

# York coed playing a lead role in Hair

By BRYAN JOHNSON

When the 30 members of the Hair cast first assembled early in December, musical director George Taros took great care to instill in them the basic concepts on which the show rests. Each performer, he said, is an individual; every one is different.

As far as Susan Little, a first year theatre student at York, was concerned, he needn't have bothered. It's just lucky for her, in fact, that you don't have to look like one of the Hair cast to be one. She doesn't.

Instead, the 19-year-old from Shelburne, Ontario, population 1400, is more like the popular conception of the girl-next-door; a perfect daughter, you'd say, for Ronald Regan, or maybe Robert Stanfield. All the adjectives that image brings to mind — intelligent, witty, confident, polite, wholesome — that's Susan.

Somehow, though, she manages to make being wholesome work in a sort of 1970-groovy-theatre-chick way. The residents of Shelburne probably wouldn't understand the word, but Susan is what the modern jargon of youth would approvingly call very, very "together".

Take for example, the way she reacted to being chosen for Hair. Some of the more experienced members of the cast, and there are many, are reported to have threatened to walk out if they didn't land one of the six lead roles: a 16-year-old high schooler moaned "It's just too fantastic!"

Susan just took it with a shrug and a sheepish sort of smile. "I was waiting for a break," she says. "And it just came at the right time. I'm glad that it didn't come till now, really. That way I had the chance to do a lot of other things before. I wasn't brain-washed with all the theatre things."

But then that attitude is hardly surprising when you consider the way she approached the five tension packed audition sessions.

"I didn't really get all that keyed up about it. I'd go back to the university and get back into the routine and when they called me back I went and did it again."

And though Susan makes it all sound like pretty dull stuff, her auditions were good enough to win her a spot on a cast crammed with experienced pros.

At least two of the cast, Terry Black and Gale Garnett,



Susan Little

have hit records to their credit and Miss Garnett was a 1965 winner of a coveted Grammy Award.

Susan's reaction? "They all started somewhere. I'm just starting now."

Moreover, she's candid enough to admit, with just a little prodding, that the more theatrical attitude of some of her compatriots does bother her somewhat.

"There are some people I have met in the show," she says "who are exactly what I don't want the theatre to be to me — very showy and everything I mean."

"I knew that that's what the theatre was going to be

like," she adds. "Probably I realized it more than those who have been in it longer. That's why I was really glad that I got into Hair because it's not really that way; at least that's not what we're saying."

Asked about the show's controversial nude scene, she replied with what was by now becoming a familiar thoughtful expression.

"At first I thought I wouldn't go into it, and my mother signed the contract on the condition that I wouldn't — though she wouldn't stop me. But they explained the nude scene to us and it's got something. Now I probably will do it because it's not an obscene thing. They've made it very beautiful."

So far Susan has not found herself the center of attention among her friends that the three high school members of the cast reported; though, as she says, "I don't hang around with that type of people."

But home in Shelburne Ontario (population 1400, remember?) the natives, who remember her as a skiing, skating, horseback-riding tomboy, are not taking the news quite so calmly. The local newspaper, apparently a little over-excited, informed the community that Susan was the star of the show.

Meanwhile her mother, who throughout the auditions advised Susan to forget it, is now listening to the Hair original-cast album but admits that she still doesn't understand the music.

"In a thing like this," Susan philosophizes, "you're bound to lose some friends and win some others. I really haven't noticed anything special yet though."

And what about the future? Again she displays the same rather untheatrical attitude.

"If I've got the talent and it can be used, I'll use the show as a stepping stone. But if I'm not really that much in demand I'll go back to university. I'll take it for what it's worth. I don't have any plans for the future really. Hair's big enough for right now."

On one point, though, she is adamant. "I'm not going to fight and battle and go through people to get on top. If I've got the talent and other people see it that's fine; if not, that's fine too. But don't get me wrong," she adds, "I'll put everything I have into Hair."

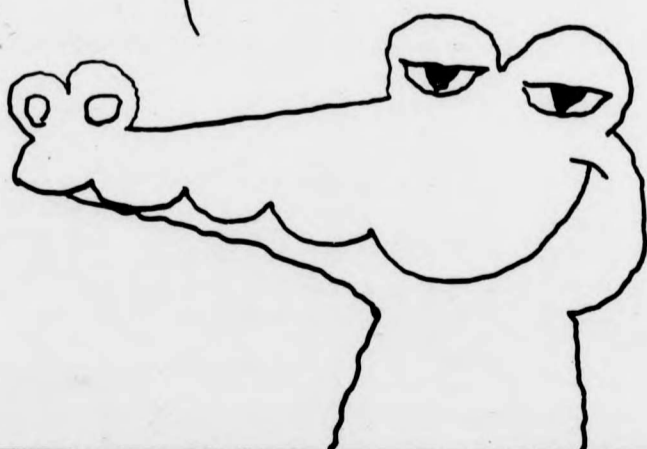
Even a tribal love rock musical can't ask any more than that.

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## Catharsis fills in for Pat

By EUGENE CATHARSIS

Last week wasn't exactly a banner week for rock music in Toronto, but Uncle Pat had retired to Adnil to sharpen his pencils in preparation for the Band concert, so I got the word to truck on down to the Hawk's Nest.

There was a fair crowd at Ron Scribner's club to welcome the return of a singer who paid his dues in the Toronto soul scene. While waiting for Eric and the band the people actually danced! (Although they were rather rusty after the long concert thing in Toronto and exhibited a singular inability to dance to anything other than a soul beat).

That the Fillmore was originally a rocking band's place and that rock is meant to be danced to seems to have been lost in the cycederic age.

Eric Mercury is a very powerful soul blues singer who is extremely physically and emotionally involved in his music. I personally do not get off on soul fingers of any type because they all seem to feel that the projection of excitement expresses a range of emotions from love, through desire and passion to hate, while to me they express only excitement, but I also hate the "Wimin is Rags" school of blues philosophy.

The fact that Eric Mercury is just a powerful soul singer with poor feeling on slow numbers was more than compensated by refreshing material, lyrics that escape the "sockittome" cliches and his eminently solid backing band Birthright.

Eric Mercury sings material that is different from that of most soul singers and Birthright plays them in a together manner with arrangements drawn from a variety of fields.

Elliott Randall is a particularly fine guitarist with really articulate and original rock riffs. The rhythm section is great, laying a soulful jazzed-up beat with solid bass work in the best Spax tradition. Occasionally their arrangements became excessively snooky, but generally they were very solid.

The Collectors, from Vancouver perhaps the most distinctive B.C. band, certainly a group of excellent writers and musicians, are in town for a while. They will play a gig at the Hawk's Nest later in January.