

Lightfoot sings well But oh, those oldies

by Linda Bohnen

Last Saturday night Gordon Lightfoot celebrated making it into Time magazine last week with what must be the most ill-mannered performance of his career.

I thought Lightfoot had reached the height of arrogance last year at Massey Hall when he forgot the words to one of his songs and had to stop in the middle. I was wrong. For two hours Saturday night he insulted and condescended to his audience and gave the impression that he really didn't give a damn about anything except his own ego.

To be sure, the conditions were less than ideal. The Tait MacKenzie gym is no concert hall and the lighting man ought to be lynched. But Lightfoot is supposed to be a pro and most of the blame must therefore fall to him.

The program was typically Lightfoot: ninety per cent oldies with two or three sneak previews from his next album. But the format, after God-knows-how-many Toronto appearances, is beginning to pall. Only one of the between-song jokes, the bit about American Airlines, was new to me; and I don't find Lightfoot blowing into the microphone particularly amusing.

His singing was as good as it always is — Lightfoot, unlike Ochs or Dylan, would be nowhere without his voice — but it wasn't enough to compensate for his lack of soul. Only once, in Canadian Railroad Trilogy, did he move me at all, and I get misty-eyed when they play O Canada.

Lightfoot is in his element in songs of jilted or faithless lovers, like The Way I Feel, and in songs of rivers and railroads, like Early Morning Rain. His mistake was in coming to the city. His intro to the anti-draft song ("I don't know whether they should be there or not . . . Geez some of them aren't even old enough to vote.") only went to prove what I suspected when Black Day in July was released: Lightfoot jumped on the civil rights Vietnam bandwagon strictly for the bread. And who needs an insincere folk singer?

The only thing more appalling than the performance was the way most of the audience lapped it up. The applause after Black Day in July was, I guess, every student's contribution to the civil rights movement. There are enough problems in Canada for Lightfoot to sing about, though, of course, songs about them wouldn't sell nearly as well south of the border.

I went to Saturday's concert in a passion of patriotism, having just read Robert Fulford's This was Exp. I figured Lightfoot was going to be the greatest thing for Canada since Barbara Ann Scott, at least. Well, scratch one dreamer. Time has discovered him; now they may keep him.

Terry and McGee create ori

Brownie McGee

by Jeff Plewman

With the pop music market of today being flooded by pseudo-blues groups such as The Cream, Beck, Hendrix and a host of imitators, it is difficult for the average public to discover where the blues first originated. Even fabled blues figures such as B.B. King and Sonny Boy Williamson were influenced by earlier bluesmen that are still alive today but are unrecognized. Two of the best of these early folk-blues artists are now playing at the Riverboat until Nov. 24 — they are Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee.

Unlike the instant success promised to groups today, the lives of Terry and McGee have been torn by handicaps, loneliness, and continuous struggle. It was these hardships not their musicianship that brought them together with their basic yet original style of blues. They sing about wine, women and money because, as Sonny says, "They are the only things in life that matter."

Individually, their hardships have been enough to put any other men on Desolation Row. Sonny Terry has been almost totally blind since he was sixteen and has wandered the streets of New York City for over half of his 57 years. Playing harmonica all this



real blues photos by Jeff Plewman

Some expressive blues guitar playing by McGee

J.B. — A — — modern — — version — — of — — you - know - what —

by Frank Liebeck

Back a dozen years ago, Archibald MacLeish won the Pulitzer Prize for his verse play *J.B.* A re-written version was done on Broadway with Christopher Plummer and Raymond Massey and now the original is getting a rare run at Burton Auditorium this weekend.

Peter Stevens plays Mr. Zuss, or as it turns out to be, God. Mr. David Schatzky as J.B. and Ellen Green as his wife Sarah are the two victims from whom God takes all.

"Look at Me!
Every hope I ever had,
Every task I put my mind to,
Every work I've ever done
Annulled as though I had not
done it."

It is the story of Job, written with a tremendous dramatic impact due mostly to the pounding verse form in which it was written.

John Innes is Nickles, who's reality becomes Satan. Mr. Innes has received the rare honour of being invited to tour with the



David Schatzky as J.B.

Stratford Company next year and gave up the part of Othello which Glendon was producing at Burton next year, to do so. It can hardly be said that York lacks dramatic talent. It may lack audience enthusiasm, but that's not their fault. The people are there. I know it. I saw them all at the Lightfoot concert drooling over the inept hick.

It is directed by Nicholas Ayre. — I don't know if he's a tough director, but he never turns his back on the cast. Soberly though, his fine job on Dylan last year merits the praise that has filtered through the Green Room door in the past.

For three nights, *J.B.* lives. We're shipping all the people who are still in a state of jubilation in the large gym over to Burton on opening night. There's something happening here, but you don't know what it is, do you Mr. Jones?

"Weep,
Enormous winds will thrash the water.
Cry in sleep for your lost children,
Snow will fall . . .

Snow will fall . . ."

Julie Andrews in *Star!* a hit with little old ladies

by David McCaughna

"The Sound of Music", an incredibly sentimental, ludicrous film directed by Robert Wise and starring Julie Andrews has become the most financially successful film of all time, it has even surpassed the infinitely better "Gone with the Wind." Obviously "Star!", a new musical film directed by Robert Wise and again starring Julie Andrews is an attempt to equal the success of "The Sound of Music." S. of M. was bad enough, but at least it had the beautiful Austrian alps as a compensation, whereas "Star!" is over-long, cliché-ridden and inane with practically nothing to relieve the tedium.

"Star!" is based very closely, we are told, on the life of

the singer-actress Gertrude Lawrence who was quite popular in the 30's and 40's in England and America. Gertrude Lawrence came up the hard way (they all do), from the London slum of Clapham to the music-hall circuit, and by struggling and scratching made her way to the very top. She was, we are to presume, a very flamboyant, kind-hearted, electric person.

Robert Wise follows the life of Miss Lawrence from near-birth until her final marriage 12 years before her death in 1952. Between the big, splashy colour segments he has fitted brownish-green documentary type sequences to show Miss Lawrence's development and to give some sense of historical perspective to the film.

These parts are the best and most interesting and provide some compensation from the treacly mish-mash of the rest.

Another token compensation in "Star!" is the fact that all the singing and dancing is done on stage, i.e., when Gertrude Lawrence is in performance. There is none of the all-too-usual film musical technique of having the actors burst into song and dance at the mention of words like 'love', etc. And there are a few rather nice-to-watch musical numbers in the film.

Whether Gertrude Lawrence's life was the typical, golden voyage, or if it has been altered to fit the film and Julie Andrews, I don't know but I'm inclined to believe the latter. For the film

contains just a few too many show-business clichés.

While Miss Lawrence spent thousands on frivolous image-making clothes, residences, etc., during the depression we are told in most un-subtle terms that she was a person with a heart-of-gold who had a social conscience. And she just wanted to bring joy and happiness into the hearts of her fellow mankind.

Then, of course, there is the tension between career and family, with Gertrude-Julie being forced to neglect her child, whom she loves ever-so-much so she can bring to the audiences of the world her stupendous talents. Underneath all this the character of Gertrude Lawrence never emerges as anything more

than a somewhat pretty creature on which to hang beautiful clothes (Julie's clothes for the film cost \$347,000).

Just what can be said about Julie Andrews? She is now the veritable female Charlton Heston of the American cinema, with those ever-innocent eyes and quivering chin. She can sing and dance pretty well but as for acting, well, there isn't within her the strength to give the character of Gertrude Lawrence any real bite or depth. Beneath all that sophistication, those rich gowns, even during the drunk scene, we know that she is always our Mary Poppins; our Eliza Doolittle.

"Star!" is a fairly miserable film. It should make a lot of nice old ladies happy.