

New rock albums

Stewart rasps on Faces cook in sleeper

By DYNAMITE C. STRANGE

Almost by default, Rod Stewart rasped his distinctive combination of tasteful romanticism and freewheeling raunch to the top of the charts a couple of years ago, largely on the strength of Every Picture Tells a Story and the singles which followed it. A colourful performer and creditable songwriter (when he gets around to it), Stewart has parlayed his appeal into the kind of mass popularity that's assured a favourable reception for almost anything he's associated with musically.

On Sing It Again, Rod (Mercury), we are presented with a compilation of cuts from Stewart's four solo albums, released after his stint with the Jeff Beck Group, which gave him the exposure and recognition he needed to go it alone. While everybody has his personal favourites, Sing It should prove quite a pleasing collection to both confirmed Stewart followers and those only passingly familiar with his work.

Even so, the selection of tunes is

fairly predictable, with a heavy emphasis on Stewart's more recent, subdued material, although there is a sprinkling of lesser heard songs from his earlier repertoire. As a retrospective, Sing It Again isn't of the Best of Greatest Hits ilk either, as it excludes such excellent singles as You're My Girl (from Stewart's

Gasoline Alley album — still probably his best solo effort overall) and What's Made Milwaukee Famous. The only "bonus" selection is Stewart's overproduced performance of Pinball Wizard from the Tommy score.

The serving offered is generous enough, to make Sing It an accurate

replay of Rod Stewart's four year career as a solo artist.

Meanwhile, Stewart's present band, the Faces, has released a bit of a sleeper in Ooh La La (Warners), a very entertaining, if somewhat superficial piece of good-timey rollicking. Although Stewart himself is featured as lead singer on only

half a dozen cuts, his contributions are characteristic of the best of what he's done in the last few years. Standouts are the infectiously lilting Cindy Incidentally (a big hit in England) and My Fault, in which Stewart and the band let loose and really cook with the kind of swinging barrelhouse rockola which Sing It Again, Rod seems to lack.

Toronto Symphony

Searching for successor to Karel

By VINCE DORVAL

Two months ago, right at the time when the Toronto Symphony Orchestra needed him the most, Karel Ancerl passed away at the age of 65.

It didn't come as a surprise to most people. — Often ill, Ancerl rarely showed up for two concerts in a row — but many had hoped that the Czech-born conductor would still play an important role in the development of one of the better orchestras in North America. The TSO had several plans for the fall, the highlight being a recording of Bedrich Smetana's Ma Vlast (My Fatherland) for the Victor label.

Now our local orchestra is without a leader. Victor Feldbrill is in charge of artistic affairs for the time being, but a more foreign-sounding name has to lead the orchestra. Who is there?

Hardly anybody, to be blunt about matters. It was poor timing all around. Most decent conductors right now are engaged, and to appoint one requires at least a couple of years. Bernstein is in Vienna, von Karajan now and then

goes to France, and Solti is freaking everybody out in Chicago. Even the thought of getting these names for the TSO shows what a stature Ancerl had and how hard it will be to find a conductor worthy of replacing him.

Was the TSO that good? Most critics placed it among the top seven, behind the likes of the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony. Toronto audiences weren't too appreciative, though. Not many indulged in standing ovations, and the applause was often painfully lukewarm.

Toronto owns the best orchestra in Canada, and its sense of discipline and tone has few rivals. It handles the greatest works in the repertoire with a firm command, and even contemporary stuff is easy to take when Albert Pratz (orchestra concertmaster) and his fellow workers are making music.

So where does the TSO hope to go? It has to suffer the inconsistency of guest conductors over the upcoming year, but let's hope that the matter of a permanent one is solved come the 1974-75 season.

The chances for a name conductor are slight. Who, after all, would go to Canada to advance his reputation?

Well, Ozawa did, and look where he is now. (Boston Symphony). A little of the northern air never hurt anyone.

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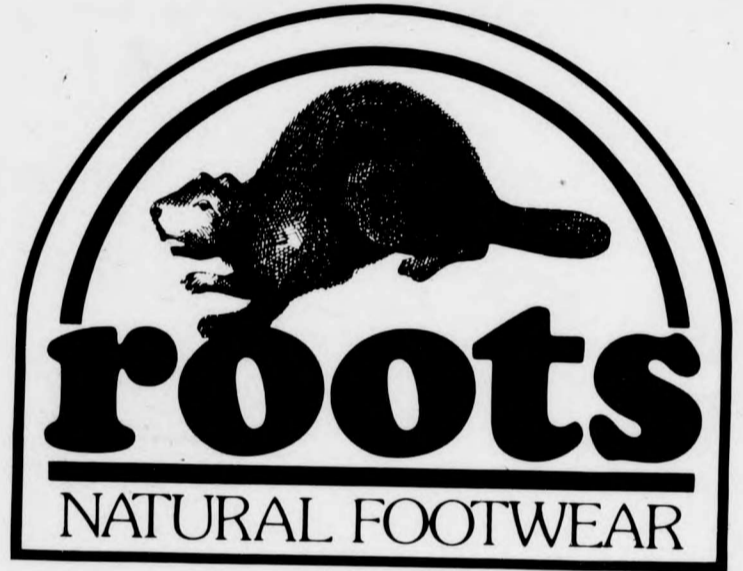


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