

THE CALGARY HERALD
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The Juno nominations are out and guess who made the list (again)?

By Brian Brennan

Anna Murray and Gordon Lightfoot lead the nominations for this year's Juno Awards. Does that sound familiar to you? It should. It's the longest-running story in the Canadian music industry.

submitted this week by the industry organization known as the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Eves Yaldy, who used to have some genuine folkie credence, is now making pop records in San Francisco with producer Elliot Mazer.

I can think of at least a dozen folk artists — David Energy, Jean Corcoran, Ken and Anne McGarvey, Cindy Falk and Dick Donald, David, Les Tremblay, Cassa, Bob Green, Stonehead, David Bruden, Graham Townsend and others — who have more right to be in the list of nominees than Lightfoot or Hill. But then, the Junos are based on record sales and many of these performers will never get a gold album unless they meet one themselves. Recognitions of commercial worth, not artistic achievement, that's what the Junos are all about.

Some of the other nominations show how backward the Junos continue to be in terms of recognition of Canadian talent.

Ned Young, who hasn't lived or performed in the country for years, hardly qualifies as a candidate for top male vocalist in Canada. It's just as if we were to single out Neil Young for an award given to Canadian artists. Or Glenn Ford for recognition as a Canadian actor. Or Michael Jackson as a Canadian singer. Or some other foreigner who has never studied at the Alberta College of Art and Design in a local college, who has never been a Canadian citizen.

Country singer Stompin' Tom Connors complained about this very situation last year, when he received the number of "honorary Canadians" — his term for artists who have moved to the U.S. — nominated each year for the Junos. Connors, who has been nominated for a country music vocalist award this year?

How does the Carlton Standard, a pseudo-folk group that specializes in folk rock and classical pop songs, manage to qualify for the best country group award, year after year? Where are Ottawa's Cooper Brothers, who just happen to record for Capricorn Records — one



IF THESE FACES LOOK FAMILIAR, THEY SHOULD

... Anna Murray and Gordon Lightfoot lead the nominees once more



MURRAY MAUCLHAN ... not likely

music industry representative, is nominated for the best new artist award. And Guy Gibson and Perry Goldstein



NEIL YOUNG

many artists — including Calgary's own Peterborough, Vancouver's Ben and the multi-talented Cassy from Vancouver — who were bypassed by the Academy this year and who deserve better.

Comment

Murray and Lightfoot are up again for the top awards this year — Murray for best female vocalist and best country female vocalist of the year. Lightfoot for best male vocalist and best folk artist of the year.

And while nobody will deny Murray's right to be nominated as best female vocalist — an award she has won half a dozen times already — one has to wonder about some of the other nominations



DAN HILL

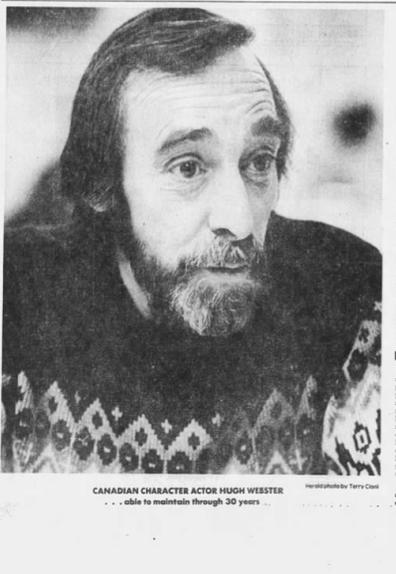
already his "I'm a Fool" record, when he was the overall best male vocalist in 1978. He is a particularly unfortunate choice for this award when there are hundreds of better qualified folkies in the country who never got in the running for a Juno.

The other nominees in the folk category argue most persuasively for the exclusion of the nomination, for one and for all.



JONI MITCHELL

... hardly counts



CANADIAN CHARACTER ACTOR HUGH WESLER

... able to maintain through 30 years

Plays Faustian curler for Theatre Calgary No starry-eyed neophyte, but obviously loves his craft

By Eric Dawson

Hugh Wesler would have you believe that there was hardly a minute in his 30-year career in the Canadian theatre when he felt starry-eyed about his work.

Even in his last ventures into theatre, it was always the craft of the actor that attracted him, he said in an interview this week. The ego, the drive toward success — they were present, naturally. No actor can do without them.

But Wesler, now in rehearsal for W.O. Mitchell's new play *The Black Squirrel* at Theatre Calgary from March 8 through 24, maintained a balanced view of his life in the theatre through the years. The best and worst moments have been in good work, choosing to see only in terms of the quality of a job and much less in terms of a long and successful life. The system that sees a career path of most actors' lives lie left to the mercy of others.

No embarrassment

Rolling off the stage in a straight jacket during a Strindberg play takes on in his 30-year career period didn't drive him from the stage in embarrassment. Neither did repeated stints in the sewer never lead of him, (most recently in the movie *Apocalypse*, starring Richard M. Chan and filmed in Montreal in December. Before that it was a succession of Disney features) carry him into the music world outside, screened by actors being little contact with reality.

"It's hard to feel you're above it all when you know the show will end, you'll get on the plane and in

a couple of hours you'll be back marking out the bars for a few weeks."

Wesler's firm outside Toronto is one of the factors he credits with helping maintain his sanity through his career as one of the country's leading character actors, but when he seemed to be closing in, there was always the firm to go back to. Neither the hours nor the high-paying promises that are all part of the business could keep him away from it for very long. He and his wife raised five children there and countless children, cows and ducks far from the pressures of the city and the stage.

Two of the sons are gone now, off trying their luck on the London stage, but the drive of the country and the family life still keeps him back.

Wesler has acted in more productions than he can or cares to remember. There are many roles he can tell of productions rewarding of the time but few forgotten by all but their participants. The best among them involve the years 1962 through 1965 when he was one of the mainstays of the Stratford Festival in Ontario.

A production of *King Lear* in which he played the Fool to John Colicos' Lear under Michael Mauchlan's direction is one of the most memorable.

"To often learn is transformed into a one-man show," he said, "with very little energy developing from the smaller roles." This one was the exception. He said that the audience could sense a society growing before their eyes through a long line of strong minor character developments. Colicos wasn't forced to bear the full weight of the play and the

genius in the text was amplified to it.

He professed an ability to cope with directors who trample over their actors' ego and later judge merit for three weeks then seem surprised when, on opening night, the actors fail to put across his ideas.

Close partnership

"Tyrone Guthrie had a far more sensible idea of the relationship between director and his cast. He thought the director should be a chairman of the board and his actors a specially chosen committee that would work in close partnership."

"I believe in that. I've spent most of my life perfecting my craft and I believe that it is my job to take a score and interpret it in a respectful way with the director's collaboration."

Wesler's present collaboration is with director Guy Spring in a play that the actor costarred in a special feature for the two hours, and loved W.O. Mitchell's work since the darkest days when *Siberia* and the *Kid* was a radio favorite. With his Scotch background, he has a special love for *The Black Squirrel* and the role of an oval cutter who is willing to sell his soul to the Devil in order to win the coveted Beer Cup.

"The cast has a tremendous sense of spirit and feel of the play. Wesler said, and is looking forward to their final commission with the Devil on stage at Theatre Calgary. It promises one of the most successful acting moments anyone will ever see, all in the framework of one of Mitchell's most enduring works.