

**ME:** Do you like the challenge that it takes to be on the move, to be responsible, to be on time et cetera?

**AL:** I like to be very punctual, but I can't say I like all that much travel. With Ronnie, we haven't been doing that much, because he was mainly working downtown Toronto until recently, by his own choosing, he is doing some road gigs. So for the past two years since I joined him, I probably haven't spent three months altogether away from home. So the travelling hasn't been that extensive, which is to my liking.

**ME:** I understand you back up some of the greats on records. Where do you do your recordings sessions, and who have you worked with?

**AL:** Pretty well in any studio in Toronto. I am a freelance steel guitarist. I haven't been on Ronnie's records yet. His last two albums, one of which was just released last week, were both cut just prior to my joining him. I will be on the next one, which we plan to do in the New Year. I would say 80 per cent of my studio work has been done at RCA Victor. Because of the instrument I play, 80 per cent of my work has been on country music. I've backed up mainly all Canadians, a few Americans. I would say that 65 per cent of all the steel guitar that you hear on radio on records of Canadians is me. One plus for that instrument is that there aren't that many steel guitarists around. It is a very versatile instrument; it is really just coming into its own and it is getting worked into all other aspects of music, rock, jazz and all that. I have backed up Al Cherny, Gary Buck, Lynn Jones, The Family Brown, Dick Damorin, Orville Profit, Dallas Harmes, Tommy Hunter, George Hamilton IV, who is an American, but he is now working up here a lot; he has his own TV show out of Hamilton, but his last RCA recording contract is a Canadian one for International release, so he is doing all his recording up here in Toronto. Country music is starting to really come along now, but business has got to grow a lot. The people in it, musicians, management and record people have got to grow up and take a lot more mature attitude towards it. It has been treated as a back door all along, saying it's just country, it's slip sha ho ho. They've got to start taking it professionally and get behind it. Other people I have recorded with, on the rock scene, Pure Prairie League from the States, and a brand new singer, a young lady from New York City, she is produced by Steve Cats, who is the ex-lead guitar player from Blood, Sweat and Tears.

**ME:** Ronnie Hawkins has been called Ontario's phenomenon, the best live performer around. What is your impression of him?

**AL:** Yes, he is one of the best live performers around. He is a great emcee; he is never stuck for words. For a person to have gone through so much in show business over the years as he has, he still has good control of his faculties. I'm sure I would have become more hardened and not so easy going. The music business is enough to drive anyone crazy — it's a high strung business, but he can roll with it. You have to have commanding control to handle those people, which takes a lot of patience. When Ronnie is on stage, it just gives the band a relaxed feeling, because he has everything in control; he gives off the vibes of having the situation in hand. He brings out the best in any of his musicians, which gives you that drive that you want to try that much harder, which is good; it helps the show a lot, too.

**ME:** Back in 1971, Rompin' Ronnie purchased London's City Hall and converted it into a restaurant-tavern. Is it as fabulous a place as the stories go?

**AL:** Yes; it is a very nice place, four stories high, beautifully done. They are adding to it and fixing it up all the time. I wasn't with him when he bought it; I didn't see the transaction or renovations. I came in a year after they opened. I have played there quite often. When Ronnie is changing people or rehearsing new people, he will book in there.

**ME:** When did your friend and associate, Dave Peever, begin his agency and start working with performers?

**AL:** Nearly two years ago. Dave was a policeman in Toronto, and he was working with performers part time; then he decided to become a manager-agent. He handles Lynn Jones, Donna Moon, The Norma Gale Show, and a few other people. He works out of Mississauga, but he handles talent all over Ontario, and books the acts into clubs mainly in the Mississauga-Toronto area.

**ME:** Is your career a means to an end?

**AL:** Yes, at the age I am getting to, you have to think about putting away a little for a rainy day. Many performers find themselves, at 40 years old, still playing in bars and nothing to fall back on. I don't want to be caught in that position, so I have all these other things going. I like to keep in with the studio work, the guitars and playing. I am the type of person who would never be stuck for a job. I was raised on a farm and I could be considered practical. I think if I put my mind to anything, I could do it. It is whatever is more desirable. I have a lot to be thankful for. As far as an ideal in the end, that is to try and create enough action and to plan out our stage of the year and try to put away enough for the future and take it from there.

**ME:** Do you feel you are in control of your destiny?

**AL:** In this business, I suppose if you put a definite aim on it, a definite goal, and you work towards it and work at it, it is bound to come. I can't say I have a definite goal, because I can go in any direction. So I don't like to put too much emphasis on any one area. But my interests are all revolving around music, so I have one basic aim, and that is what is most important. Being in showbusiness, your horizons and your scope are broadened and you are not just stuck in one little corner of the world. I am the kind of person that even if I had a million dollars, I would still be the same kind of person as I am now; I couldn't change. I feel I have control of myself and I know that success wouldn't go to my head. When you wanted to interview me, I thought, "Who am I but one pebble in the passing sands of time."