

Whiskey Jack is bringing Stompin' Tom to Theatre Orangeville September 15 - 17

By Constance Scrafield

Duncan Fremlin said this first-off about Stompin' Tom, "He was a very principled man, which cost him [potentially] millions of dollars for withdrawing from the [music] industry because American acts were getting awards and gigs over Canadian artists. He quit for 13 years."

This protest changed attitudes and made an impression on the industry. Mr. Fremlin gives the deeply Canadian star some credit for the legislation compelling radio stations in Canada to assure at least 50% of their popular music content is Canadian.

In 1990, Stompin' Tom and Whiskey Jack began a 75-city tour across Canada. They played Flin Flon, all the smaller places and Regina and all the bigger places.

"We went right to the Rock" Mr. Fremlin related. "That's really where I learned to appreciate the genius of the man. We were coming into towns that had been [decimated] by free trade. That was his first tour and we went again in 1993. I was his banjo player, song arranger and singer. I only did two tours. My fiddle player did 13 years with him."

Stompin' Tom died in 2013 and Duncan Fremlin commented on the show they are bringing. "We're not Tom. We [don't] get on in costumes. We paint a picture in the show of what playing with Tom was really like " he was an itinerate walking across the country. He had a passion for that."

Whiskey Jack's show shares his humour and offers a personalized presentation of him. Duncan Fremlin and his fiddler, Billy MacInnis, have spent more time on stage and with Tom than anyone else. This is "an incredibly respectful salute. There's way more to the picture than just country."

Included in this brand-new show is Tom's 1993 song and video, Blue Beret, at a time when Canadians were "trotting the world as peace keepers. It's included to try and increase the Legion membership somewhat."

Mr. Fremlin wrote a book in 2018, My Good Life with Stompin' Tom. Lots of books have sold about this eccentric character that people don't know what he was all about.

Asked what makes this concert special, he replied, "There is an appeal"because his legacy still holds a lot of magic, a positive drive. Everybody comes from a different angle; they see genius in these lyrics. Where does he fit in the mosaic in Canadian music and culture? He approached [his songs] from the Canadian perspective " he did not go to the States. When was the last time you saw anybody take a stand on principle? I can't even tell you how committed the fans are who come and thank us."

Whiskey Jack is offering any Legion member who attends the show and shows his up-to-date membership card gets a free CD or book.

Whiskey Jack Presents Stories and Songs of Stompin' Tom is on at Theatre Orangeville over September 15 to 17. For details and to purchase tickets, go to www.theatreorangeville.ca or call the Box Office at 519-942-3423