

plane, a four-seater. Don't even have to get there until four or five o'clock. You know, you think about the logistics of these things. . . .

"And one of the reasons I've kept it small is there's a certain charm, a certain uniqueness to it—the fact that we don't have a drummer, for instance. It's a very lyrical band, and the songs are lyrical. Any added rhythm or electric kind of thing would detract from the lyrics."

I've got to where I'm an excellent rhythm guitarist. In this band, I'm the drummer."

He is immodestly equipped for songwriting as modern cowboy-troubadours go, one of the few who can write a melody down on paper. "I start by getting the melody in shape and then I start writing the words right away," he said. "I let the lyrics dictate the melody and vice versa, so you might say it's done simulta-

all my lead sheets. That's a *big job*, takes about a week, and it's the worst week of the year. Fourteen tunes or so have to be copyrighted, registered with the Library of Congress and all that stuff, and you sit down with onion-skin paper, India ink, a three-nib pen. . . . I used to do that for a living, copying scores, when I was about twenty. I would sing in the evenings and copy scores for television, for the CBC. Worked for various arrangers



A & M Records



A wise neighbor (who, incidentally, once worked for one of the magazines Lightfoot reads) tells me some parts of Canada today remind him of certain regions in the U.S. twenty years ago. Lightfoot reminded me of your basic gifted Midwesterner of twenty years ago—a craftsman, mainly, proud of his workmanship and willing to talk all day about how one does this or that, proud of the good condition of his tools, inclined to let the product speak for itself . . . and, in the bargain, as time permits, trying to think about making a buck. Lightfoot is pleased with his improvement in the detail work in areas where not even critics are picky—"I've been improving on my rhythm style on the twelve-string guitar," he said. "I picked that up from Bob Gibson. He used to frail a twelve-string, but he used those National finger picks which were a pain in the ass, so I tried to duplicate it with a flat pick. Got into a sort of rolling style. Actually,

neously. I actually sit down with a piece of paper and do a rough draft, write out the notes. The ability to do that is a great help. Lots of people have to work with tape recorders, or else they've got to just write down the words and have the melody in their heads. You can do it that way, but the next time you refer back to the melody, by George, you've changed it. Very subtle changes take place unless you have a reference point.

"If I start rewriting too much, I get right off a tune," he said. "If I can get by with just changing a few lines, I figure it's all right, but when I get into heavy rewriting, I just might as well forget it."

He had piano lessons as a child, "but I was never good enough on that instrument," he says. He started playing the guitar at sixteen. "Didn't study orchestration until I was about seventeen," he said while I tried not to look astounded. "The biggest single hassle that confronts me is doing

up there. I have quite a background in orchestration and it's been invaluable to me, a great advantage."

WHEN Lightfoot started singing his own songs in small Toronto clubs, he attracted—or at least his songs (*Early Morning Rain*, *Ribbon of Darkness*, *The Way I Feel*, and such) attracted—the attention of someone who could help.

"Ian Tyson—Ian and Sylvia—gave me my start," Lightfoot said. "It took a lot of strength on Ian's part, too, because even though he's a very respected artist in Canada and a rancher and a really smart, intelligent guy—and I really like him—I surpassed him long ago in terms of acceptance on a national scale. And sometimes I feel bad about it. He was the guy who really helped me and then I overlooked him. He has a television series up there now on a private network that is really a good show, but I don't know if it's going to stay on the air or what's