

Peterson, Oscar

CBC presents a two-hour look at jazz legend Oscar Peterson

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Oct-14-92 MN

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By MIKE BEGGS

Special To *The Mississauga News*
Mississauga resident and jazz legend Oscar Peterson will be profiled through an in-depth documentary, *In The Key Of Oscar*, Sunday Nov. 1, beginning at 8 p.m. on CBC-TV.

The two-hour show is set on a train travelling from Toronto to his native Montreal. As the train rolls along, the 67-year-old pianist/composer looks back on the highlights and trials of his esteemed, half-century career.

The winner of seven Grammy Awards (and counting), Peterson addresses: the color barriers he faced as a jazz player during the 1930s, 40s and 50s; his rise to international acclaim through a 15-year stint with the star-laden ensemble, Jazz At The Philharmonic, beginning in 1949; and his personal life, as the son of a railway porter and grandfather-of-nine.

This intimate, biographical production also features interviews with such jazz luminaries as Dizzy Gillespie, and Ella Fitzgerald and extensive live concert footage of Peterson's appearances around the world with Nat King Cole and his own trio including Ray Brown, and Herb Ellis.

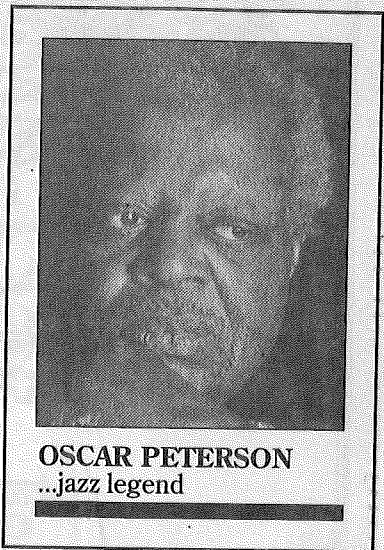
"Working with Oscar was particularly enlightening, because you think you know someone, but until you start following him around, you don't really get a handle on the pressure points he had to endure over the years," said producer and co-director Sylvia Sweeney, also Peterson's niece.

"I guess what intrigues me most is the dichotomy of the man, especially musically. When you isolate Oscar Peterson's compositions, you hear a very emotionally soft man. Then you listen to him as a live performer, and you hear that brilliant virtuoso."

Sweeney initiated this project in the spring of 1991, upon realizing that, "very few people know the man," who worked with hundreds of jazz greats, founded the internationally renowned Advanced School Of Contemporary Music in Toronto and is presently Chancellor of York University.

That won't be the case for long, however.

The CBC special will be made available on home video through the



OSCAR PETERSON
...jazz legend

National Film Board; a CD entitled, *The Composer, The Performer, The Man*, will be released by Peterson in mid-November; and Sweeney's firm, Elitha Peterson Productions (which owns the exclusive broadcast rights to Peterson's life story), has plans for future features. He'll also put out a new original record, next spring.

"He is an icon," she added. "But what struck me is, you can't compare the acknowledgement here to the reception he receives abroad. Oscar went to Japan last year and they held a parade for him."