



Bruce Cole

Edith Butler, who started in New Brunswick, sings Acadian songs: "My father comes back from the sea / And at night he talks to me / He wants to know if I remember / All our people who were sent away / Do you think their lives will ever be revenged?"

## Some Teleological Observations by an Eminent Critic on the Past, Present and Future State of Canadian Music

If one is going to be strictly factual, rock groups in Canada have always been a bit of an aberration. The ones that have grown from the café or the club of the sixties—Leonard Cohen, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young—remain essentially solo performers. These people are the most distinctively Canadian, rather than a group like The Guess Who.

The individual performer has always triumphed over the group. In a sense it almost has a religious implication. A lot of Canada is still dominated by the Scottish-Presbyterian church, at least socially; and it always has been in the nature of the Presbyterians and the Methodists to have a viable religious community and at the same time to prosper individually. In Canadian history it is customary to achieve, then become Anglican. In the case of Young and Lightfoot, they started out as musical Methodists—as part of a group—individual talents who played together as a group. After their talent became polished they became musical Anglicans. They go on stage like Anglicans, involved in the higher theatrics, like a mass rather than a service. Neil Young is the perfect example because he finds groups incompatible with his ambitions and musical statements; he has become, in effect, an Anglican.

Disco music is form as opposed to substance. In rock music as found on FM radio, one finds a lot more interesting structure than in disco, and it demands an awareness and a participation.

The truth is probably that disco is very commercial in its genesis, rather than artistic. You must take a very skeptical glance at disco. It has produced no important song writers, no individuals who have changed the way we think of music. No real attention is demanded on the part of the listener. Discos are only places to dance and meeting places. Despite the nature of the lighting and the volume of the music, discos are still a place to show off haberdashery. Disco is to actual rock as 101 Strings is to a symphony orchestra. It is bastardized, glossed-over, sugar-coated like Muzak. It is background—wallpaper rather than the furnishings.

Now is not a time of experimentation and innovation but a time of refining and polishing. All over the world in the late seventies, there was a great lack of direction and confusion, a funny world. The fathers of it are still active, the pioneers are still working (after all Elvis only died a week and a half ago). The giants are still creating. The new ones tend to be more cautious.

DOUG FETHERLING

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Blair Kirby in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* says Stompin' Tom Connors sings for all the people who feel they're the abused, hard-slugging common herd. His lyrics are particularly and specifically Canadian: "She's on a bar-hopping spree / Back in Soo Saint Maree / Because of me / She's now a fallen star / She could have been true / But I left her in Soo / And I travelled North upon the ACR."



Paul Smith Photography