

## arts &amp; entertainment

**Rankin Family comfortably familiar**

by Richard Lim

When I tell people I went to see the Rankin Family on Sunday, February 6, I get a lot of smiles (smirks) and clever (smarmy) comments. I guess it's because university students are too hip (cynical) for music which isn't chaotic (noisy) and lyrics which aren't ironic (nihilistic).

**CONCERT REVIEW**  
**The Rankin Family**  
 Metro Centre

Perhaps it's the wholesome image which irritates the Gen X sensibilities. Heather, Raylene, Carol Jean ("Cookie"), Jimmy and John Morris Rankin all have that freshly-scrubbed cheer which doesn't wash well (pun intended) with the mosh pit and Doc Martens crowd. On one hand, the three sold-out shows at the Metro Centre demonstrate the broad appeal of the Rankin Family, but it would be nice to see more twenty-somethings enjoying an evening of simple pleasures which excludes alcohol and/or drum machines.

The concert was opened by Ron Hynes, the Newfoundland songwriter and singer who penned "Sonny's Dream" back in 1976. Unfortunately, it took two songs before the sound technician decided to mix the music and vocals rather than broadcasting them from separate speakers at dif-

ferent ends of the stage. Once this problem was fixed, Hynes' brand of hard-edged country rock was well-received by the audience, particularly "Roy Orbison Came Along" and the aforementioned classic.

The Rankin Family Band took the stage at 8:30 pm and for the next 100 minutes, all the snow and wind and subzero temperatures became distant and vague memories. The set opened with Jimmy's humorous and upbeat spiel introduction. Then came the music, with John Morris on the piano, fiddler Howie MacDonald and some fellow Capers on the drums and bass. Finally the three sisters joined Jimmy on the front edge of the stage, and a ringing chorus of perfectly-blended voices filled the air.

All the familiar flavours were there: The sweeping Gaelic stories, the fine Celtic influence, the familiar curls and accents of the Irish, a taste of folk and a hint of pop, the rollicking fiddle duet/duel between John Morris and Howie MacDonald, the pleasing mix of traditional (familiar) tunes and modern songs (often written by Jimmy), and the amazing footwork of Heather, Cookie and Raylene.

The Rankin siblings gave the audiences some glimpses of their individual character in addition to the requisite clear-eyed innocence which they are known for. Jimmy often went deep down for some gutsy vo-

cals, while John Morris' stylish dexterity stood out even as he shied away from the spotlight that picked him out now and again. When a fan shouted, "I love you, Cookie!" she responded with a gentle smile and, "You're a sweetheart," while Heather stood with one hand on her hip and mock-snarled, "Thanks a lot, buddy!" Raylene's energy was evident and infectious; even when she wasn't step-dancing, she was in constant motion.

While much of the evening's performance was drawn from their latest album, "North Country", the old favourites provided just as many highlights. There was Raylene reaching up to touch the sharp high notes of "Rise Again", and the infectious chorus of "Mairi's Wedding" brought the audience to its feet.

The audience returned the Rankins to the stage for a two song encore, but the emotional highlight

came just before, when Jimmy and Cookie breathed the opening bars to "Fare Thee Well Love", one of many Rankin Family songs about love lost and love hoped for. A hush descended upon the darkened arena. The air grew taut with the emotional wires which join sorrow and joy, regret and hope; and the air was warm with the flow of love that ran through it.

**Identify with animals**

by Mark Farmer

Finally a film dear to my heart (see name under headline). OK, I'm kidding — but *Leon The Pig Farmer* is a wry, witty flick, well worth seeing.

Leon Geller (Mark Frankel) is a nice Jewish boy and real estate agent in London who quits his job after he's asked to help turn Charles Dickens' house into an aroma therapy clinic.

Leon gets enlisted by mom to deliver lunches for her catering company, and finds out on a run to the fertility clinic ("First floor: marriage counselling, second floor: premature ejaculation") that he's the proud product of artificial insemination.

Unfortunately he later finds out the test tubes got mixed up all those years ago. His father isn't Sidney Geller, Jewish curtain salesman, but Brian Chadwick, Anglo-Saxon pig farmer in Lower Dinthorpe, Yorkshire — Leon's a goy. "One day you'll laugh at this," coos the doctor.

The rest of the film is Leon's struggle to deal with his goy side, his newfound heritage and his old parents. Both sets of parents learn to deal with the other's culture.

Leon's enchanting. He's pitiful, lacks any self-esteem or identity, but he's completely genuine and lovable. He's like a young Jeff Goldblum, awkward but amiable. This rubs off on women, and Leon lands in bed with good friend Lisa, then the quite un-Jewish Madeleine, a stained-glass artist with a fetish for Jews and herbal tea.

*Leon's like a young Jeff Goldblum, awkward but amiable.*

Leon spends most of his time trying to come to terms with good old-fashioned Judaic guilt. "Guilt isn't a word — it's a way of life!" he explains to Brian. In a slightly surreal touch, total strangers become Leon's conscience, walking up to him on the street and telling him what he should do with his life.

Witness Leon's attempt to stay kosher in the face of insurmountable odds, the tension and angst as he tries the lobster special ("Am I to take it zhat zir is Jewish?" gasps the waiter), the abject terror and nausea of pig farming. Dabbling in artificial insemination in the barn, Leon inadvertently creates what may be the world's first kosher pig — half sheep/half pig.

Witness also the honest attempts of Leon's newfound family to make him feel at home. Brian and Yvonne (played by Connie Booth of *Fawlty Towers* fame) try to eat kosher and learn Yiddish. Mounted pigs' heads get replaced by Israeli travel posters. Blood pudding gives way to chicken soup.

But they end up sounding like Jackie Mason gone honky. Leon points out that being Jewish is more than mozza and shouting "Oy!"; they're dealing with 5,000 years of history and guilt, and you just can't take Brian seriously after he says, "This is my wife Yvonne, but you can call her thunderthighs!"

*Leon The Pig Farmer* is a romp of a film, comical, indulgent and just as naive and innocent as Leon. It loses a little steam in the second half, but it's a lot of fun. Look for a lot of visual gags, and while you're at it look for a guest appearance by Burt Kwouk (Kato from *The Pink Panther* series). A tongue-in-cheek look at the search for identity and what it means to be Jewish. A-

*Leon The Pig Farmer is at Wormwood's Dog & Monkey Cinema on Gottingen St., Feb 11-17.*

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- Rev. John E. Boyd

Music: Walton, Holst, Karg-Elert, Widor

**No Student Luncheon on February 13****February 20; 10:30 a.m. Worship**

Sermon: *A Covenant of Grace..*

- Rev. John E. Boyd

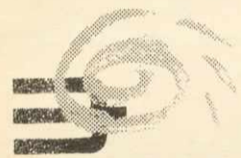
Music: Sanders, Hilton, Howells

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