

Rock's place within our culture

SONG TO A SEAGULL:
Edited by Robert Evans
(Ryerson)
\$6.95

THE SOUND OF OUR TIME:
By Dave Laing
(Burns & McEachern)
\$7.25

SONG TO A SEAGULL is "a book of Canadian songs and poems" put together by Robert Evans, a co-ordinator of music for the North York Board of Education in Toronto.

It has been finely designed and illustrated by Peggy Steele, and it is a very good example of an inexpensive gift book which will make a very nice gift for anyone interested in Canadian culture. There are poems by Leonard Cohen, Margaret Atwood, Dorothy Livesay, Raymond Souster, Al Purdy, and others.

Not only is there a very fine selection of older Canadian folk songs, but most of our best contemporary songwriters are also represented: Gordon Lightfoot, Ian Tyson and Jonie Mitchell. Gordon Lightfoot is the best represented songwriter, with four songs, although I am rather surprised to find that one of his finest, and most Canadian

songs, The Canadian Railway Trilogy, has been omitted.

It's also quite disgraceful that only one of Joni Mitchell's songs is included, despite the fact that the book's title is lifted from her first album. And it's rather surprising to find two poems by Cohen, but none of his songs.

Mr. Evans has included a few of his own poems, and, as they are not up to the standard of the rest of the book, they could easily have been left out, their place being filled with the songs of Cohen or Joni Mitchell. Despite these complaints, SONG TO A SEAGULL is a fine introduction to Canada's poetry and song.

Dave Laing is English and he is writing about the major pop scenes in THE SOUND OF OUR TIME, so he has nothing to say about that scene in Canada. His book is, nevertheless, a surprisingly scholarly investigation of the roots of rock music.

It examines both the social and musical background of the music and is one of the best of a flood of recent books on the subject. He is perhaps a bit too formally

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scholarly at times, and he had to reach for some of his quotations, but he does understand the music, and some of

his explanations of its particular status as an art are very fine.

He correctly places rock as an outgrowth of real folk music (as opposed to the self-conscious, backward gazing "folk music" of the late fifties and early sixties), and intelligently analyzes the

complex cultural and economic situation the music and its makers find themselves in today.

In his final chapters he discusses The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who and Bob Dylan with wit and understanding.

Douglas Barbour

Leacock, the kindly uncle who never quite materializes

THE MAN IN THE PANAMA HAT:
By Elizabeth Kimball
(McClelland & Stewart)
\$6.50

Stephen Leacock was one of Canada's all-time great writers — and probably her greatest humorist.

I still remember my first introduction to him — through medium of one of his stories, My Financial Career, in one of our school English texts. And it was funny even then.

But to Elizabeth Kimball he was "just one of her many remarkable uncles."

This is the man she tries to show us in her reminiscences,

The Man in the Panama Hat. But while it's lively and readable at times it doesn't quite come off.

As a little girl growing up in a large, affectionate family, Elizabeth Kimball naturally enough didn't understand just how famous her uncle really was. He was a kindly uncle — not her favorite — whom she saw occasionally during summer at the lake at Orillia.

So it's understandable that he didn't make that much of an impression on her. However, Mrs. Kimball doesn't need to keep apologizing for that. Having explained it once should be enough.

The incidents she does remember give insights into the

man his family knew . . . and for this, it's worth writing.

Irritating, too, is another habit of Mrs. Kimball's . . . to refer to an incident, then say, "But I'll tell you more of that later." Why not explain its significance then.

As a teaser, it doesn't quite come off.

Darn shame, too, because, otherwise, it's a good book. Not only for the picture it presents of a favorite author . . . but for the mood it evokes . . . of another time . . . of summers in northern Ontario when life was more leisurely and pleasant. For anyone who knows that setting, it's beautiful.

Catherine Carson