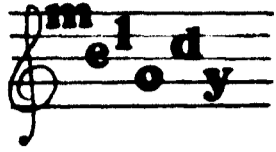


# CONCEPT



Rod McKuen returned to Edmonton last weekend. He came to renew his acquaintance with our home town and he came to entertain many of his fans with his greatest hits and some of his not-so-greatest hits as well. He performed in conjunction with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (conducted from the keyboard by our own local jazz-man Tommy Banks) in one of its DuMaurier Series concerts.

The evening proved to be a collage of Hollywoodish-type music—comparable to some degree to hearing his recordings to the accompaniment of a somewhat enlarged studio orchestra and including added spoken commentary—all in eight-channel or at the very least, quadrasonic sound.

McKuen has a style of performance, a magnetic stage presence, which is totally capable of seducing and then captivating his audience, despite the fact that his soft but grated voice lacks the quality necessary to recommend him as a singer.

His lyrics, like his poetry, are very sentimental, even melancholy and introspective. Perhaps therein lies the astounding secret to his success; his knowledge and ability to view the world as it really is; his capability of understanding people and their emotions as they really are.

He has composed well over one thousand popular songs which have sold over one hundred million records for himself as well as many other major artists, among them Glenn Yarborough, Joan Baez, Jimmy Rogers, Frank Sinatra and Petula Clarke. His program included many of these well-known hit selections: "Run to Me; Fly to Me"; "I'll Catch the Sun" (from the Motion Picture 'Joanna'); "We Were Three"; "Jean" (the incomparable title song from 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie'); "Solitude's My Home"; "Love's Been Good to Me"; "Children One and All"; "The World I Used to Know"; "Far Side of the Hill" (which was marred by a very out-of-rhythm percussion section); as well as "If You Go Away" and "Amsterdam"—two songs which McKuen composed in collaboration with Jacques Brel, who I believe, is alive and well and playing at the Citadel. He also gave a beautiful rendering of a song by David Gates of the group 'Bread'; "The You I've Come to Know". Apparently Mr. McKuen usually does not perform material by other individuals, but since Gates

listening to the warm

had been one of his own arrangers, he seemed to have paid him a sentimental thank you. I recommend more of the same.

The first part of the concert was spiked by a bit of warm-hearted humour in the form of a true-to-life "something happened to me on the way to Seattle to do a show" type event as well as a couple of wonderfully satirical songs: "The Complete Madame Butterfly" (McKuen believes that the opera can be reduced from three hours to a very concise one-and-one half minutes merely by deleting a few unnecessary areas and omitting any characters who don't add to the plot from the story flow.)—Reader's Digest Version yet!; and "Everybody's Rich But Us."

"Moment to Moment", the last entry in the diary 'Another Monday—Two Months Later' was a gorgeous reading.

Following the intermission the orchestra presented the World Premiere performance of Red McKuen's "Ballad of Distances: A Suite for Orchestra", composed especially for this performance and dedicated to Tommy Banks. The work is in four movements, with the music being a combination of folk songs and film soundtracks in style. The opening movement began with a vigorous though fragmented motive which led into a very melancholy lyrical theme played by the oboe.

The movement proved to be sectional in its structure.

The second section began with a brass fanfare and was followed by a beautiful solo played this time on the cor anglais. In listening to this one could almost picture the ranch popularized by Barbara Stanwyck and Linda Evans in the television series "The Big Valley."

The third movement proved to be more of the same—add some lyrics and it could conceivably be an excerpt from a Broadway Musical "Paint Your Barn Blue" or something. Unfortunately, the thematic material proved to be much too fragmented and the continual steps and starts by the orchestra detracted from the natural flow of the music.

The final movement was strangely sad and oppressive compared to the others. However, this dark mood of despair was permeated throughout with wonderfully songful melodies and concluded in an atmosphere of optimism—the brightness shining through.

A cool way to spend an evening, listening to the warm. Knowing what the man has experienced during his varied and active life, I cannot help but admire and enjoy the fruits of his talent. Now he has gone back to be with his four sheep dogs, eight cats and a turtle named Wade.

Jerry Ozipko

## music notes

● It looks as if certain that you will soon be able to enjoy a new Beatles' album. John, Paul, George and Ringo are reported to be recording together in California. Their reunion is "mainly for the fans" as one of the four explained in an interview.

I'm sure that their own interests and the financial aspect of a reunion played a more important role in their decision than they will admit. Let's hope that they will "get together" on a full-time basis.

● Carly Simon-Taylor explaining "You're So Vain": "It certainly is not about Mick Jagger. It is about a lot of people. The actual examples that I've used are from my imagination but the stimulus is directly from a couple of different sources."

● Leonard Cohen finished recordings for his next album in a London studio.

● Did you know that Hurricane Smith ("Oh Babe What Would You Say") is the producer of Pink Floyd.

● New sounds (to be released soon):

'In Deep' - Argent,  
'Around the World - Three Dog Night,

'True Stories' - Judy Collins,  
'Eat It' - Humble Pie,  
'The Darker Side of Moon' - Pink Floyd.

'Grand Hotel' - Procol Harum,

● "Maple" songs" revival in US charts: Edward Bear's "Last Song" and Ann Murray's "Danny's Song" both in Top 20.

● Bob Dylan Night on CFRN-FM Midnight Special next Saturday (8:05 p.m.)

● Give a listen to the new Beach-Boys' album "Holland". The old surfers are still among the best.

H. Kuckertz, Jr.

## CHARTERS to EUROPE

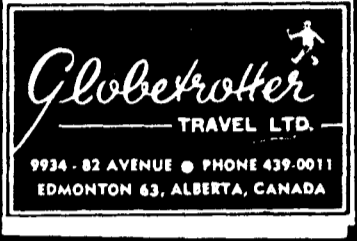
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