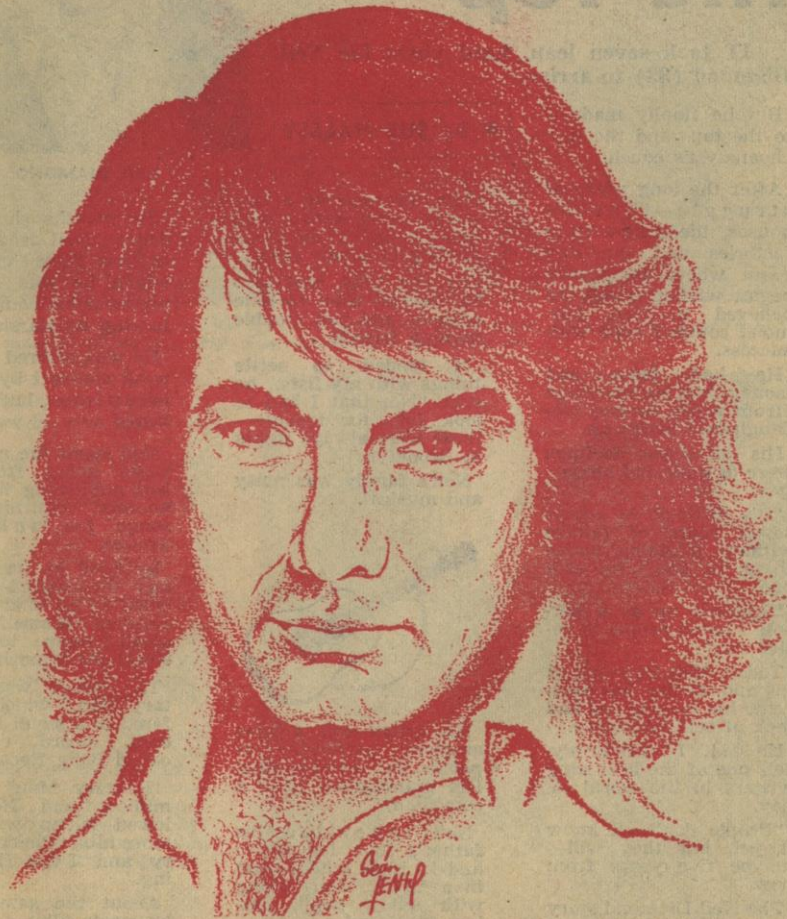


THIRD STAGE: FOLD LEFT HAND UNDER

Neil Diamond



POP BOOKLET

Seven lean years to the top

IT took seven lean, hard years for Neil Diamond (33) to arrive.

But he finally made it to the top—and the psychoanalyst's couch.

After the long years of struggle—the coffee houses, the song-writing factories and the tiny room where he finally began writing songs he believed in—Neil Diamond couldn't cope with success.

He had fame and money, but his marriage (from which he had two daughters) broke up.

His strongest feelings were of guilt and anxiety.

"It's difficult to accept seven years of failure without it doing something to you," he said one.

"I closed up as a person, I hated people to notice me."

Today, Neil Diamond in his mid-thirties, has overcome his insecurities and lack of self-confidence.

He said: "I consider myself one of the best song writers in the world today.

"People don't all know it yet, but they will—maybe five years from now."

The Neil Diamond story had humble beginnings in the Flatbush and Coney Island sections of Brooklyn where he grew up.

He was a shy Jewish

• By SUE HALSEY

child, the son of a dry goods merchant who kept going broke and moving to a new area.

By the time Neil was 16, he had been to nine schools, and had trouble making friends.

"I tended to settle things with my fists," he said. "Not that I had to look far for trouble—there were always fights in Brooklyn."

Neil's family was noisy and musical.



His father was a keen amateur performer at parties and loved to sing. His grandfather was a comedian.

Neil inherited his father's love for music and in high school sang in a mixed choir—along with fellow pupil, Barbra Streisand.

At first Neil had hopes of becoming a doctor, but a guitar given to him by his parents changed that ambition.



NEIL DIAMOND

Six months short of a degree, Neil dropped out of New York University, where he was doing a pre-medicine course on a fencing scholarship.

He was offered a \$50 a week contract by a publishing house, but the job lasted only 16 weeks.

Neil spent the next few years going from one bad publishing house to another, churning out songs for unknown groups.

By 1966 he was broke and dissatisfied—he decided to go it alone and closeted himself in a small room to write songs for himself.

The result was "Solitary Man," which he offered to a small independent record company called Bang Records.

"Solitary Man" sold a million, and Neil followed it up with two more hits, "Cherry, Cherry" and "I Got The Feeling."

About the same time, he wrote "I'm A Believer" for the commercially produced group, The Monkees—it was another million-selling hit.

• Continued next page

Aced by 'black' Diamond

from
ROD EASDOWN
in Sydney

SYDNEY'S Hordern Pavilion holds 5500 people in a fair degree of discomfort, but nobody was complaining while a solitary man dressed in black was on stage.

Few entertainers who have visited this city have held a crowd at the pavilion so completely as guitar-strumming Neil Diamond.

On record Neil Diamond commands attention—on stage it's closer to adoration.

It was hot, but the entertainer held a tremendous sway over his audience, making his concert almost like a religious experience.

He had as much power over the people as a preacher over a congregation, and the whole concert rocked with a revivalist beat.

He talked with the audience, won them over and then unleashed songs like "Holly Holy" and "I Am."

He performed for an unbroken two hours and 15 minutes.

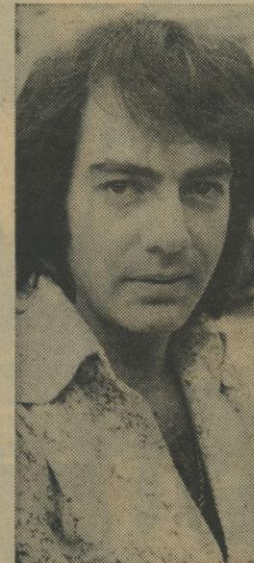
Diamond showed remarkable stamina and an obligation to his job, his music and his audience.

It gave Sydney a new high in the art of stagecraft.

He talked with his audience for about 40 minutes, but they didn't mind the chat.

He spoke of smokers, amateur photographers, the eight members of his band and even the Australian scenery.

The amateur photographers began letting off



their flash guns to take pictures during the singing, and Diamond stopped to call a truce with them.

He offered to pose throughout one song—"Sweet Sweet Wine"—if they agreed to put their cameras away for the rest of the show.

Such a thing has never happened in a stage show in Sydney before.

It worked—the singer and the audience had no more trouble with flashing lights.

Nobody rushed the stage until the very end, and even then they were so rapt that the rushing was orderly.

Diamond gave them the songs they wanted.

David Frost, who brought Diamond to Australia, said after the sing-

er's first Sydney performance that he had only expected the concert to last an hour and 50 minutes.

But Diamond gave them much more than that.

The concert caused traffic jams, money-hungry scalpers selling spare tickets and chartered buses from all over NSW.

To the delight of the organisers the scalpers were scalped—the concert, as with all of Diamond's concerts throughout the country, was a sell-out and people without tickets didn't bother to come to the pavilion.

Traffic banked up for more than a mile at the height of the traffic jam.



Many people hummed Diamond songs as they made their way into the pavilion.

The organisers have taken unprecedented security precautions to guard against forged tickets, and as well as a visual inspection they also scanned the tickets with an electronic device to make sure they were genuine.

Scalpers were asking as much as \$100 for tickets, and for weeks prior to the concerts advertisements appeared in Sydney newspapers advertising "Neil Diamond tickets for sale, price negotiable."

DIAMOND HAS HIS CRITICS

THERE is no doubt that Neil Diamond has millions of devoted fans.

But, as is the case of all big show business names, he also has his critics.

One wrote that his concerts were "like Liberace and Lawrence Welk in a Strawberry-jam session."

Another commented: "A man who sings lyrics like 'If I'm a crumb, baby, you're the cake' must have a direct pipeline to infancy."

But as Diamond admitted: "A dumb sound can be smart music."

A common complaint from his critics is that he has a saccharine quality and comes over as a one-man load of sweeter-than-sweet sugar.

Music-chess mates

"OUTSIDE of music I'm involved in very little," Neil Diamond says.

"I play a little chess, I like to play with my son and I enjoy making love to my wife.

"But music is my life.

"It says what I am."

He doesn't like interviews and has kept away from the press for some time.

"I've only exposed myself through my music," he says.

One example is his Jonathon Livingston Seagull album, the musical score of the film by the same name.

The album fared much better than the film but a typical criticism of it came from Leroy Aarons, a Hollywood critic.

"Seagull is an over-orchestrated, over-sentimental disappointment," he wrote in an article headlined "A sour note over some saccharine music."



But what the critics see as Neil Diamond's weakness is probably his real strength.

His vast following of grannies, mums and dads, middle-class executives and long-haired kids finds his uncomplicated melodies captivating and his lyrics pleasing.

Diamond's style has a lot to do with the way he writes because he sees himself as a writer first, performer second.

The writing is from instinct rather than an intellectual decision.

"My lyrics and the kind of music I write are ge-

nerally poetic imagery," he says.

Obviously the man himself must come through.

Neil Diamond has often described himself as an introvert.

A shy man, he was too frightened to ask girls out as a youth (he wrote poems to them instead) and when he first performed on stage he went in for low-key personal appearance to avoid the audience's attention.

But he is not a limp-wristed wallflower and has known tough times.

He seems to have that rare touch that turns dust to gold.

A jam session

Neil Diamond arrives in Perth on Monday.

It will be impossible for him to slip in unannounced because he will be bringing the biggest entourage ever to accompany a singer to Perth.

Two aircraft are needed to get him, his entourage and his equipment from the Eastern States here.

One aircraft will be packed with musical equipment, the other will carry Diamond and his followers.

These include 42 Americans.



◆ Neil Diamond takes a break during a studio recording session.

• From previous page

Putting back the missing pieces

So, after 10 shows at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles—one of which resulted in the stupendous "Hot August Night" album—and 20 shots at New York's Wintergarden Theatre, Neil Diamond felt secure enough to take some time off.

"I could say to myself, 'OK, these people at least know about me, and they'll come to see me again.'

"I needed time away to fill in some missing pieces in my life . . ."

In his time off from performing, Neil Diamond got to know his wife, Marcia, and his young son, now five, all over again.

"My son was in very bad shape when I was touring. He was a fragile child and his daddy was always away," says Diamond.

"But the relationship is fantastic now. I've had three years to spend with him: Fishing, reading books, drawing together . . ."

Diamond seems to have got his head together on whatever was bothering him before about his life and career.

"The way to live I've found, is long-range, and to be a complete person in everything I do," he says.

During his time off, he read a lot about how men like George Gershwin, Stephen Foster and Irving Berlin handled themselves while earning huge sums and being in great demand as composers.

But the former hack writer of pop songs, the ex-dweller in a publisher's tiny office, churning out ordered material for plastic singers, can't really be believed when he says his Australian tour will be the last major tour he will make.

He is too involved, too close to music to get out. He likes to write but he loves to perform.

"Being in front of an audience is the only real test," he says.

"Anyway, I'm a sort of Will Rogers of pop. There isn't a musical form I've heard that I haven't liked . . ."

Neil Diamond is going nowhere except forward.



The solitary man

IT is probably necessary to know a man to understand him.

Neil Diamond is a difficult person to know because he gives very little of himself away in public.

Like most performers he shows himself through his work.

Part of the difficulty—knowing him—is that big stars tend to live in an unreal world.

It is a problem Diamond understands.

"People don't treat you as a person," he says.

"They tend to treat you as something else—you lose what you are.

Many stars don't realise

this problem until it is too late.

They end up on a psychiatrist's couch or living out of a bottle of pills or alcohol.

Neil Diamond took 3½ years off instead.



It was a time to himself and his family which allowed him to "find himself."

But dropping out of the public eye only helped to make it more difficult to know him.

So what do we know about him?

He's a shy man no doubt—that comes through his history and through his often reflective lyrics.

He also has his share of doubts—hence the retirement.

"I'm about as self-critical as any person you've ever met," he says.

But he is not an inward looking introvert.

There is a world out there and he knows it.

"I know as much about current affairs as any man in the street," he says.

"But my songs are about life, not politics."

Perhaps that statement is as near as the public will get to knowing him.



• • In his spare time Neil Diamond sometimes plays chess. Here he has a game with a girl member of his fan club. The club bought the chess set.

From page two

In 1967, Neil tied with Frank Sinatra for the most popular male vocalist award.

He changed his record company and cut seven albums, all of which sold a million copies or more.

Neil has since been reported to have outsold the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, the Rolling Stones and even Elvis Presley.

He is a superstar and rivals Elton John for success and record sales.

On arrival in Sydney for his Australian tour, Neil was asked if he would have to stay in his hotel room to escape the fans.

He quipped: "No—I'll disguise myself as Elton John."

Neil Diamond relaxes at home



Diamond didn't lose his sparkle

WHEN Neil Diamond announced in 1972 that he was giving up concert performances to take a long look at himself as a man, a father, a husband and a musician, it looked like the end of his professional career.

Even his closest friends and associates said he was committing musical suicide.

Pop idols just don't knock off for a quiet think and a smoke.

They have to keep on performing right there on stage, they have to make big-selling records.

A superstar is only just so super . . .

But Neil Diamond did it, did it well and came back as popular as he ever was.

FROM
JOHN FRASER
IN NEW YORK

And one factor in that is his incredible popularity in Australia.

Writing in the Los Angeles Times, Robert Hilburn says that whatever Diamond has got it is an international thing.

"When the box-office manager of the 2400-seat

Sacramento Community Theatre arrived for work the day after the advertisement for Diamond's comeback concert, he found his mail piled up with no fewer than 30,000 applications for tickets," he wrote.

"But when he got to Australia for his first-ever tour, his popularity was so immense that his press conference was broadcast live on national TV.

"And the tour gross—more than \$2 million for 13 dates—is the largest ever in Australia . . ."

Neil Diamond is a different man than when he retired 3½ years ago.

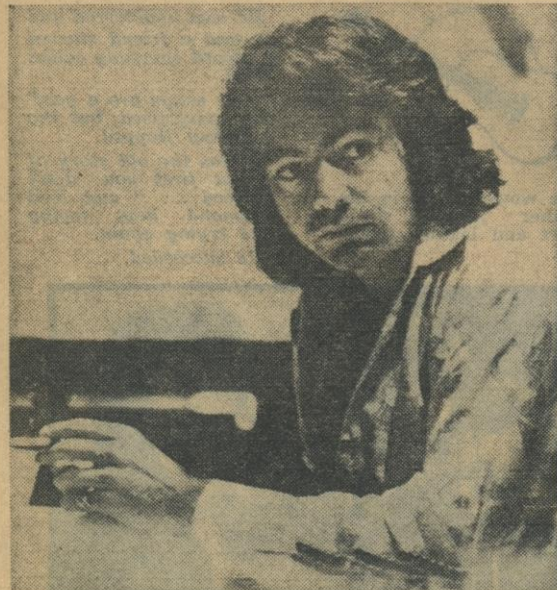
"I feel so much better about a lot of things, I've grown up in many ways," he told an interviewer recently.

"When I stopped touring, and that was after six years, I was still tied to whatever drove me towards this business at 17.

"The main goal I had was this intense desire to be accepted by an audience—but after a while that wasn't enough.

"It was enough from a professional standpoint, but there came a time when you have to ask yourself how many gold records, how many audiences, how many standing ovations do you have to have to keep you happy?"

• Continued next page



FROST FINDS A GEM

DAVID FROST has turned his talented hand to promotion with Neil Diamond's Australian tour and expects a record-breaker.

When he plays at the WACA in Perth next Thursday Diamond is expected to attract a crowd of more than 20,000 to set a new Perth concert crowd record.

The idea of performing on a cricket ground appeals to him.

"I like to perform under the stars because its in communication with nature," he says.

In a recent radio interview he said he was looking forward to coming to Perth and hoped to put on a fine show.

He believes in having fun and aims to enjoy himself while in Australia.

"Seeing Australia is something I have wanted to do for about seven years," he says.

"Starting my 1976 world tour in Australia is kind of a good luck measure."

After the phenomenal success of "Hot August Night" in Australia he knows what Australians like.

While he is here he hopes to get out and see the people and the country.

The Barrier Reef is a "must" for him.

Perhaps there will be something he comes across to inspire one of his future songs.

New album out soon

STREET LIFE is the latest Diamond album and is due for release at any moment in Australia.

Neil Diamond is confident it will be one of his best works.

The album contains different types of songs.

Some of them go back to the "Brooklyn Road" and "Cherry, Cherry" type of song.

"They go back to my experience as a young song-writer in New York—it was an impressionable time of my life and I've always wanted to put it into musical form", he said in a recent radio interview.

"I'm very excited about the album for that reason."

He thinks the songs are among the best he has done.

And what of the future?



Writing songs is his first love and he is looking for at least another 30 years of writing.

He has plans to write a full scale musical as well as plans to direct a movie based on his latest album.

He has also combined his interests in fencing (he entered University

on a fencing scholarship) and music with a sketch for a short ballet for two sabre fighters.

Diamond once suggested that after this tour he might go back into retirement but most don't take him seriously—there is too much music in him yet to come out.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

NEIL Diamond has entered a new phase . . . Middle-age.

"I have grown up, I was a mere child before," he said at his press conference in Sydney

"I have changed and so my concert will have changed.

"People can expect to see a changed Neil Diamond.

"It's middle-age."



Neil Diamond explains at his Sydney press conference why he had to "get off the road."

Why Diamond needed a break

"It was time to get off the road, to fill up the well I'd been drawing from."

Neil Diamond was talking about his 31-year retirement at the peak of his fame.

When the announcement was made Neil Diamond's fans were shocked by his plans.

The self-imposed rest was carefully planned.

Besides rediscovering a normal family life, Neil wanted to study, read, think and write.

He now says the three years were the most productive of his life.

He says the last 40 months gave him something to write about again.

"My concerts will be a summation of the last few musical years of my life, for all my music reflects me and what I am doing," he said.

It is likely that Australian audiences can expect something different from the Neil Diamond they have come to know and love.

In the middle of his retirement, he said: "When I go back on stage it will only be when I've got something so new and so special that it will destroy the people."

The inspiration to return to his fans came

from the time he spent at his Malibu Beach house in California, where he lived in seclusion with his wife, Marcia, and son Jesse.

"I could look out the window each day at the Pacific and watch pelicans in flight or gossiping on rocks," he said.

"Some days I'd take Jesse, who is five, fishing at a nearby lake.

"Or maybe I'd jump on my motorbike and take off into the hills just for the exhilaration of having the wind lash my face."

He must have had doubts . . .

But the fans loved him...

TWO weeks ago Neil Diamond started his comeback as a concert performer.

He appeared in concerts in Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand, as a prelude to his blockbuster tour of Australia.

After a layoff of more than three years Diamond must have had a few doubts.

Would he still have the old touch—would the public still be interested?

The answer to any such questions was loud and clear.

Neil Diamond was still a superstar.

Some even call him a megastar which presumably makes him a superstar's superstar.

In Auckland 35,000 people crowded a speedway track to listen and scream their adulation.

In Christchurch 27,000 turned up to pack Queen Elizabeth II Park, a bigger crowd than the 1974 Commonwealth Games could draw.

He began the tour with a press conference where he said his songs were "like children to me."

"I love them all", he said.

And he did them all in two-hour performances, running through the well-remembered and well-loved hits like "Sweet Caroline", "Play Me", "Brother Love's Travellin' Salvation Show", "I am, I Said", through to the music from "Jonathon Livingston Seagull."



He wowed them in his leather jerkin, white shirt and leather trousers.

A Sydney promoter was quoted after the Christchurch show:

"I saw Elvis Presley's comeback in Las Vegas.

"That was supposed to be the ultimate in stagecraft.

"But Neil makes Presley look like a choir-boy."

SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

WHEN you consider the early setbacks Neil Diamond had it is a wonder that he finally made it to the top.

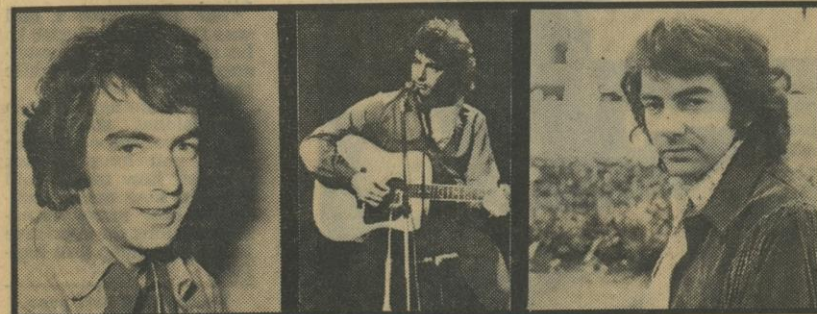
As a 16-year-old he failed a university music aptitude test.

He was undeterred and he and a friend started a record company called Shell.

"Our songs are a gas," they advertised, but the company flopped.

"It was the old story of 'if at first you don't succeed . . .'" and Neil Diamond kept trying and trying again.

He succeeded.





Neil and Marcia Diamond.

MARCIA:

Woman behind her successful man

SHE'S tall, sensuous, thirtyish and blonde.

She's the woman behind the multi-million-dollar man, Neil Diamond.

Marcia Diamond is said to be a great influence on her husband.

She is one of the main reasons for his 3½-year retirement at the peak of his career.

Neil said he wanted a normal life with her and their son Jesse. Marcia is Neil's second wife.

He was first married to his childhood sweetheart and they had two daughters.

Today Neil prefers not to talk about his first marriage and the break-up.

He has written many of his latest songs for Marcia.

"She has been my inspiration for lots of my best songs," he said.

"The experience of knowing her has been terrifically important to me.

"She's softened me, but she's also an excellent critic.

"She tells me exactly what she thinks."

Marcia has been des-

cribed as "a fine lady" by a friend of the couple.

The friend said Neil's wife was very witty and uneasy with her star status lifestyle.

She is said to live in jeans and big shirts and hats.

"She's intelligent," says Neil, "but it's funny—I don't think of her with my head.

"I think of her with my emotions.

"I once introduced her during a show and oh, she was sick to her stomach.

"Please don't do that again," she said."

THEY say one home in every four in Australia has a copy of "Hot August Night."

This is an estimate based on the fact that the two-record set returned \$3 million in this country.

"Hot August Night" is possibly Neil Diamond's greatest achievement so far.

It was on the Australian charts for 75 weeks and was Number One for 45 weeks.

When it was finally knocked from the top of the charts it was by "Jonathon Livingston Seagull," which was Diamond's next album.



"Hot August Night" was recorded on Thursday, August 24, 1972, in the Greek Theatre in California during a concert played before about 5000 people.

The album cover says that it was: "A hot, sultry summer night in California. They call it earthquake weather."

Neil Diamond spoke about the album in an interview in Los Angeles shortly before he began his Australian tour.

"It's very special to me,

it's a moment of my life captured forever," he said.

It is also important to him because the 20 numbers and 107 minutes' music represented an historical document of seven or eight years of his writing.

An unusual fact about the album is that he con-

siders it the easiest he has recorded.

"The audience was very receptive, which makes a performer work twice as hard and so much better," he says.

The Greek Theatre was chosen because of its warmth and intimate setting.

• Continued next page



FROM
PREVIOUS PAGE

Besides the audience inside the theatre there were many other fans outside on the mountain or climbing trees to get a glimpse.

He called to them—the “three people” he called them—and was playing for everyone.

Afterwards he said: “Usually you can’t remember the concert.

“There is very little thinking done in performances.

“But with the live recording of ‘Hot August Night’ I can recapture the experience.”

For those who weren’t there the album is an opportunity to share the experience because “Hot August Night” was a performance and not a recording.

Since then there has been his 3½ year retirement interrupted with the “Jonathon Livingston Seagull” and “Serenade” albums and the “Longfellow Serenade” single.

Now there is the comeback with the Australian tour and his latest album “Street Life” is due for release here.

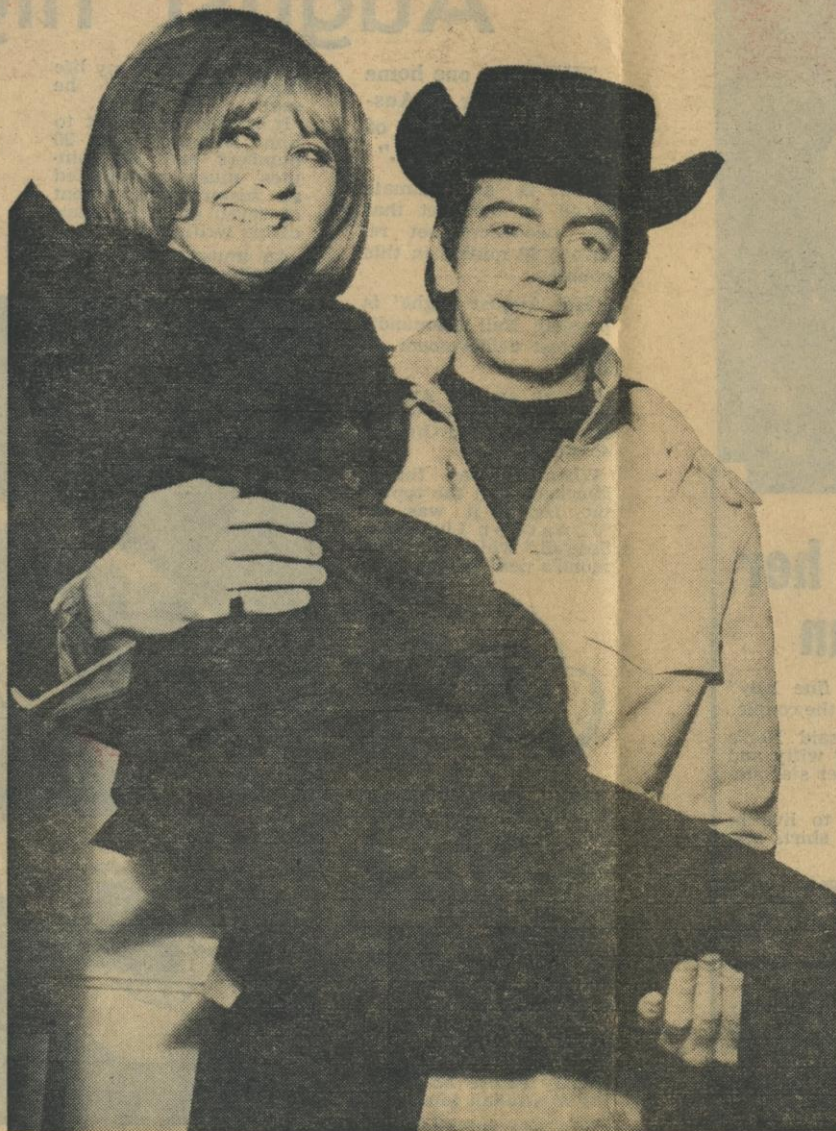
Diamond is forever

UNLIKE many other performers Neil Diamond has stayed with the name he was given at birth.

But early in his career he thought Diamond was not interesting enough and thought of changing his professional name to Noah Kaminsky.

“I have always liked biblical names,” he explains.

British pop singer Lulu and Neil Diamond ham it up for photographers. They met some years ago, when Neil was at the height of his success and Lulu was just emerging as a top recording artist.



Gulls brought him back

THERE were seagulls everywhere—in the air and on the sand.

After a fortnight of watching the birds, Neil Diamond forgot his exhaustion and his plans for a year “off.”

He made a telephone call to the producer of the film, “Jonathon Livingston Seagull,” and asked to see the film already shot.

When Neil Diamond was first asked to write the score for the movie he had no intention of complying.

“I was exhausted,” he said, “I had just finished 20 concerts in the old Wintergarden Theatre in New York and my brains were scrambled.



“I wanted to do nothing more than lie on a Californian beach and contemplate the ocean and the sky.”

When he got back to his home there was a telegram waiting.

It read: “Must meet with you urgently. Want you to write score for Jonathon Livingston Seagull.”

Neil tossed the telegram into the bin and went to the beach.

“Of course,” he said later, “at the beach you see lots of seagulls.”



The score took Neil almost a year of work.

Besides the script of the movie, Neil read books on philosophy, religion and spiritualism.

During this time a member of the Hare Krishna movement called at his home.

He offered Neil a book and in return was given a cup of coffee and asked to read the film script.

The two met regularly for about six weeks, and Neil said it helped his spiritual research for the film score.

Eventually Neil gave his visitor a return ticket to India—a Mecca for his movement.

The writing began, but for three months nothing came.

Neil says his inspiration sprang from three words that he wrote down one day, while sitting at his piano: “God is being.”

He felt that was the crux of the story . . . “BE.”

“Be what you can be. Be what you are. But be,” Neil said.