

# Ian & Sylvia entertain with 'new, fresh' music



Ian and Sylvia Tyson, who appeared at the Playhouse last weekend said Fredericton audiences were fantastic. They must have been, for the duo did an encore show.

By SUSAN MANZER  
News Editor

Unlike the four strong winds and the seven seas that don't change (which made Ian and Sylvia famous), the Tysons continue to entertain Canadian audiences across the country with "new, fresh" music and song.

Actually it's been 13 years since the duo got together, later to become Mr. and Mrs.

"Sylvia and I were introduced over the telephone, actually, in 1959 but it wasn't until 1960 that we got together," Ian said. "I was working in a factory in Toronto and singing at night in coffee houses. My boss had heard this marvelous singing voice at a wild party in Chatham, Ont., Sylvia's hometown. He told me all about her and said we should get together."

"So a few months later he phoned from another wild party and said to listen to this. So I listened and sure enough, here over the sound of revelry, came Sylvia's bell-like tone. I thought

she really sounded great. Then about a year later we actually met and I got Sylvia a job singing in the club I was performing in at the time.

"It was a great old club in Toronto called 'The First Floor' and it was one of the original coffee houses with jazz and folk music and just about anything. I guess it was about that time we started singing together. I don't really remember when it became official but it started about 1960."

Ian's musical affiliations came a bit earlier than his new stint with Sylvia, about 15 years ago to be exact.

"I started pretty late because I was sort of retarded musically and I didn't pick up a guitar until I was 22 which would really be unusual today. But at that time not many people played guitar," he explained. "I came from good old polka country where if anybody played anything they played the accordion and Polish tunes."

"I was in the hospital with a broken leg in the next bed to

another fellow who also had a broken leg. He had a guitar which he couldn't play, so to while away the hours we decided we would see if we could figure out the chords. We didn't even know what chords were but that's what we did. Eventually when I got out of the hospital one month later I could play A, D and E. Now I can play A, D, E and G, 15 years later."

Ian mentioned that he never had any formal musical training but that most guitar players haven't or "not enough to hurt their playing too much". He said that nowadays, however, younger musicians are better trained. Still most of them play by ear.

Ian also explained that most guitar players' instruments are rarely the same as when they purchased them.

"We do a lot of modifying and customizing just like a hot rod. Everybody changes the action and the pace and this and that and eventually the guitar almost gets made over completely. A lot of guys have secrets in the way they rewire their electric guitar and it's very competitive."

He added that he plays a six string acoustic guitar. "I don't play 12 string anymore. I lost my 12 string a few years ago in New York and I never found another one I like so I just stick to a six string. I have a lot of trouble with it."

Concerning their music Ian said that in a concert he would estimate that about three quarters of the songs performed would be their own compositions. Along with his band "The Great Speckled Bird" who have been with Ian since 1969, they counted they'd done about 180 different tunes on their TV shows last year. Some of them were from the hit parade and some of them were country hits but Ian said that the networks were very good. They never told them what to play.

"We just pick the tunes that we like and I think that is why they come off sounding good because they have the enthusiasm," he added. "It's not too good playing songs you don't like because it usually shows."

When asked if anything in his music is distinctively Ian and Sylvia, he replied that that is pretty hard for a singer to answer.

"I think that's something the listener can hear more readily than the singer because when the listener listens to an artist that he likes very much there's something that communicates very strongly.

The singer, after awhile, develops a style that he may or may not be conscious of and once the style is set that's pretty well it, for better or for worse; he just plays the style. We've just tried to progress and tried to keep fresh."

"We've changed a lot over the years and we find that when we do change, at first people resent it a little. Then after while they sort of accept it. When we started playing early country rock music it was hard going for awhile but people now seem to like that kind of music very much in Canada."

"I think it's the duty of the singer to try and keep moving ahead. People will always request the old tunes in night clubs but one of the reasons for this is that these are the titles they know. I think its mostly to try to keep going ahead and hope that the people will like whatever we come up with; they not always do."

Ian said that there are a great many singers who have influenced his style over the years.

Currently he admires songwriter Tom T. Hall (mostly country singers) along with pop records such as the Lennon-McCartney songs. He added that he and Sylvia have widely different tastes in music. She likes to listen to folk music from all over the world but he feels that there is so much music available today that there is always something stimulating for everyone.

Does Ian Tyson have a favourite song he's written?

"Most songwriters like the last song they wrote. But I think the song I've written that is my personal favourite is "Summer Wages" which is not a big hit but it has a feeling that I like. I don't get tired of doing it. A lot of songs that you write you get tired of and just throw them out."

Although Ian and Sylvia base most of their work now in Canada they did, as many budding Canadian artists do, go to the States for the success opportunities.

"We worked from 1963 to 1968 mostly in the US," said Ian, "because there was more call for our kind of music than there was in Canada, however we always lived here. But in the last few years the whole music scene has changed here so much that when we were given the opportunity to do the "Ian Tyson Show", I didn't know if it was a good idea or not but I thought we'd try it because it was a

way for us to be home more. Our son was going to school and it worked out fine."

Ian feels that young Canadian talent should not necessarily stay in Canada to work.

"I think they should go where their creativity takes them. I think that if a young singer has a real talent and he's doing something really creative, people will recognize it at once. But if they don't, I think it's up to him to go where the audience is. I don't really think it matters if it's Australia or where it is as long as the audience is responsive. A player has to play wherever there's an audience. I think today more and more young Canadians are staying home which I feel is great because no doubt we've lost a lot of talent over the years. It's really up to the audiences to support the young singers."

Ian mentioned that they don't travel as much as they used to. They may go out only three or four months of the year now compared to when they used to spend all their time on the road. The "Ian Tyson Show" may be the major reason for this.

The shows are done in groups of four, sometimes groups of eight, all put together in a week. The band gets together and with Ian and they rehearse for five days just on the music alone. Then in two days they tape four television shows. Ian said, however, that doing shows in bunches like this does give everybody a chance to go out on the road or do what they want to do.

Is Ian still reaching for a particular goal? "I still haven't written that couple of songs I want to write. Also there are a number of places I'd like to play, such as Ireland. I'd like to play the Grand Old Opry again, and then there is the National Arts Centre in Ottawa which I think we'll do in another month or so. I think it's the greatest concert hall in the world."

The music business also has its difficulties and its rewards according to Ian.

"All the difficulties are big at the moment but the one great thing about the music business and singing is that every next day is a new beginning. Some nights are really bad and everybody gets very, very depressed but if you can just keep in mind that the next day

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## src by-elections

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1973

Candidates for SCIENCE REPRESENTATIVE- one to be elected half term

JAEGER, Valerie (S) 3  
VEYSEY, Stephen W. (S) 3

Candidate for REPRESENTATIVE AT LARGE- requires 10% of the student body

FLANAGAN, Patrick (A) 3

Positions left vacant at close of nominations:  
Post Graduate Representative  
Secretary of the Graduating Class

Polls and Times for SRC By-Election

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Tilley Hall    | 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.                         |
| Head Hall      | 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.                        |
| Stud           | 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.                       |
| McConnell Hall | 11:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m.- 6:30 p.m. |
| Lady Dunn Hall | 11:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m.- 6:30 p.m. |
| Sub            | 9:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.                        |

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