ments — Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter — and the material reflects the cyclical nature of life by following the relationship between a man and a woman from courtship to marriage to parenthood and finally to empty nest.

"I've just started the winter of my life," the 64-year-old Whittaker says, "and I feel that I am in the position now to make some comments that are believable. I've put a lot of my own life into this album.

"That was a bit difficult," he adds. "It took two years to make this album. But I think it was worth it. I think we've made a believable album that has some credibility. It's so very important to believe in what you write. If *you* don't believe, you can't very well expect other people to believe."

Whittaker is first and foremost a storyteller, and so it comes as no surprise that *Awakening* remains faithful to the traditions of folk music.

"I think this is probably the last project album I will do," he says. "This is part of closing the door. I think I am ready now to stop touring."

Whittaker has been taking his act on the road for nearly half a century. At the peak of his career, a period covering a decade or more, he was doing an astounding 300 shows a year. In total, he estimates that he has given between 8,000 and 9,000 concerts.

Asked if his latest junket should be viewed as a farewell tour, Whittaker pauses for a moment before replying with a less than definitive: "I don't know. I'm still having fun, and I'm singing to second and third generations now, which I think is great. But I honestly don't know if I will be doing it for much longer."

Wait. Better make that *semi*-retirement.

"I'll continue to write songs," he says, "but there will be songs for other people, songs that I'll write with other performers in mind, not for myself. It's a very pleasing thing, creativity. It gives you a great kick."

Throughout the years, Whittaker has tried to maintain what he describes as an honest and sincere relationship with his audiences. Clearly this is a high priority and something in which he takes pride.

"I've been singing to people of *my* generation, and I have never attempted to sing songs that the radio stations were playing," he says. "I started in folk music and I will finish with folk music. My stuff has been called easy-listening

Whittaker

Whittaker chose a career as an entertainer simply because he believed it was his calling. It was no more complicated than that. Nor has he ever had the occasion to question it.

"I used to sing to my mates in the army," he says. "The very first time that I did it, it was magic, and I still remember thinking, wow, I can do this for a living."

Psychologically, the demands of near-constant touring have not taken their toll. It's a different matter altogether in terms of the physical aspects.

"The old back isn't as strong as it used to be," Whittaker says. "I get aches and pains now. I have to worry about the machine breaking down. The voice is still as strong as ever, and when I am onstage I forget the aches and pains. But the back reminds me later. Maybe

rugby.

As a substitute, he took up squash. This, too, has come with a price.

"I played it until my knees were lit[erally] bone scraping bone," Whittaker says.

By 1996 he could hardly walk. In 1997 he had both knees replaced by a surgeon in Toronto.

"I have two steel knees," Whittaker says. "I've been known to set off security systems in airports."

Three weeks after the operation, he was dancing a jig, in the Sutton Place Hotel, where he was staying during the rehabilitation period.

"My wife said, 'What are you doing? You'll ruin them!' And I suppose she did have a point," Whittaker says. "These days I confine myself to long walks, calisthenics and playing golf."

REGINA LEADER POST 4/28/2000

Video wrong medium for show

Opinion

At the Galleries

By Jack Anderson

review

Quick Time: Revenge of the Super-8

Dunlop Art Gallery

Until April 22

At this point in our cultural history, it is almost impossible to escape fool-proof and lightning-fast electronic media such as palm-sized home video cameras, interactive CD-ROMs, and digital cameras.

Indeed, these kinds of technologies seem to have become commonplace in North American homes and are no longer considered unique or exotic, as they once were a decade or so ago.

The corollary of that, of course, is that the older manual or analog devices that were replaced by these digital technologies are now, through their simplicity, their limited capacities, and their current status as garage sale items, considered to be way out of date.

Missing from the technoscape we currently inhabit, then, are such old-fashioned and clunky paraphernalia as electric typewriters, SLR cameras, and televisions with manual dials instead of remote controls. We can include in this group the low-fi Super-8 home movie camera of the 1950s and 1960s.

This confusion of new technologies with old is precisely what confuses and neutralizes *Quick Time: Revenge of the Super-8*, a survey exhibition of the artists' Super-8 movies made in Canada over the past decade, with emphasis on the work made in the past couple of years (although a few films from the 1960s and 1970s sneak in here).

The curatorial decision to show these films on video monitors rather than on film screens has morphed them into something else — into TV — and has resulted in them being inflected with a different language than that intended by the artists.

The original films made by the artists were created using Super-8 technology for a number or reasons.

Clearly, they adopted this anachronistic medium either out of an appreciation of Super-8's shaky, grainy, flicker black and white aesthetic and processes which deny sleek and over-crafted big-budget Technicolor mainstream movies; or as a simple tool that permits and even encourages brevity, independent vision and marginal positions; or as a political tool which allows gritty, on-the-fly, street-level, guerrilla-like tactics challenging narrative and linearity; or as a technological symbol that critiques and challenges both historical and popular bourgeois standards.

Indeed, Super-8 was originally a toy which validated the status quo and is normally associated with scratchy old home movies capturing scenes of domestic harmony: backyard barbecues, birthday parties, holidays at the beach, and so on.

The artists in this show all challenge those scenes of suburban North American bliss by working with the Super-8 camera as a tool of opposition which, in their hands, records instead social discord, individual isolation, and in some cases, domestic violence.

Among the works that stand out are the following:

Heaven, by Heather Frise, is a dreamy but simultaneously harrowing three-minute film about abuse and its escape.

My Feet and Freedom from the Inside Out (Venus Soberanes) is an exploration of ethnicity, traditional values, and identity as written through the body.

Time Passes (Nelson Henricks) layers multiple texts to explore the creative confusions brought about by isolation.

Hi I'm Steve (Robert Kennedy) is an amusing but low-down look at self-identity, failed communication, and gay relationships.

25 Short Films In and About Regina (Gerald Saul) is a montage autobiography of sorts that investigates self-identity through place and wryly concludes that, in this locale at least, the whole does not seem to quite add up to the sum of its parts.

Guest curator Su Ditta, who may very well be the Canadian authority on what she calls "underground film," has put together a collection of works that all deal with significant objects — but the show as a whole fails to gel.

Here, at various viewing stations coyly set up to look like 1950s and 1960s domestic interiors, we sit ourselves in front of TV sets, pop in a video cassette of these short 'home movies,' and press play.

This show, which purports to investigate, validate and perpetuate Super-8 as an artistic medium, has mysteriously abandoned it.

Although Ditta makes a disclaimer about the instability and fragility of Super-8 film stock and, for conservation purposes, the technical necessity of exhibiting these film-to-video transfers instead of the originals, this electronic means of display erases some of the content and meaning of the original work and applies a layer of its own.

Through Super-8, these artists refer to and challenge the nostalgic, superficial, candy-coated veneer of bourgeois domestic amicability.

In their work, Super-8 is both a subversive social instrument and an intimate, personal tool that points to dysfunction and to the instability and fraudulence of the utopic social notions originally written in the suburbia of the 1950s.

To convert Super-8 to TV repositions and even arrests these messages inherent to the medium itself. Consequently, these video images — no longer film, but now represented as TV — encode all kinds of other notions about popular media, the mediation of information, and the global e-village which film does not.

While the work of these 18 artists is either amusing or abjectly disturbing, elegantly crafted or rough cut, it is, above all, personal.

It interrogates various themes: gender and role, political movements and social development, identity and memory, sex and the body, isolation and communication, traditional values and uncharted territories, cultural biases and hermetic despair.

Clearly, content cannot be separated from form.

This work would be considerably more potent, and more in keeping with the artists's intentions, if we were privileged to see it in film format.

Scene from 25 Films In and About Regina, by Gerald Saul

Clooney going live with Cold War TV movie