

Trust Hodgson to Give a Little Bit more



Roger Hodgson

Photograph by : CALGARY HERALD, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Eric Volmers, Calgary Herald; CanWest News Service

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Roger Hodgson seems an odd choice to take on the role of a hardened, reality-TV taskmaster overseeing a gaggle of young Canadian Idol hopefuls.

But the soft-spoken and willowy singer-songwriter, who is best known for applying his otherworldly falsetto to a string of progressive pop hits in the 1970s and '80s with his band Supertramp, seems genuinely excited that producers have asked him to be an official mentor on the show.

Come August, the former Supertramp frontman, who was 19 when the band's first album was released in 1969, will be shepherding Idol's surviving singers through some of Supertramp's most beloved songs.

And the near legendary songwriter admits he is curious to see how the young singers negotiate some of the trickier vocal gymnastics required to master tunes like Dreamer and Take the Long Way Home.

"It will be interesting to find contestants who can sing in my register," Hodgson said. "It will be something different for me."

Hodgson's appearance on Canadian Idol is another reminder of the long-term relationship the British-born musician has had with this country.

Although Hodgson has lived in California since the 1980s, he says Canada's long-standing devotion to Supertramp has always made it seem like a second home. At one time, it was estimated that one in every 20 Canadians owned the band's *Breakfast in America* and *Crime of the Century* albums.

"It really was an amazing phenomenon. It happened in Canada way before America caught on. It's been a very long, deep love affair with Canada. I'm certainly happy to be back here."

Thursday night, Hodgson will be performing on the Telus Stage at Northlands as part of Capital Ex.

Although he left Supertramp more than 20 years ago, Hodgson is still best remembered for his years fronting the progressive rock outfit. Formed in the late '60s, the band would go on to sell more than 50 million albums during its golden years in the '70s and early '80s. Boasting a more spiritual bent and smarter pop hooks than corporate rock contemporaries REO Speedwagon, Journey and Styx, Supertramp became a fixture in stadiums throughout Europe and North America.

And while the band was not always a critical favourite -- Rolling Stone magazine once described Supertramp's early prog-rock efforts as "flailing away in a tuneless fog" -- Hodgson's infectious pop singles have stood up quite well over the years.

Give a Little Bit, *Take the Long Way Home*, *It's Raining Again*, *The Logical Song*, *Dreamer* and *Breakfast in America* continue to be daily fodder for classic rock stations. And the performer certainly doesn't disappoint when it comes to pleasing the nostalgia-seeking fans that come to his solo shows hoping for a blast from the past.

While the oldies circuit is a far cry from the stadiums Supertramp used to pack in its salad days, Hodgson says the intimate venues offer him a chance to "connect with the audience and the songs in a deeper way.

"I've never gotten sick of the songs. They just seem to have an evergreen quality. I think that some of the recordings might sound dated. But the songs, and the way I play them, always seem fresh."

Still, don't count on seeing Hodgson reunite with his former bandmates. While Supertramp continues to play the nostalgia circuit and periodically

releases albums under the leadership of co-founder Rick Davies, Hodgson doesn't foresee a reunion any time soon.

"I'm enjoying myself too much doing everything else now. We did look into it a couple of years ago and I was open to it. But ... it didn't happen. I've moved on. I'm much happier now."

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