

Angry Lucey plans to rediscover his humanity through music

Troubadour's back on track

Carolyn McGibbon

SIX years ago when Roger Lucey laid down his guitar, he was an angry young man. Now, after a stint as cameraman for a foreign TV agency, he is blazing a comeback trail and there is still lots to be angry about.

With a passionate plucking of his acoustic guitar, and a beat that draws on the protest songs of the '60s, he belts out his anger, culled from brutalising experiences in the thick of things.

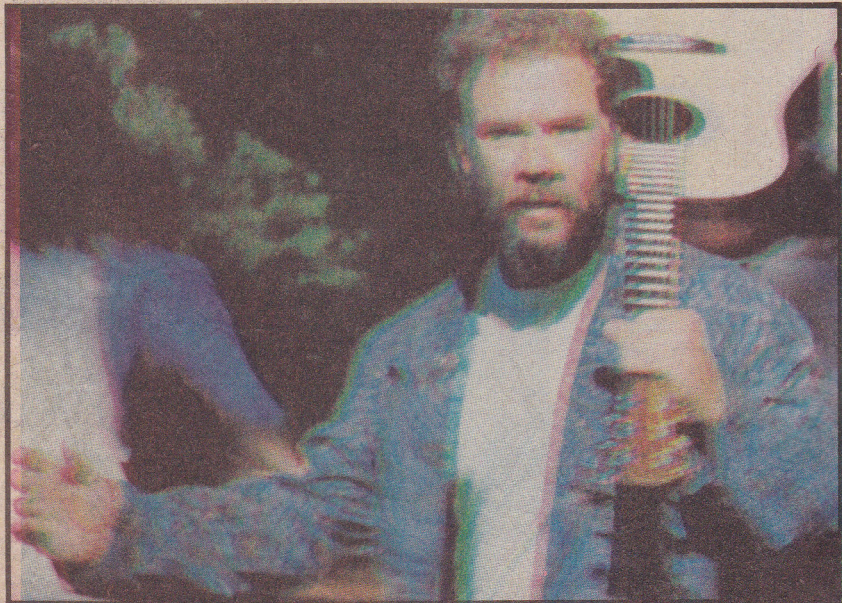
He recalls the "gang bang" of the foreign Press corps jostling for places at the kill and is sickened by the "cynicism" of his fellow journalists.

"I'm going to stop being one of them," he says. By moving back towards music, he plans to rediscover his humanity.

In his song, *Pictures of Pain*, he bitterly etches the macho journalist — the swashbuckling cowboy, the hunter ... *pictures of death and destruction's good business, understanding the story is not always part of the process.*

Lucey said although he stopped short of wearing the requisite flak jacket, he used to love the adrenalin of the hunt, and his barbs are aimed as much at himself as at his colleagues.

It was a shock to realise that the years of covering the unrest had numbed his feelings. He



Running for cover ... Roger Lucey blazes a comeback trail and finds there's still lots to be angry about.

recalled one of his first assignments when he photographed the burning of a man in Duduza and remembers feeling devastated and depressed.

He compared this with later experiences, when he felt nothing.

"I was in Khayelitsha and the marchers were on one side, the police on another. After giving an order to disperse, the police opened fire. One man died and another died later.

"I shot the whole thing, and at the end of it I realised I had lost my sensitivity. I did it without even shaking.

"There was a guy lying on the pavement, saying:

'Please help me' and holding his arm out to me. I just stood there, and filmed him.

"When I came home that night I realised I had come to a bridge: I was in danger of losing my humanity.

"In this business, the most successful are the people who don't have a great deal of sensitivity," he says.

His turnaround was a slow process, helped much by his love for the woman who is now his wife, Rachel Browne.

Rachel, a producer for Worldwide Television News, the biggest news agency in the world, recalls meeting the hot-blooded WTN camera-

man Roger, not knowing that he had been a musician.

Roger, who grew up in Durban and cut his musical teeth on the folk circuit, on Durban campus and with Steve Fatar, had decided to leave his musical career behind after his albums *The Road is much longer* and *Half Alive* were banned and restricted.

Rachel identified Roger's angst and gave him an ultimatum: she told him she was not prepared to live with a frustrated man. "When you've decided what you are going to do, I'll come back," she told him.

He had been through a period of not expressing

himself — *like a drunk with no story, a dog with no bark* — and Rachel was the impetus that talked him out of silence.

Roger got his act together and started writing songs again: a song about a middle-class white guy — *Danny's all right, Danny can drink and Danny can fight* — who ends up killing his family; his classic *No easy walk to Freedom* about Nelson Mandela; a song for his long-distance daughter, Amanda (*Long way to Cairo*); another about Johannesburg (*Not enough soul in this old gold town*), and a song that could be perceived as critical of the African National Congress (*The Line*).

Said Roger: "I've always been misinterpreted as a people's songwriter. But I see my role as a troubadour, expressing where I find myself in society."

His songs do not fit "the line", they are his own, true to himself, and he believes he has something to say to the next generation, as well as his fan-club of ex-hippies.

Roger has now produced — independently — his third album, *Running for Cover*, with Durban percussion maestro Dan Chiorboli and Durban-born guitarist Kenny Henson.

■ They will appear at the Splashy Fen festival from April 26 to 28 and in Durban from May 1 to 4 before going to Johannesburg.