

# Ronnie Hawkins hits the road — and hits on Hazel

By JOHN STEWART  
Staff

Mr. Dynamo wants you to know that his motor is still running, even though he has a little trouble changing gears.

Ronnie Hawkins — recent Order of Canada recipient and inaugural inductee into the Mississauga Music

Walk of Fame one year ago — is hitting the road.

Even though a media website references the occasion as Ronnie Hawkins Tour 2013, “I wouldn’t call it a tour,” laughs the senior citizen down the telephone line from his home on Stoney Lake in the Kawarthas. “It’s more like a few little dates.”

Once famed as a rockabilly road

warrior who played endless bars and lounges in a preview of the concept of the “never-ending tour” Bob Dylan has now perfected, the Arkansas native is about to launch a much more sedate schedule — the kind that befits a 78-year-old who has already beaten cancer once.

(Dylan once called Hawkins “the guru of rock ‘n’ roll” and even got his “hero” to play the part of Dylan in a movie he made called *Renaldo and Clara*.)

In his latest return to the stage, Hawkins will be the star of a half-dozen events billed as “An Intimate Evening with Ronnie Hawkins.”

The first takes place Oct. 4 at the Burlington Arts Centre, with more Oct. 17 in Brantford, Oct. 26 in Windsor, Nov. 5 in London, Nov. 16 in Lindsay and Nov. 21 at Massey Hall. For Burlington tickets visit [burlingtonpac.ca](http://burlingtonpac.ca).

In his heyday, Hawkins was famed for his high-energy live shows that earned him the “Dynamo” tag and produced the back-up band that went on to become The Band.

Hawkins is an adopted son of Mississauga, having lived here for “maybe seven or eight or nine years or 10 years, I don’t know.

“I love Mississauga, but it got busy. It used to be an old stagecoach run, but that was a long time before all them houses got built two inches apart.”

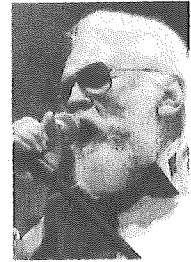
It was on his 20-acre farm on Mississauga Rd., near Hwy. 403, where John Lennon and Yoko Ono were famously photographed on snowmobiles before launching their peace campaign in Toronto in 1969.

Hawkins says there were several other “historic” markers along the long driveway into his former home. Those would be fence posts that were wiped out by the vehicles of well-known visitors.

“There was a curve around the bend up the hill and there are poles there that David Clayton-Thomas and Kris Kristofferson and Gordon Lightfoot and Ian Tyson visited when they came by ‘over-served,’” chuckles Hawkins, who is almost as famous for his constant string of one-liners as he is for his singing — and his grooming of great guitar players like Robbie Robertson, who started as a roadie for his band.

The format of the shows will see local celebrities chat with Hawkins, who will just be Ronnie for most of the program — which is entertaining in its own right.

But Hawkins gets serious when he



Ronnie Hawkins

talks about the musical portion of the presentation. A renowned perfectionist, he has always cared about getting the music absolutely right.

He will have a small combo, including son Robin on guitar. He’ll play his hit *Forty Days*, Gordon Lightfoot’s *Home From The Forest*, *Lodi* and a number written by an Arkansas friend of Hawkins for Richard Manuel of The Band, called *Days Gone By*.

He’ll play in the old country-folk style that he started playing in emulation of his dad and uncles who were part of the Hawkins Brothers Band back home.

But he won’t be doing the camel walk — a stage antic that he mastered in his younger rockabilly days.

Hawkins guffaws at the suggestion: “If I put all my weight on one leg, it would snap in three places.”

Before he signs off, Hawkins sends a personal love letter to Mayor Hazel McCallion, who was present at Port Credit Memorial Park a year ago when the singer was one of the initial recipients of a special stone commemorating his career on the Mississauga Music Walk of Fame.

“I tried to marry her three or four times,” jokes the Hawk. “I hope she’s going to come out. You tell that sweet Hurricane that maybe I can buy her a drink and get her to run off with me.”

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