

NON-FICTION



MORE OF THE SAME LIGHTFOOT

Lightfoot non-fiction - 1
by Carrie MacLeod
Last spring, while in Toronto, I had the pleasure of seeing Gordon Lightfoot perform at Massey Hall. The man and his music have always fascinated me. The concert proved his talents to me even more. But I walked away feeling let down; Lightfoot has no stage personality.

Gordon Lightfoot isn't so much a musician as a mascot. Up he goes, centre-stage at Massey Hall, that squared jaw and distant manner telling us that it's cool, he's here to give the converted everything they want. Roots for the insecure; after all, he started singing about the time the Indians carved the glyphs in the Pre-Cambrian Shield near Peterborough, didn't he? - and boasts for the chauvinists: "Well, we have this singer that L.A. and Vegas are just begging for, but he's still here, see? A real Canajun!"

Is this an unkind lead-in to Lightfoot's annual sold out week at Massey Hall? Perhaps it is, but Lightfoot himself is partly to blame. He has written a lot of fine songs, curved his sensibility from heart-stricken go-go dancers to national epics like the Railroad Trilogy, but when he gets up on stage he has a manner only a star-struck devotee could love. Sure the popping of flashbulbs is irritating, but does he have to stop in mid-song and strike a smarmy pose for the Nikon freaks? And does he have to agree to a request in such a mealy-mouthed fashion as if to make it seem he is slumming down from Olympus? Or gracelessly toss back in his fans' face the wealth they have given him by having a framed photo of his 45-foot custom-made sailboat, Sundown, on stage?

Come on, Gord, we know you're not that creepy. The lyrics of your songs have a heart in them

somewhere. If You Could Read My Mind is just as sweet as ever, Alberta Bound is just as wistful, and newer songs like If Children Had Wings and Spanish Moss, show that the capacity for feeling is still intact, sailboats and Rosedale digs notwithstanding. The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald shows that the spirit of the broadside balladeer is still there, too.

But Lightfoot didn't seem to be having much fun singing these songs. In the first half of the concert (in fairness, it should be emphasized that he did the whole show himself without a warm-up

act) there was a relentless ploughing through a selection of songs, all in Lightfoot's middle-of-the-road style: the voice characteristically rising in each chorus, the trembling tenor, the clipped country catch in the throat. The full house loved every one of them, but since they don't demand any more of Lightfoot than that he be there and sing them, he just doesn't do more than that. Anybody not obsessed with him couldn't miss the flatness and lack of emotion, emphasized by the rhythmic sameness.

Happily, later in the show an occasional bit of

pyrotechnics like the Auctioneer showed up to vary the humbling sameness of the tempo, and also to show that he has a brilliant picking style when he puts his mind to it. Why did we only hear a few seconds of it? Where was the energy?

It may seem pointless cavilling about an entertainer who is clearly loved. But, since Lightfoot's legions have already bought every ticket in the series, it would be even more pointless to gush for their benefit. It has to be said that Lightfoot does not return the love of his fans, and his concert manners clearly show it.

The Disadvantage of Large Shopping Centres

Large shopping centres are constantly increasing in number. Five years ago there were no malls in Summerside and only two in Charlottetown. Now there are three in Summerside and Charlottetown is presently constructing its fourth.

In my opinion, shopping malls are definitely not an improvement over the small country store, even though they seem to attract more people.

Large stores make shoplifting easier because there are so many people moving about that store personnel cannot watch everyone at once. Within the last five years, shoplifting has increased significantly.

While the younger generation considers malls convenient, older people find it very confusing and exhausting to shop in large plazas. The different sections of the store are very far apart, and many find that goods are difficult to locate. If, for example, one wants a spool of thread and a

package of envelopes, one may have to cross the entire length of the store to obtain these two items.

Huge malls cater to people who have money. In most places, only cash is accepted for purchases. Poor people who have little money must either borrow it or do without.

The friendly contact, characteristic of smaller shops is absent in the malls. People are not treated individually; they are just more faces in a long line of customers. Everything is so impersonal; robots could probably do just as well.

Shopping centres induce energy waste by using extremely high-powered lights, and an excessive number of bulbs to illuminate their buildings.

Another primary source of energy waste is bright, colorful packaging of products. This encourages customers to choose one particular

brand over the other simply because it is attractive. This packaging is expensive, and it is the consumer who pays for it.

Since most large stores are located in towns and cities, much fuel is wasted by people from rural areas who travel to town to shop.

With the passing of the big store fad, we will once again see the rise of the smaller shops, and consumers will get the quality and service they deserve. Energy conservation, which is one of the most important issues of today, will also be improved.

The above Prof. Terry Prof. Ledw... the exception submitted to Megannity. The SUN's comments on centre page planned for