

Cat Stevens: pop idol at 17

A former superstar comes to life at 23

By LARRY LEBLANC

Cat Stevens is back with us, has a new album, some thoughts on leading the happy life, and several succinct words about coming a hype away from death.

Stevens is either stoutly defended as one of the five greatest rock composers of all time or vaguely remembered as an odd name in the English music scene that flashed briefly before our eyes and then vanished. Five years ago straight out of art school, he rose to brilliant stardom with "I Love My Dog," "Matthew and Son," "I'm Gonna Get Me A Gun," and "First Cut Is The Deepest."

At 17 he was a full-fledged pop idol. People grabbed at him at parties, pumped his hand, and steered him into corners to tell him they loved his work so much. He had rave reviews from every publication in England that could get someone in to see him. He was on the cover of a tremendous number of music papers. The photographers snapped away, click-click-click.

And then there was such a social scene, so many parties and celebrities adopting him and places to see. Managers, musicians, fans and critics built up his ego to fantastic proportions.

When he speaks of his past, today, all his expression coming from his voice, which plays on patterns of speaking that simply don't exist here, he makes you wish you'd been there to see the outrageousness of the Superstar scene: the flags, the banners, the horns, the blaring ego.

Talking in his dressing room in Buffalo, he doesn't remind you of the fiery star of the mid-sixties.

A Cancer, he has soft and gentle beauty in the features of his face, very much like an angel in a Renaissance painting. The look of original innocence joined with a genuinely shy manner and soft, youthful voice makes him outwardly appear younger than his 23 years.

His expression is darkest when he speaks of those early recording sessions in which the producer's rules and goals conflicted with his own. The multitude of studio musicians were also apparently less than impressed with him being a Superstar and consequently gave him all manner of over-production as well as a hand, the result being you had to wade through so much plastic fluff to get to Cat Stevens.

"We had a twenty-piece band," recalls Cat, disgustedly. "Everytime we were in the studio none of them were really interested in what we were doing. Nothing to do with it. They were just getting paid."

As the beginning he thought he could cope with everything. But then events were blurred, blown right out of proportion. The songs were over-arranged right into the ground. In a short time he entered into a long series of disastrous flops. The first record which missed was, ironically, "Bad Night." Physical disaster struck in the form of tuberculosis and he was hospitalized in September, 1968 for three months. Then he travelled, made friends (he never had any before) and thought about his past style of life.

"I dropped everything for a time and then suddenly I realized what I wanted to do," he says. "I wanted to do it again only I wanted to do it right. I wanted to do it truthfully. Before it was all messed up. I didn't have my ideals right. I was completely upside down."

"I realized that although I'd spent all that time working and striving, I still knew nobody. I was lonely. I thought 'what's the point of living here if you have to live alone?' I decided then to get myself together as a person. I was an instant public figure but had nothing to myself except what I felt. It's all right to feel something but it's nice to know what you feel."

Over a year ago, Island Records released "Mona Bone Jakon," Cat's first album in two years. It was a wonder summary-with-



Cat Stevens, singer and composer, appears at Massey Hall on Oct. 7 along with Mimi Farina.

introspection set and so simple. Yet, the superb album generated less than its share of praise among pop critics and journals. One cut, "Lady D'Arbanville," reached No. 4 on the British chart and was a regional hit in Canada.

"Tea For The Tillerman," an extension of the basic idea he investigated in the previous album, quite possibly the best record, the simplest, to appear in the last five years, yielded a 'hit' single "Wild World".

Success of a new single "Peace Train" and

a new album "Teaser and the Firecat" (just released) brings the possibility of Cat again being confronted with the tag superstar and its implications.

"I hope I never get to that point," he says. "I keep an eye on myself and if that happens, I'll realize it. Actually the only thing to do is to split because it's not for money."

"I think it had a lot to do with myself at the time. I wasn't strong. I was ready for something like tuberculosis. I see myself so much stronger now."



Lights, Camera, Action!

Johnny Got His Gun - first rate but depressing

By DAN MERKUR

It all began when Johnny Got His Gun won the National Booksellers Association award as the most original novel of 1939. Dalton Trumbo had been trying to put it on the screen ever since.

Trumbo's first screenwriting credit was in 1936. He won the Oscar in 1956 for the screenplay of The Brave One, but he was being blacklisted — one of the Hollywood 10 persecuted in 1948 and '49 by the House Un-American Activities Committee — and so was not allowed to accept it. Johnny Got His Gun is the first picture he has directed, and one he has reportedly been actively arranging to make since he got out of jail in 1950.

As might be expected, it is a brilliant bit of film. It is also tremendously depressing: the anti-war philosophy is so painfully evident as to bum the hell out of anyone.

Trumbo wrote the novel in 1939. The U.S. went to war two years later. Just right now, another anti-war film is very timely. I don't know. I like to enjoy a movie, not just come out

saying, "Whew, I'm glad that one's over. But gee, it was superbly made."

Cinematography, script, acting (including Donald Sutherland and Jason Robards), direction — all superb. The film is about a man who loses his arms and legs and face in a bombing in the trenches, lives and retains his intellect, and struggles to communicate with those who attend him. When he finally does get through to them, having been desperately tortured by his deaf blindness to confusing reality and dream — yet unable to commit suicide, his demands on the doctors, presented to us as sane and rational, are dismissed as the product of a mind very much upset, and so ignored. Yes, Johnny got his gun, but he lost everything else. He isn't even allowed to die. It isn't a very pretty story.

Okay, Mr. Trumbo. You made your masterpiece thesis movie. It was first-rate. How about a western or a comedy next time? You could have a wagon train massacred by the Seventh cavalry just out of plain orneriness. Or Woody Allen losing his arm to a meat grinding machine in Chicago and wandering around for the rest of the film with twenty tin cans

looking for a doctor who can work miracles. I mean really, who needs to pay \$2.50 the seat just to be bad-timed by a professional?

People, there's an old Danny Kaye movie at the Eglinton made by Howard Hawks, who is about as good as there is. The film's called A Song is Born.

Lloyd Chesley (Film major, 4th year) took half the \$1,000 first prize for 8mm shorts in the Famous Players contest, for his Wolf Lanigan's Death. Lloyd adapted Liam O'Flaherty's story, directed, co-produced and edited it. I played a heavy, I think. Harris Kirshenbaum, cinematographer, co-producer, co-editor, took the other \$500.

Risa insists it was Julie Christie and not Julie Harris in McCabe and Mrs. Miller; and that Max Ophul's film was Letter from an Unknown Woman and not Lady. I think she's right.

Anybody seen any good new movies recently? For the life of me, I haven't.

Dr. Bethune biology: a romantic figure in times of social protest

By CARL STIEREN

It is strangely appropriate that the story of Dr. Norman Bethune should be reprinted now in times when social protest is supposed to have turned to self-indulgence among students.

Norman Bethune also grew up in such an era, in Toronto and Gravenhurst just before World War I. Later in London's Soho in the early 1920's, the young Canadian intern lived the life of a young bohemian, patron of starving young artists and connoisseur of the sweet life. The flourish of Bethune's early life, as portrayed in The Scalpel, The Sword — The Story of Doctor Norman Bethune stands in sharp relief to the Chinese socialist style of the book's preface by Madame Sun Yatsen. Even the grandiose prose of the authors hardly seems overdrawn: Bethune was indeed a romantic figure. Yet it was just when Bethune's life was most drab and unexciting, in the slums of Detroit in 1924, where the young doctor was first confronted with the con-

tradition that those who most needed medical care could least afford it.

At 45, after a miraculous recovery from tuberculosis and after establishing himself as a pioneer in thoracic surgery for patients, Bethune became a member of the

Communist Party and a founder of the Montreal Group for the Security of the People's Health. At a time when most men would be preparing for retirement, Bethune went to Spain to organize field hospitals and blood transfusion teams that covered 1,000 kilometers of front

lines during the Spanish Civil War. When he heard of the Japanese attack in mainland China while on a Canadian fund-raising trip Bethune decided to go to China. In reading their narrative, one senses that the authors have written out of a personal admiration for Bethune and

that any errors are more likely to arise from this admiration than from party loyalty.

Nevertheless, one gets a different picture of the struggles among Republicans in Spain and of the Communist-led Shanghai revolt in 1927 from the authors' accounts.

Bethune's last achievements were his greatest: his devotion and pioneering work in field surgery for Mao Tse-tung's Eighth Route Army won him praise from Christians and Communists alike.

On Nov. 13, 1939, he died of infections contracted while operating on the battlefield. He was mourned by many, among them Mao Tse-tung and today is a hero to millions of Chinese. Somehow, even in this Age of the Anti-Hero, it is hard to imagine that his example will go unheeded.

The Scalpel, The Sword: The Story of Doctor Norman Bethune, by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, \$3.95, 319 pp.

Murray McLauchlan - staggering

By NANCY AND ADRIAN HILL

When 200 people turned out to see Murray McLauchlan last Friday night, very few of them expected to see one of the best overall folk singers ever to perform at York. McLauchlan is nothing less than overwhelming in his style, ability, and honesty. Backstreet blues are his home; dust's language is his mother tongue.

"When I need a drink
Stretched out on the sink,
I'm please and thank you m'am
But when I get a head
full of honky red
I don't give a good god damn."

His voice is warm, tough, and powerful. . .

dynamics flow all the way from soft to harsh. His emotion is demanding and relentless — he makes no effort to hide how sad he has been or how much he has lived.

He draws you in to his sensitivities, joys, and hurts — both real and imagined. On the guitar he has few peers; his notes flow from a deep base and work up in and out of the chords. McLauchlan's fingers on the strings provide a mirror image of his voice and lyrics. The rhythm comes from everywhere — with deep guts impact.

True North Records is planning five albums with Murray, the first will be released any day now. Before very long people are going to stop quoting Bob Dylan.