

Indeed, Smith tried his hand as a musician upon qualifying as a solicitor with Allen & Overy. "I felt that I had to pursue music at that stage in my life," he recalls. "I benefited hugely from exploring this for two and a half years and got to the stage where I could just about rely upon music as a source of income." But Smith's other self was champing at the bit for another kind of challenge. "Life as a musician is great, but after a while I realized I was missing the kind of problem-solving that comes with the law. I returned to the profession with Fulbright & Jaworski, and was fortunate to find that the firm has always been incredibly encouraging of my music. The partners provide an immense amount of moral support for me and other lawyers who have interests outside work."

This strikes me as a little unusual and not, at any rate, what life was like some 15 years ago when I joined the law. "I think the culture in many law firms is changing," says Smith. "After all, during the recruitment process law firms put a premium on candidates being well-rounded, and want to know all about your hobbies and passions. It's hardly reasonable that they ask you to drop all those interests the

moment you join, is it?"

I couldn't agree more, but what if Geography proves to be a hit? Would Smith continue to ply his trade as a lawyer and craft elegant and subtle music in his spare time? He pauses, says that one shouldn't build one's hopes too high, and repeats that both the law and music play vital roles in his psyche. Whether Kevin or Cameron, it's a nice problem to have.

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