



Dan Hill thrills

by Cheryl Downton

*the gift of music is the key
to all my tears and laughter
and though it claims to set me free
it reigns my life as master
lord don't let this crazy world
make a jukebox out of me
let the songs keep flowing
strong and naturally*

*.....
a gift to share for all
my friends and me*

(seed of music Dan Hill 1975)

Contained in this lyric is part of what is Dan Hill; the man and his music — as inseparable as they are one. He lives his life in his music; he lives his music in his life. His lyrics are personal, immediate, simple. It is a performer's strength to rise above pretension; to present a 'show' and yet to bare his soul and trust an audience he does not know and can not see. We are used to 'performances,' essentially contrived and artificial adaptations of life, so we find Dan Hill alarmingly open.

He himself admits that he may be naive. This naiveté is apparent in his songs, but it is through this natural simplicity that his expression of honesty fulfills itself. He opens his very being to his listeners in the belief that one can only achieve complete communication and the ultimate sharing experience through exposure of the self. Dan Hill gives of himself through his music; in return he receives what few others in his sphere can ever hope to obtain: a genuine rapport that flows from 'performer' to audience; it is returned as it is given.

Friday's sold-out shows at the Cohn were a mixture of story and song — very informal, with no back-up or warm-up group — just Dan Hill singing his songs in sockfeet comfort. Selections ranged from those found on his first album *Dan Hill*, some from his second

entitled *Hold On* and the more recently recorded third album *Longer Fuse*. He also sang a song he wrote for his younger sister, not yet recorded, which is a message of reassurance and realization that we all experience growing pains and through it emerge as individuals, unique, yet sharing similarities.

Many of the songs were preceded with a usually humorous anecdote relating the content of the piece to a moment in his life: *looking back* (Dan Hill 1975) tells of a paper route in Don Mills, Ontario and adolescent boys' preoccupation with well thumbed copies of *Playboy*; *fountain* (Dan Hill 1975) is a bittersweet farewell message to a former girlfriend from the jilted Hill; *seed of music* (Dan Hill 1975) signifies his signing of his very first recording contract, and expresses the fervent wish that creativity will always remain with him; *proposal* (*Hold On* 1976) was written for two good friends, but because of some obscure sexual imagery, was deemed inappropriate to be sung at the wedding ceremony . . . parental considerations! *crazy* (*Longer Fuse* 1977) tells the story of the girl who surfaced in California and was remembered as an acquaintance from Toronto, who "felt orange" occasionally.

Dan Hill's songs flow from the experiences that make up his young life, and he shares them through poetry put to music. One feels privileged to be a part of it. Perhaps his songs best describe his own appeal:

*still not used to having people pay
to hear me
guess I'm still a child trying so hard
to please
trying to seek approval through my
songs*

*.....
trying to share my life with people
most of whom I'll never know*

(still not used to *Longer Fuse* 1977)

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