

Poet plunges below the surface

By Ryan Stanley

Irving Layton, one of Canada's most popular and prolific poets, was the special guest at the Annual General meeting of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia, held at the Dalhousie Arts Centre November 4 and 5. Layton's powerful yet touching readings to the audience in the Sir James Dunn Theatre on Saturday evening were an appropriate finale to the very successful event.

As a two-time nominee for the Nobel Prize for Literature, a member of the Order of Canada and composer of over 30 published volumes of poetry, Layton's success as a poet has few parallels in this country today. His ability to produce verse of great quality seems to have no limits.

Layton began his reading with his definition of a poet. He calls him "God's recording angel" whose purpose it is "to commu-

icate the . . . majesty, the colour and . . . the unpredictability of human existence." Layton sees himself as a prophet who "warns people of the dangers of the human spirit."

It was clear from the beginning that Layton was dealing with an audience that had come prepared to be captivated by his poetry. Though he requested that applause be held until the end, listeners on several occasions could not contain their appreciation.

Layton charmed his audience with his wit, his ability to stimulate for them vivid sensory images and his often novel insights into human nature.

The poet's sharp sense of humour punctuated his readings from time to time. He set the mood at the outset by relating how he once experienced a sudden rush of images upon entering a restaurant, grabbed a pencil from a startled waitress and scibbled

"The Swimmer" in less than five minutes. The poem drew an interesting connection between a swimmer and the poet, who "plunges below the surface" to discover and reveal "the hidden truths of human nature."

Another more sober and disturbing poem, entitled "Cain", probed the human tendency to kill. Layton expressed this concern with the darker side of human nature in other compositions such as "The Predator".

But it was in his social commentaries, many of which dealt with issues of religion, that Layton showed his true genius. He pleaded for wisdom and understanding between Jew and Arab, and contemplated the motives of the Almighty in allowing religious conflict to persist. When Layton confronted problems in society, he never failed to reach their roots, which he feels are invariably located in the human spirit.

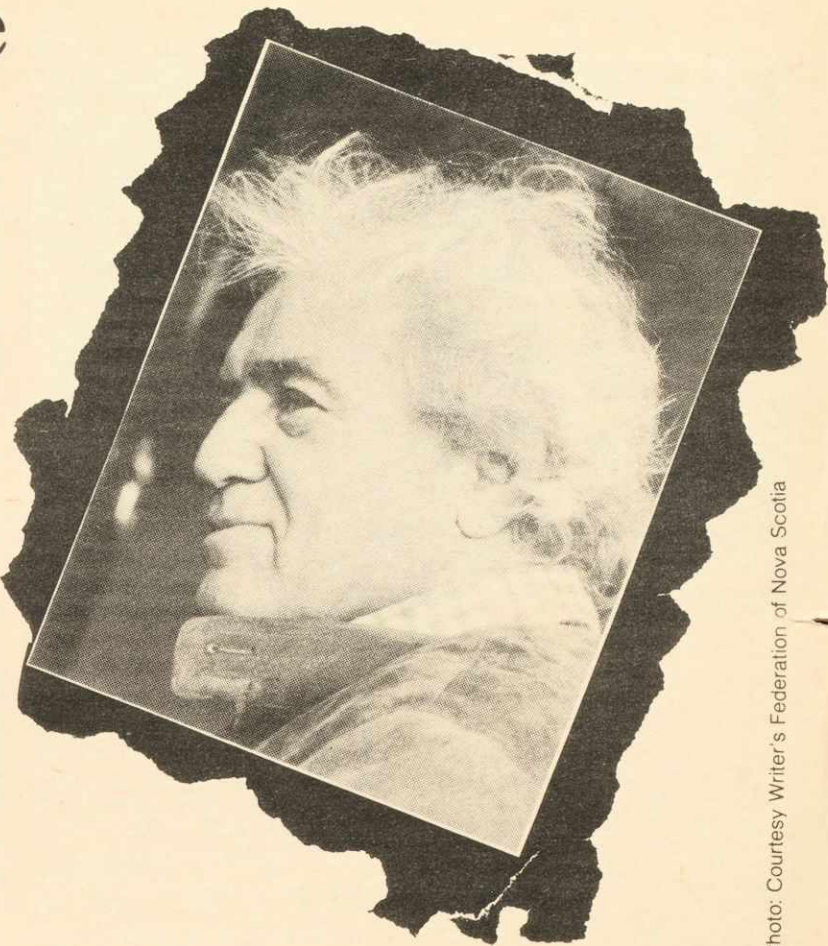


Photo: Courtesy Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia

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MOVIES

By Lisa Clifford

U2 have become the rock phenomenon of the mid-80's. Bono, the Edge, Larry Mullen Jr. and Adam Clayton play rock music with a message and are well known for their association with Amnesty International and Artists Against Apartheid. They achieved superstar status with the release of their *Joshua Tree* album in 1987. It was during that tour that the footage for their first concert movie was shot.

The movie, *Rattle and Hum*, premiered in Halifax last Wednesday.

U2 performs such old favourites as *Where the Streets Have No Name* and *Pride In the Name of Love* as well as new songs including *Desire*, their latest hit single.

In *Rattle and Hum*, the band shows a lighter side to their per-

sonalities than is usually indicated in their intense music. They laugh and joke with one another and it is especially interesting to watch them record *Angel of Harlem* in the Memphis, Tennessee, studio where Elvis Presley, an influence on the group, recorded many of his hits.

For this reviewer, however, the highlight of *Rattle and Hum* occurred near the movie's end when the group performed a passionate and emotional *Sunday Bloody Sunday*. To introduce the song, lead singer Bono talks about the revolution in Northern Ireland — a revolution that a majority of the population do not want.

Any U2 fan is sure to love *Rattle and Hum*, a movie which entertains and excites the imagination.

Playing at Park Lane Cinema.