

The wind beneath her wings...

# The force behind Rita McNeil

by Robb Cribb

Contrary to popular belief, Rita McNeil has not been flying on her own in her ascent to the top of the music charts throughout Canada and the world.

In fact, it has been personal manager Brookes Diamond who has served as the proverbial wind beneath Rita's wings. Diamond has been described as the most influential figure in the Atlantic Canadian music industry, an

acclamation which he has earned through his staggering success at placing a shy and demure woman from Cape Breton on the world stage.

Reclining in his luxurious office high atop the World Trade Centre in downtown Halifax, Brookes Diamond seems out of place amid the gold records and opulent furnishings. Dressed casually in a sweater and pants, he is an unlikely hero to an Atlantic Canadian music industry which has declared him its reigning prince.

A former student of Dalhousie University, Diamond admits to never having been a conscientious student. He remains a half-credit short of completing his degree. "My heart was never into the school thing," he recalls. "I lacked the discipline, and university didn't succeed in taming me."

His start in the industry came when he was working on the Dalhousie Winter Carnival. "It was a total accident," he says. "A friend asked me if I would run the Winter Carnival/Parade. I, of course, didn't know anything about running a parade, but I did it anyway and had a ball."

"It was a tremendous time," he

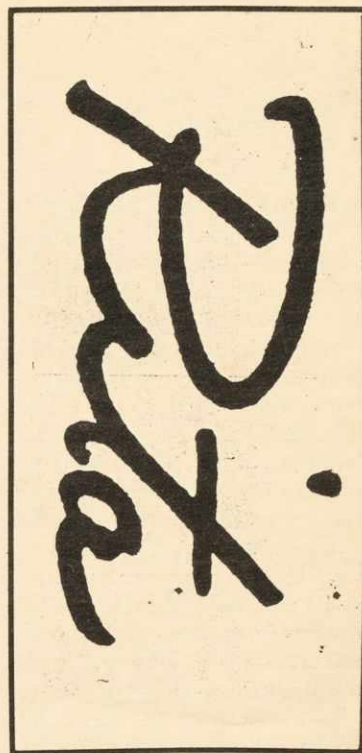
recalls. "My mind exploded with ideas and enthusiasm. I threw everything I had into the carnival. I also met a number of people, including Dennis Ryan of Ryan's Fancy."

It was this meeting which spawned Diamond's first performance booking on an entrepreneurial basis. He booked Ryan's Fancy at the Dal SUB for the last night of the Carnival and earned \$150 for his efforts.

"Leaving the SUB was like leaving mother," Diamond says. "It was my umbrella, but you have to eventually get out there. It's like leaving home. The time comes when you just have to enter the school of hard knocks."

Diamond's eventual partnership with Rita McNeil came as the result of his work with the Atlantic Folk Festival, an event which he conceived and organized. "I had known Rita and worked with her, but she had always had other people around her."

It was not until 1985 when Diamond was trying to book her into a club that he realized McNeil was without management. He seized the opportunity and "the relationship naturally grew into management as a result of things



that weren't happening for her."

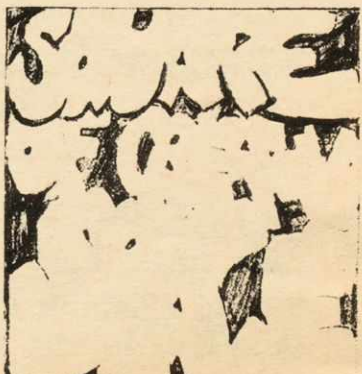
The work Diamond did involved getting McNeil's music and personality recognized for the potential it had. "With an artist like Rita you don't direct as much as you connect her to the public via the media," Diamond says. "One of the things that wasn't happening with Rita was that she wasn't coming through as Rita. People weren't getting the opportunity to see the real person. It was a matter of getting her out and on the radio."

Sounds easy, but this is no simple feat with even the greatest of new artists.

On a recent visit to Halifax, Anne Murray's personal manager, Leonard Rambeau, referred to a good manager as one "who doesn't let his short-term greed get in the way of his long-term greed". Brookes Diamond agrees and suggests that patience is indeed the stuff that success is made of. "I don't know one person who is successful who was in a hurry to get there," Diamond says. "The category of artist I avoid most is the 'Young Man in a Hurry' category."

With over 800,000 of McNeil's records sold in Canada, near-gold sales in Australia, a May 1st release in the UK, four Juno nominations, and a new album by fall and a one-hour Christmas special next December, both Diamond and McNeil are in a position where most music industry people would like to be.

Rita McNeil is currently the biggest-selling artist in the country, and as Diamond says, "Our aim is to make it the world."



## Thinking of Teaching?

The University of British Columbia invites applications to its teacher education programs for September 1990.

### All programs feature

- a full term of teaching practice
- effective communication skills
- classroom management strategies
- providing for students with special needs

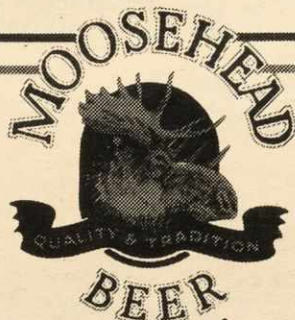
**Secondary teaching applicants** completing Bachelor's degrees with strength in one or two teaching subjects enter a 12-month program leading to teacher certification; an additional summer session completes the B.Ed.

**Elementary teaching applicants** with three years of appropriate university credit enter a 2-year B.Ed. program leading to teacher certification.

**Elementary teaching applicants** with acceptable 4-year degrees enter a 12-month certification program with a further summer to complete the B.Ed.

### Information and applications now available from:

Teacher Education Office,  
Faculty of Education,  
The University of British Columbia,  
2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z5.  
(604) 228-5221 (messages: 24 hours) Fax (604) 228-6501



## scoundrels

LOT 'O THURSDAYS

Every customer between  
9:00 pm - 2:00 am receives  
a Moosehead Scratch 'n Win Ticket  
and a chance to win:

### GREAT PRIZES EVERY THURSDAY

All tickets are eligible for one of our  
grand prizes:

**AIRFARE TO: ♦ MONTREAL  
♦ QUEBEC  
CITY**

BROUGHT  
TO YOU  
BY **AirNova**

To enter put your name and phone number on the  
back of your ticket and drop it off at the main bar

**TICKETS VALID THURSDAYS ONLY**

A NEW MARITIME TRADITION



## NEED EXTRA CASH

Roll Clerks are needed for the upcoming student union elections, to be held March 13, 14 & 15. Hours and locations are flexible. If interested, leave your name with Christina or Edythe in room 222 of the SUB or at 424-2146.

## Graduation Portraits



by  
*J. Harris*  
of Halifax

Master of  
Photographic  
Arts

10<sup>50</sup> plus tax

Sitting fee includes your proofs to keep  
plus one yearbook print

423-7089

982 Barrington at Inglis

422-3946