

Evans of 'Zager and Evans'

'2525' artist now performs solo

By Deb Gray

You remember Rick Evans. Five years ago he wrote a song that propelled him and Denny Zager to instant stardom. The record sold 4 million copies and was No. 1 around the country.

But nothing followed "In the Year 2525." The second, third and fourth hits that would entrench Zager and Evans as perennial top 40 artists never came.

Evans on his own

So, about two years ago, Zager and Evans split up. Evans is now on his own and has been playing in Lincoln since last Christmas.

In a jazz and java concert last week in the South Crib, Evans played some Jim Croce, some John Denver, lots of Rick Evans and "a medley of my hit."

Evans said he and Zager recorded "In the Year 2525" on their own label and marketed it to RCA Records. The song was an instant hit, he said.

Native of Imperial

So, the Imperial, Neb., native who had never traveled by jet was flown to New York to enjoy the trappings of success. Interviews with Life and Time magazines. The top floor of the Hotel Americana for their use. And a group of people "making a fuss over us."

"Everywhere we went we heard our record playing," he said. "Everyone was raving about us."

Evans admitted his catapult to stardom changed him.

"You feel so powerful," he said. "You'll still be nice to people, but you can't help thinking, 'I could buy you'" Evans partially blamed himself for his one-hit woes.

"The most frustrating thing is to look back on your own mistakes," he said. "Maybe if we had used some other songs on our first album and kept the same group of musicians we had worked with instead of bringing in new ones, things would have been different."

Success in love ballads

If their first hit had been a love ballad, Evans added, perhaps they could have succeeded in their follow-up efforts.

"'In the Year 2525' was such a unique song," he said. "You can't follow it up, unless it's with something more unique. It's different with a love song. You can take one song, change the words and music a little and you have another one."

"For instance, John Denver has found his place with songs dealing with love and nature, and based his career on that."

And, Evans said, the top 40 market is continually changing.

"The group of young people buying records changes so fast," he said. "They don't keep someone with them."

Evans a loner

Since he described himself "somewhat a loner," the fall from grace was easier to swallow, he said.

"If I was into this business only for the social thing and for the fame, the loss of all the admiration would have been very hard on me."

Evans said he can hit again, that his career is not finished.

"I'm doing the same thing now as I did when I had the last hit," he said. "I've been producing and writing. I've met a lot of people."

The music business is frightening because of its insecurity, Evans said.

"There's never any guarantee of the future," he said. "If you fail, there's really nothing else you can do. If you're older and you fail, you're rejected. You just have to love it so much that you're willing to sacrifice anything for it."



Rick Evans

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