

**R**onnie Hawkins throws his six-string over his shoulder and heads out the door. He walks past the old touring bus and hops into his Roadtrek. He turns the ignition, chooses a Levon Helm CD, hits the gas pedal and sets off down the lane of his rambling lakefront estate.

Hawkins calls himself a "Geritol gypsy" and his life today is a testament to the nickname. Although he and his family spend a lot of time here at Hawkstone Manor, he's often on the road in one of two Roadtreks — a 190 Versatile and a 190 Popular. After all, at nearly 70 years old, he doesn't plan to give up more than five decades as a rock 'n' roll legend. He still performs with the likes of Robbie Robertson, Kris Kristofferson, Garth Hudson and Bev D'Angelo.

"My Roadtreks take me everywhere I want to go, whether it's to Toronto for a gig, down home to Arkansas to see the folks, or to Peterborough for a loaf of bread," he says.

"I can't say enough about Roadtreks. You can go just about anywhere and do anything in them. With a (Class A)

bus, you can't go to a lot of places — you have to plan ahead, book ferry passage, figure out where you're going to park when you get there. Heck, with Roadtreks, even a McDonald's drive-through is no problem."

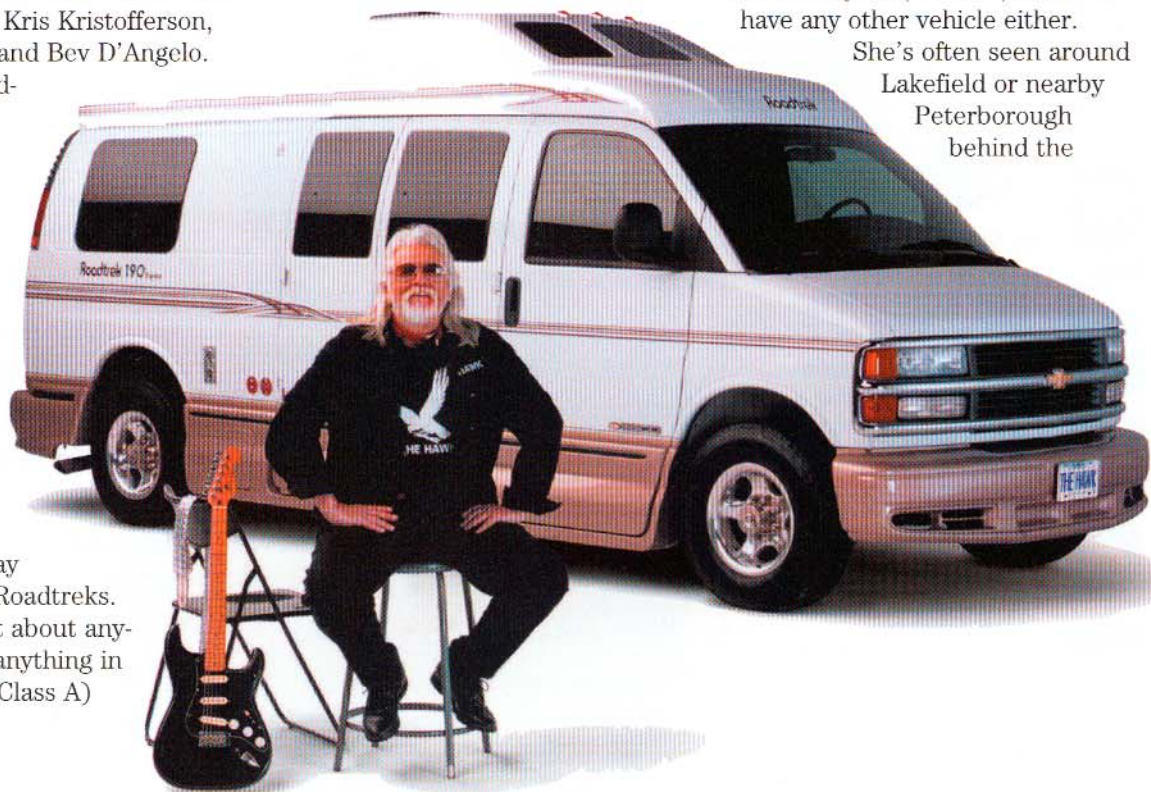
Not that Hawkins eats much fast food these days. He admits that 50 years as a performer eating burgers and fries on the road has finally caught up with him, which is why he's thrilled with his compact mobile kitchen. With ample room at the galley counter, an under-mounted sink with a hidden cutting board and a recessed stove, anything from freshly cooked meats to salads are available at short notice. This is important for someone like Hawkins, who's dealing with dia-

betes and preparing for quadruple-bypass heart surgery.

He brushes off his medical history with a wave of the hand and gets back to talking about his motorhome. One of the biggest appeals of a Roadtrek, he says, is its on-the-road economy. As a younger performer, he and the band were forced to pay for rooms in cheap motels and eat at greasy spoons across North America, but now Hawkins doesn't have to bed down in overpriced lodging for a few hours. With his Roadtrek, he's always guaranteed a good night's comfortable rest on a dual-layer foam bed and a nourishing meal with fresh onboard water the next day.

Hawkins isn't the only member of the clan sold on Roadtreks: His wife of 40 years, Wanda, wouldn't have any other vehicle either.

She's often seen around Lakefield or nearby Peterborough behind the



# Rompin' Ronnie Rocks

## While His Roadtreks Roll

# RONNIE HAWKINS ROCKS

wheel of the 190 Popular, picking up the weekly groceries or taking the grandchildren for an outing. She's also busy planning for the annual Roadtrek trip down to their hometown, Hawkins Holler, Arkansas. Next year, they plan to continue south with the whole family to Walt Disney World, Florida.

Rompin' Ronnie is on the road again. Summer engagements included a trip to Vancouver to perform with Levon Helm for a new CD to be produced later in the year. He says that such a hectic schedule is all the easier when he can be sure of a good night's rest,

plenty of space to stretch out and a pleasurable drive. His motor-homes are equipped with ducted air conditioners offering 12,000 BTUs of cooling and a heat pump for those frostier nights. They seat up to six people and sleep as many as four. Beds can be as large as 76 x 74 inches, with two layers of extra-thick foam.

Grinning broadly, Hawkins jokes about his love for being on the road with a Roadtrek.

"All you have to do is get used to sleeping in a camper. Hell, that's okay as long as you have the right company!"

## Ronnie Hawkins, Canada's King of Rock 'n Roll

RONNIE HAWKINS WAS BORN IN HUNTSVILLE, ARKANSAS, JANUARY 10, 1935, JUST TWO DAYS AFTER ELVIS PRESLEY'S BIRTH.

THROUGHOUT HIGH SCHOOL, RONNIE DABBLED IN MUSIC. BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS HE HAD FORMED HIS OWN BAND, THE HAWKS, WHICH TOURED THROUGHOUT ARKANSAS, OKLAHOMA AND MISSOURI. IN 1957, WITH THE HELP OF JIMMY RAY PAULMAN, HAWKINS BECAME A MEMBER OF A NEW BAND CONSISTING OF PAULMAN, ED "BUBBA" BURKES, WILLARD JONES AND LEVON HELM.

IN 1958, HAWKINS TOOK OFF TO BRING ROCK AND ROLL TO CANADA AND IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "THE FATHER OF CANADIAN ROCK AND ROLL." IT WAS AT YONGE STREET, TORONTO, THAT THE LEGENDARY BAND, RONNIE HAWKINS AND THE HAWKS, WAS FORMED.

FROM THAT POINT ON, THE BAND BEGAN TO INFLUENCE A NUMBER OF WELL-KNOWN PERFORMERS. AMONG THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO HONOR "THE HAWK" FOR HIS ROLE IN THEIR SUCCESS ARE LEVON HELM, ROBBIE ROBERTSON, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, MARK SAILINGS, RICHARD DANKO, JEFF HEALEY AND BEV D'ANGELO. JOHN LENNON USED TO CALL HIM "SIR RONNIE"; FOR BOB DYLAN, HAWKINS IS A HERO.

WITH MORE THAN 25 ALBUMS TO HIS CREDIT, INCLUDING, MOST RECENTLY, THE GOLD ALBUM *LET IT ROCK*, AND NUMEROUS APPEARANCES IN MOVIES, HAWKINS CONTINUES TO PERFORM ON STAGE THROUGHOUT CANADA AND THE STATES.

HE AND HIS WIFE, WANDA, RECENTLY CELEBRATED THEIR 40TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. THEY LIVE IN CANADA NEAR LAKEFIELD, ONTARIO, AT HAWKSTONE MANOR, THEIR 200-ACRE WATERFRONT ESTATE. **MAC**