Canadian singing stars preserve wealth

By Michael Lawson

Canadian Press staff writer Burton Cummings once lost a \$60,000 cheque but did not realize it until the cheque turned up eight months later. A broken fingernail once cost Gordon Lightfoot at least \$20,000.

Incidents like these are the meat and potatoes of gossip columns but they offer a starvation diet to gossip mongers in this country. Canada's most successful entertainers do not play by their rules.

risn't it generally understood that the showbiz wealthy - particularly the youth-oriented sector are foolishly flamboyant with finances, indulging every expensive whim?

In the United States the gossip press is full of juicy tidbits about a ravenhaired vamp who spends bundles on manicures and has enough shoes to outfit a WAC regiment; about a mellow-voiced crooner who has added a lake to the swimming pool and two tennis courts in his garden; about a member of a popular vocal group who owned five Rolls Royces before his 21st birthday and demolished them before he was much older.

The truth is. Canada's music elite is dull. Those who have made millions



Gordon Lightfoot Scrapped project

Rarely does an item

royalty cheque, which he

Or the one about Light-

foot's fingernail. The folk-

singer broke a nail before

a week-long engagement at

Toronto's Massey Hall in

1974, an engagement that

cost him between \$20,000

and \$25,000 to tape for a

live recording. But during

the subsequent mixing pro-

cess Lightfoot decided that

the synthetic nail with

which he strummed his

guitar during the concerts

delivered a flawed sound

on tape. He crapped the

seem to live sensibly.

found under his bed.



Basic tastes



Anne Murray

are few in number -ally shrink from the inemerge such as the one about Cummings's elusive flamboyant or otherwise.

Some, notably Neil Young and Joni Michell, avoid interviews altogether. The more accessible artists usually confine their comments to their work.

Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart and Geddy Lee, better known as the band Rush, have parlayed eight years of sweat and heavy metal into millions of dollars and today the three Toronto musicians are living comfortably. And characteristically, they fend off the media's curiosity about their wealth.

image is often larger than life, such celebrities generquisitive press when the topic turns to lifestyle,

> The way it works with so many bands that do become financially successful is that for a period of three or four years there's a great deal of income generated. After that period it's like a company going out of business. So while you're making it, you tend

Burton Cummings

Millionaire at 20

and fellow big-timers may have cars, houses and oth-

er possessions that are

more luxurious than the

norm, but defended it by

He conceded that he

In truth, a band often loses money touring. But the roadwork generates both interest and identity which, in turn, sell re-

to go for a little more."

town Ottawa.

Cummings, too, has invested much of his earnings wisely. In the late '60s, when he and the Guess Who were riding high internationally, the Winnipeg rock group had joint holdings in everything from chicken franchises to shopping plazas.

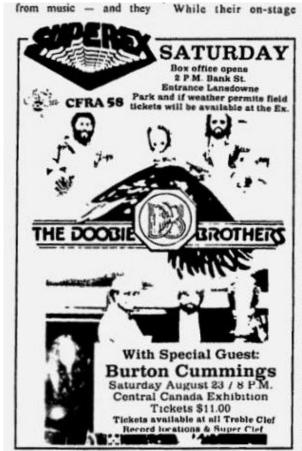
Cummings, now a suc-cessful solo artist, is still drawing royalties from the Guess Who years, having co-written most of the band's material with Randy Bachman.

Among his possessions are two fine homes, one overlooking a canyon in Hollywood, the other a 21room mansion in Winnipeg. And, although he still rents his trademark white Steinway grand piano, he owns a number of other instruments, including an upright piano, guitars, saxophones, flutes and "my expensive toys" - several synthesizers.

Anne Murray's situation is somewhat unusual in that her considerable wealth has come mainly through her talent as a performer - she doesn't write music. But like Anka, Murray today is much in demand worldwide. Leonard Rambeau, president of her Balmur management and publishplace in the Thornhill area north of Metropolitan Toronto, may bespeak wealth, but Rambeau noted that Murray doesn't wear the wealth on her sleeve.

She drives a solidly middie-class Volvo station wagon, "not even a Mer-cedes,"





Guitarist Lifeson noted in an interview that people generally have a misguided image of rock musicians. The life - especially the roadwork - is far from glamorous, and the financial rewards are neither plentiful nor easily won.

"A great deal of touring throughout the year is necessary if a band is to get any kind of name at all. and that's an expensive proposition. We have close to 30 people on the road with us so there's a lot of dollars involved."

Although Rush has been a mainstay of Canadian music almost from its beginning, Lifeson said it took four or five years of hard work before the group could pay off the for such artists as Frank bills for its equipment.

Break even

"It wasn't really until this last tour (of European and American cities) that we sort of broke even and managed to put away a little bit to cover these two months that we're off the

The people who benefit ing firm, says her asking most from these sales are the songwriters, whose credit on a single hit tune will not them a small fortune in royalties. Both Paul Anka and Cummings were millionaires by age 20, thanks to their frequently played compositions.

Anka, in fact, still earns between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year just for his Tonight Show theme. which has heralded Johnny Carson's entrance for the last 15 years.

But the bulk of his millions comes from the dozens of hit tunes that he recorded himself over a 23-year career, and the ones he tailored exclusively Sinatra (My Way) and Tom Jones (She's a Lady).

With the respect he has earned in the music industry, Anka can command top dollars in Las Vegas, where he has one of three residences. And many of those dollars are sensibly invested in real

price for a performance jumped 20 per cent two years ago when she won a Grammy Award, the Oscar of the American music industry.

terview that the singer has basic tastes and a down-toearth lifestyle.

"Her idea of luxury is having the kind of kitchen she wants, the drapes that appeal to her, a comfortable home," he said. That home, a large, fashionable

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