

# Turntable Druggist

by Andrew Gillis

Then we were there in the balcony, nice seats in the very middle, and we were expecting a good show. We knew who Stephane Grapelli was, and we knew he had played with Django Rheinhardt at the Hot Club de Jazz de la France, which was somewhere in Paris, and which operated before the war, or after the war, or at some romantic point in this unromantic century.

The first thing that happened was the entry of the back-up trio, led by a slightly overweight Diz Disley, who was about to handle most of the guitar chording, while the bassist Brian Torff was about to be mellow for the first half hour, and the other guitarist John Etheridge was going to burn right at the start and hardly ever stop, except to flex his delirious fretting hand, which was tying itself into knots from incessant speed.

Then, we got the first perfect sound mix I have ever heard in that damn Rebecca Cohn, which cost millions, (and which is so acoustically perfect by itself that the designer had to commit suicide after he was through with it), and which has always had some complete ass on the sound board, who seems now to have been fired. The mix for this concert last Wednesday was incredibly tight, just Grapelli, near a mike; the double bassist with a small amp and pickup; the lead guitar, an ovation, also with a mike.

It became clear that Grapelli had IT, a sense of the collective unconscious in the concert hall, the appreciation of what everyone in the room wanted to hear; and he had it early. The lead guitar took a break - I think on the Ellington number, which like a lot of the material that night was a pure swing tempo, uncluttered, unalterable (something universal, which the band picked out of the air). This break by the lead guitar was not riffs on the tempo, but was riffs on double the tempo. After the first twenty minutes, he was taking double-time breaks on these jump tunes, and after a couple of choruses, would switch to double and a half time.

If you were there, you may remember that the first two lead guitar breaks actually made people laugh. The talent of that guitar player was so big you had to laugh - he was using the thing as a toy when he wanted to; his facility with the guitar gave you the impression

he was making fun of it. This was the first sign we saw of mastery. The bassist showed it next, with three-string chords sliding around way up over the body. People had to laugh when this guy first lit up, too. Of those three strings, we thought a couple of times that he was bending alternate strings on every other beat. I hope he wasn't.

But Grapelli had IT more than anybody I have ever seen. Like the unalterable, universal tempos the four men were picking out for their tunes, the phrases Grapelli was picking out were universal. They were perfect, they were taken from the air, where somehow they had existed before Grapelli played them, and where now they would make themselves more beautiful because he had played them.

'Mastery over an instrument' is not an adequate phrase here. It is found in surprisingly too many concert reviews; and is not the praise you should give to an exuberant 66 year old who obviously knows no age. 'Mastery over his instrument' is not what Grapelli has. Etheridge, the guitarist, had that; and we had to admit we were waiting for Grapelli to simply come out and show it, plainly and for all to see. But he never did. We just noticed at the end of the second set that he had completely surpassed that little "master" category. He had never bothered to intentionally put himself in it. For example, he gave the other three men, who each had twenty-five or thirty years on him, an equal chance to play. Grapelli would breath everybody into a tune; then he would step aside, perhaps sit down, enjoy it all, smiling, attentive, not in a show, but not ignorant of the fact that a crowd was there for him. When he sat we noticed his tan Cote d'Azur shoes and his round and interested face. In this unassuming way, Grapelli grew and grew.

After three encore numbers, Grapelli was greater than anyone we had seen play in some time. We hadn't noticed him climbing to this position of status; and yet there he was, completely in IT.

I looked next to me and there was the Turntable Druggist. I stole his notes. It seems he must have stolen his from someone, too. There was a long description of IT on the page. I knew there was no coincidence: somebody else had noticed. Somebody else had noticed—IT.



## Belafonte

by Cheryl Downton

The gods did indeed smile favourably. There may have been equipment, costume and hot water shortages, but the main ingredients were indisputably present. Harry Belafonte has returned, and what a joyous heralding of a new spring-time. Halifax has never felt the warmth of so much sunshine. Belafonte, his orchestra and choir offer an unforgettable excursion into a land of happiness and golden luminance. One can't beat the price, and the tour guide has got to be the best in the business.

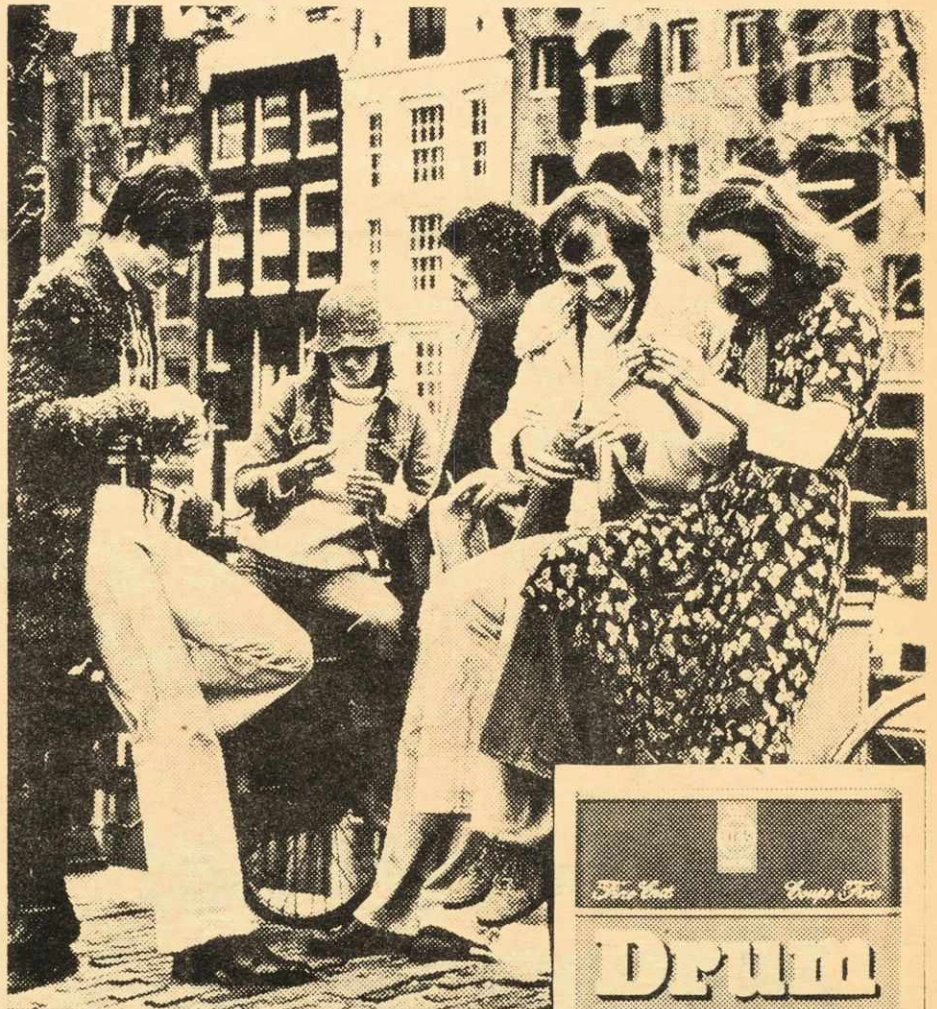
Belafonte began an eleven week tour across Canada in Halifax Monday night. He performed before a sold out house and ticket sales indicate more of the same for the remainder of his stay. This really comes as no surprise. Belafonte has made only one previous stop here, although others were

scheduled and then cancelled. The man can not be too highly acclaimed, and superlatives seem grossly inadequate. His very presence evokes such warmth that bonds of communication are forever forged, never to be broken. He takes the theatre and his audience and wraps everyone and everything in a harmonious, tightly knit bundle of joy and keen desire to live and experience all that is there.

The performance is more than one man upon an empty stage. Belafonte shares himself not only with his listening audience, but creates an alliance of love and mutual respect with his fellow musicians. Each musical selection, be it Calypso, folk, gospel, or even soft rock, is performed as a unit—even selected solo numbers are bound together with a little bit of everyone, be it an encouraging smile, accompanying foot tapping/hand clapping, or musical harmony.

As has been his custom for several years, Belafonte shared the spotlight with African born Falumi Prince, his "leading lady". Falumi, as well as being a vibrant, alive woman with an enviable stage presence, has a voice as beautiful and powerful as the forces of nature. **Some Sweet Love, Dreaming as One**, and a wonderfully silly **There's a Hole in the Bucket**, done with Belafonte—all superb and overflowing with consuming strength.

Belafonte combines a warm honesty and faultless craft to give so much of himself, and yet has so much to give, there is always enough to spark even the coldest heart and spirit.



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