

Scott Young: like Neil he'd rather burn than rust

Elliott Lefko
 Scott Young is a celebrated writer whose work encompasses politics, sports, and humour. Long known for his work as a journalist and novelist, his latest work is a biography on Conn Smythe entitled *If You Can't Beat 'Em in the Alley*. Currently Young is working on a biography of his son, Neil, a star in the world of rock. Here is part two of an interview that was begun in the last issue of *Excalibur*.

How long will your book on Neil take?

My agent says she's going to ask for a one-year contract. That means whenever I sign a

contract it will be ready for delivery in a year. It's a good idea because there's no closing point to either of our lives. We can take it up to '82 or '83. In my opinion, he's going to have maybe his greatest tour, one that will rival or surpass *Rust Never Sleeps*.

Obviously you enjoyed *Rust*

I thought it was a smashing concept. I just sat there with my mouth open. Right now he's working on his next album. The last time I saw him he played me a cassette of two songs and he told me about another song. He also had an idea for the concert that'll tie the concept together.

When did your enthusiasm for Neil's music begin?

Basically I am an ignorant fan. Naturally because he was my son I was interested in what he was doing. And when he first started writing I was sometimes critical of it; not of the music, but of the writing. I remembered one time saying to him that we all have this problem as writers, you get one great line, and you think you can build an article or a song or a poem around it, but really, the rest of the quality of the whole piece has to come up to that one line. Last summer, we were talking, and he almost repeated that back to me word for word, as one of the ways he operated.

Was the song *Old Man* written for you?

Everybody assumed it's dedicated to me. And frankly, I've never asked. So I wouldn't know. There's always a bit of politics when writing about family. In our family, which survived a bitter divorce, there's almost an obligation not to lay too much stress on who that song was written for. It's still a song that applied to a lot of fathers, and the thoughts of a lot of sons. Interestingly though, at the *Tonight's The Night* concert and at McMaster University six years ago, Neil, in introducing *Old Man*, mentioned that I was in the audience. There was a

tremendous cheer that Neil said made the hackles stand on his back. He realized that I had a local identity, and he had an international one.

Who will you be talking to in your research?

I'll go and see his mother. It causes great amusement among Neil and everybody else 'cause they all figure it will be the beginning of a World War III. Even 20 some odd years after the divorce.

I'll also speak to his first wife Susan who he was married to for a year in Topanga Canyon. Then Steve Stills, probably David Crosby.

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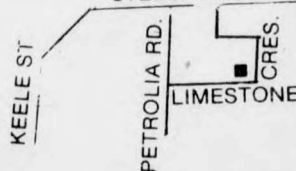
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
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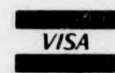
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