

# Panning for gold in Canadian rock

**A**FTER THREE years of research, digging through TV vaults and film archives around the continent, tomorrow night CBC-TV unveils the most ambitious look at rock music it has ever attempted.

The three-hour, three-night Superspecial (on the full CBC network at 7:30 p.m. EST tomorrow and at 8 the following two evenings) is titled Heart Of Gold after a song by Neil Young. Jointly created by the CBC and the independent firm of Insight Productions, with some help from Labatt's brewery, the program chronicles the history of English-Canadian rock from the 1950s to the 1980s, with old tapes and films, specially staged performances and interviews with musicians, all bound up by the voice-over narration of actor and one-time deejay Donald Sutherland. The project has also spun off into a six-hour syndicated radio program and a book, which will be released in February.

"If you told people a few years ago that you were going to do a three-hour TV show on Canadian rock music, they would have laughed in your face," says Heart Of Gold's executive producer, John Brunton. "And I doubt if anyone has any idea how much great stuff we've left on the floor."

The show was edited, says Brunton, primarily with entertainment in mind. He emphasizes that it is not intended to present a new thesis on Canadian music, or to document the evolution of Canadian music. Rather the intention is to entertain a broad audience, many members of which may not know, for example, that The Diamonds, whose hit 'Little Darlin'' is a doo-wop classic, was a Canadian group, or that, as Sutherland puts it, "Born To Be Wild, which became the anthem of a generation, was conceived in the bars and coffee houses of Yorkville" — the same Yorkville where David Clayton-Thomas, **Joni Mitchell**, John Kay (of Steppenwolf) and Neil Young were learning their chops.

The program's producer Iain Paterson and director Peter Shatalow were always conscious that it was designed for a mass CBC audience, and not hard-core rock fans: "The catch phrase we used the whole time we were working on this was 'celebration, not investigation,'" explains Brunton. "We had to ignore lots of great footage we came across along the way, because we wanted to let the music speak for itself. We wanted to show Canadians that their music was as good as any in the world, and to help them understand how central a part Canadian musicians have played in international music."

The first hour of the series concentrates on the fifties and sixties, with such acts as The Crewcuts and Paul Anka from the fifties and, from the sixties, Bobby Curtola, Ronnie Hawkins and The Band, Ian and Sylvia, **Joni Mitchell**, Lovin' Spoonful, The Mamas and The Papas and John Kay and Steppenwolf.

Among those last groups, several are generally thought of as American, a reflection of the exodus of Canadian musicians to Los Angeles and New York in the mid-sixties. Brunton acknowledges that, at times, the Canadian connection may appear thin, but he says that Born To Be Wild was, in fact, written in Yorkville, and he was anxious to show how Toronto was "as important as San Francisco or Greenwich Village or Liverpool in influencing sixties' music. I honestly believe the Yorkville influence has spread all over

the world. You can question why we included Denny Doherty, but I think that in many ways a song like California Dreaming, besides being a great song, captures that time perfectly and it was sung by a Canadian, which a lot of people probably don't know."

The second part of the series features such performers as Gordon Lightfoot and Murray McLachlan, artists who were finally able to make a comfortable living in Canada, while gaining international reputations as well. The program covers The Guess Who, Bachman-Turner Overdrive and David Clayton-Thomas, as well as concentrating on singer-songwriters such as Leonard Cohen, McLachlan and Neil Young. The final episode (which has the advantage of more easily available footage, including promotional videos) provides an overview of the eighties' Canadian hard rock movement (Rush, April Wine, Loverboy, Chilliwack) as well as featuring such performers as Bruce Cockburn, Rough Trade and Anne Murray.

In total, there are 35 different acts, performing 70 songs. Even at that, every music fan will find favorites that have been missed — from Jack Scott in the fifties to Lighthouse, The Stampeders, The James Gang and Ian Thomas in the seventies and, in the eighties, Martha And The Muffins and Bryan Adams. In most cases, Brunton explains, the crew chose to run the most interesting footage it could, and many Canadian acts were never filmed. In other cases, it was a matter of time limitations: "We wanted there to be a certain amount of space between performers, and not a barraging the audience with acts. I have to take any criticism that we left too many people out in a positive way: what a marvellous thing it is, that three hours of television still isn't enough to include all the Canadian talent that deserves attention."



The Crewcuts represent the fifties.



A youthful Ronnie Hawkins is among the acts representing the sixties.