



AFTER DARK



The soul of a poet

by ARNOLD OLSON

Murray McLaughlan is a poet who writes music.

That's not just a glib statement, because the people who make textbooks and those who require students to read his work have made that distinction.

Child's Song, written 20 years ago, is such an entry to the world of school books.

The Farmer's Song, for instance, is a piece he is obliged to perform in concerts such as the Salmon Valley Music Festival where he was one of the headliners.

"I don't know how other people feel, but if I'm able to create a piece of work that people take to their heart, and it moves them or they get something out of it in any way, I'm gratified."

McLaughlan is no stranger to Prince George. He's featured on CBC radio as well as having performed here before.

With 20 years in the business and 17 albums on the market — as well as other artists performing his songs — the name McLaughlan is a household name to many people throughout the continent. He's won 10 Juno awards for his efforts as well as other prestigious awards.

"In the last two weeks I've been gearing up," he said in a telephone interview. "I'm doing a tour of western Canada in late July and all of August."

"We're just gearing up for a new season of *Swinging on a Star* (his CBC radio program)."

That will start with material collected from the Edmonton Music Festival.

"I've just finished a recording project as a producer for an artist named Molly Johnson." He said the artist's voice is extremely like the jazz singer Billy Holiday.

"It's a little bit different from the standard I'm best known as: a folk/country writer but the truth is that I find it easy and very satisfying to write in veins that aren't necessarily for my particular performance identity."

"I've always liked, for instance, the works of people like Harold Arlin or Johnny Mercer or Hoagy Carmichael. I've been writing songs in that vein."

McLaughlan has hopes the album finds its way onto a major U.S. jazz blues label.

He has another project underway that will take about a year to reach fruition.

"It's more major than anything I've ever undertaken."

He said the CD ROM interactive book is read by computer.

"It will involve an odyssey around Canada, dealing with things historic and otherwise. It will be done by float plane. It'll involve my writing — both poetry and text — it'll involve music production and recording — it'll involve video and still photography as well as involving paintings and drawings."

"The big thing about these things is they're interactive. The person who uses this technology can access it in different ways."

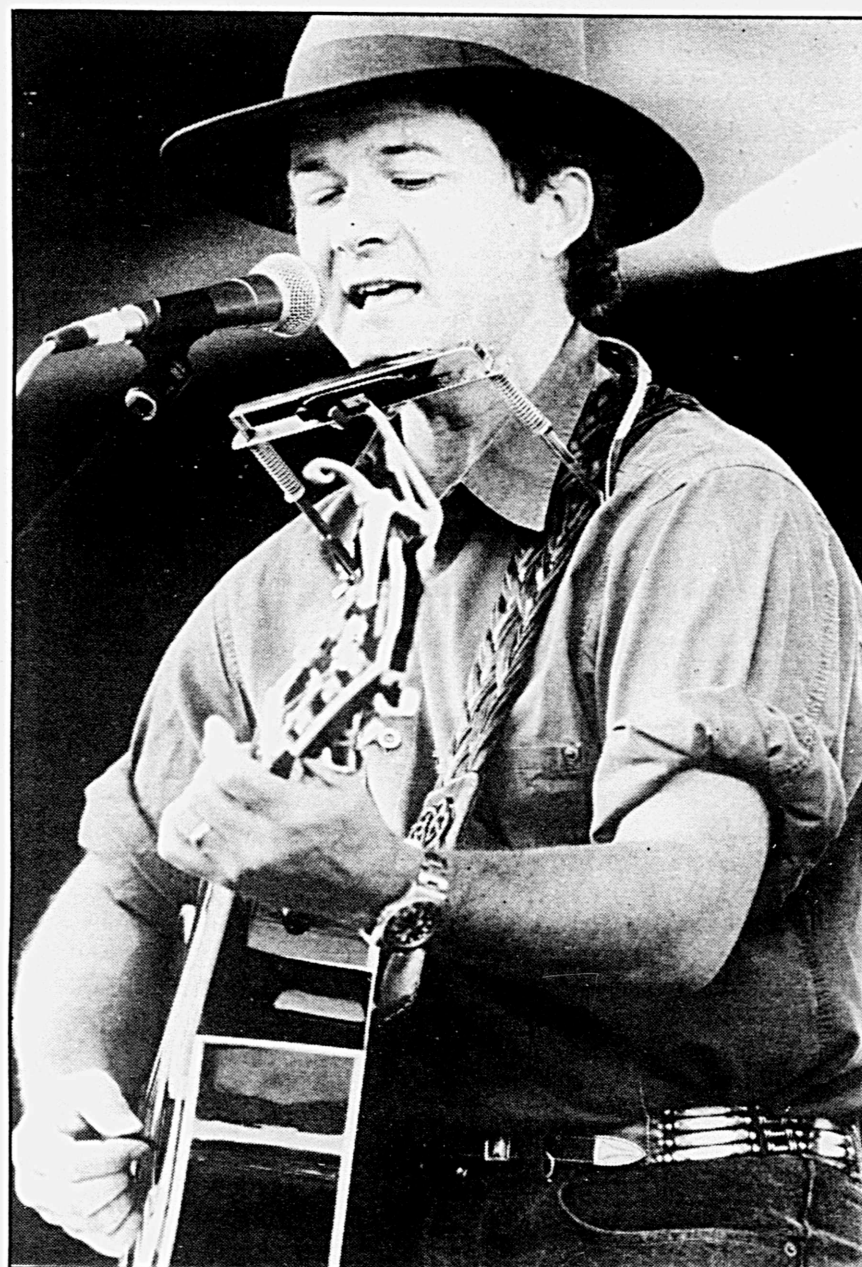
He said the new technology, although not understood by many, is likely to be, "the next thing."

He also has been working toward producing another album, with hopes of completion by October.

He performed at Salmon Valley with his radio broadcast players Danny Greenspoon and Kit Johnson, producing their music with acoustic instruments.

He said at least half of his music was material most people have never heard.

"I'd probably be tarred and feathered and run out of town if I didn't play *Farmer's Song*."



Murray McLaughlan looks to touch people's hearts with his music. He was caught here, in concert, at the Salmon Valley Music Festival.

photos by Chuck Nisbett