

Jam Session

By PATRICIA FAGAN

Folk Singer Ray Materick

It seems that every time I make plans to go out somewhere, the weather expresses its disapproval with a snowstorm. Like two weeks ago Friday, when I was all set to head down to Grumbles — a quaint little coffee house in the King and Jarvis area of Toronto.

The snow was drifting and the visibility close to nil but I decided to make the trek downtown, regardless. What was the attraction? A folk singer from Brantford, name of Ray Materick. I'd heard his album "Sidestreets" and it was enough to whet my appetite. I wasn't going to miss the chance of seeing him perform, just because of a little snow. The Don Valley Parkway was as treacherous as I had feared, but when I finally arrived at Grumbles, I was glad I'd made the effort.

Ray wasn't exactly the way I pictured him to be. I'd imagined him as a suave, sophisticated type of artist. Not so. He turned out to be a combination of entertainer, poet and folksinger. Prior to each song that he sang, Ray would tell a funny little anecdote complete with all the actions. Then he would give a compelling reading from his poetry book called Fat Birds. After the lengthy introduction, would follow the song, done in his gutsy, commanding folk style.

Doesn't sound like the usual folk singing act, does it? But then Ray isn't your average folk singer either. He was 23 years old, before he decided to put his poetry to music. At first his singing was just a way of expressing his poetry. Now it's progressed to songwriting in its own right. That's why Kanata Record Company signed Ray up as a recording artist. Lyrics are undoubtedly the strongpoints of his songs, but they're musically sound as well.

One radio announcer introduced Ray's new album with the comment: "He's lived it; now he sings it." Ray gets a big kick out of relating that to the audience at Grumbles. He said that people tend to take songwriters too seriously and read too much into the lyrics. Ray writes what he feels — nothing more, nothing less. Like the lyrics in the title album "Sidestreets" . . .

I know that wrong is only relative to right
Yes and weak is only relative to might
But I'm not sure that I believe in everything
I say

Still there's a chance that it might work
out for the best one day

That is if I can think of anything to say.

Ray claims that actually he's lived about half of that album and written the rest. Most of the tunes have some relevance to his personal life and problems. The other album cuts include Season of Plenty; Goodbye; Final Fire; Home From Parade; Dear Christine; Hard Life Alone; Morning Song Cherylee Rose; One Thing I'll Never Ask Is Why and Morning Song. Ray sang most of them for the attentive audience that came out to hear him on that snowy Friday night.

The only thing that spoiled my evening was the realization that Ray Materick would never again play at Grumbles. Nor will any folk singer, for that matter. Grumbles closed down Thursday night of last week after futile attempts to secure a liquor license.

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