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MARIPOSA: Ten Years of Music

Story by Peter H. Nicol
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Mariposa, a fictitious and amusing little town born in the imagination of the greatest of Canadian humorists, Stephen Leacock, is also the name adopted for the largest festival of music and people in Canada, and the third largest of its kind in the world. After its inception and difficulties in Orillia and the consequent move to Innis Lake, a small community some 35 miles northwest of Toronto, the Mariposa Folk Festival recently celebrated its 10th birthday on picturesque Toronto Island.

In its three days of music and sunshine, it drew people of all ages and from all parts of the country to hear the legendary figures of a sub-culture that, despite its recent popularity, has been a part of the North American way of life for hundreds of years. The festival consists of two separate and quite different sectors: the day-time workshops and mini-concerts, and the big formal productions each evening.

Mariposa, run by a non-profit organization called the Toronto Guild of Canadian Folk Artists, is based on the concept of presenting a highly varied program of music and information ranging from traditional Canadian ballads, to blues, to international folk songs to contemporary folk styles.

To this end the organization engages the best authorities

in their respective fields to perform and explain the roots and life styles in their particular field of endeavor.

THE DAILY activities conform to this principle. At 10:30 a.m., you can pay your \$2 for six hours of continuous entertainment at any one of four different sites.

These concerts and discussions are informal, and one can sit on the grass and listen or wander about from place to place as the mood and entertainment moves you.

For example, at any one time you may:

- See Michael Conney discussing the influence of magic and the supernatural in songs;
- Listen to Merrick Jarrett and the Maits discuss and perform the native music of Australia and New Zealand;
- Hear bluegrass stylings of the Toronto Bluegrass Committee;
- Listen to the original sounds of the Pennywhislers as they sing Balkan and Slavic songs;
- Take the children to concerts just for them led by such people as Klaus Van Graft;
- Hear one of the greatest authorities, Edith Fowke, discuss and perform traditional Ontario songs;
- Sing by the International Song Swap hosted by Tex;
- Listen as Doug Kershaw

who has appeared many times at the festival, a singer from Montreal, a singer from the Mariposa Folk Festival, and a singer from the Mariposa Folk Festival.

To this end the organization and Edith Butler discuss the histories and intricacies of Cajun music.

—Watch legendary figures like Mississippi Fred McDowell discuss and illustrate the roots and development of traditional blues;

—Hear Elizabeth Cotton, the composer of Freight Train tell of her life of over 60 years singing and performing;

—Hear an inspired workshop by rambling Jack Elliot, the successor to the Guthrie-Seeger tradition of the wandering minstrel - balladeer, talk about and perform the songs of the greatest of North American singers, Woody Guthrie who was his friend and inspiration;

—Hear Barry O'Neill discuss the traditions of Ontario love songs.

And there is more. David Rea on country music, and Ottawa's own Bruce Cockburn giving excellent performances of his own topical music. All of this happening at the same time, over 50 different performers doing what they know best in a four-day circus of good music.

But there is something else that makes Mariposa such an interesting experience, no matter if you are a first-timer or an old hand at these gatherings.

IT WAS to be expected, of course, that a festival of this size, (over 50 performers and over 20,000 paid attendance) would not be without problems.

The fantastic crowds which jammed the ferries, the food and washroom facilities were nothing less than a pain in the neck and served to discourage and enrage many people.

Planes flying overhead to the near-by landing field, motor boats of the yacht club which was only 60 feet away from the main workshop stage and steamboat whistles from Toronto harbor intruded on the calm and concentration of the performances.

The physical limitations of the island also presented some difficulties since the sounds of one group would often impose itself on another group, making it difficult to hear.

But all of these things, while a nuisance, did not dampen the proceedings, and generally things went smoothly and enjoyably.

There was a major snag however. The police, who did their jobs well and unobtrusively, were too few in number to handle the crowd of boogymen who crashed the gates on Saturday and then made a concentrated effort at disrupting proceedings on Sunday night.

festivals in the area. Perhaps they felt that folk music is not conducive to such behavior. On the other hand though, it was nice to see that the people who were there, particularly the youth, behaved in an adult and responsible manner.

Only the lunatic fringe who crashed the gates and stole some microphones marred a particularly rewarding weekend.

It is to be hoped that the organizers and Toronto officials

from whom blessings must come to hold this affair will not lose faith with those who came to be a part of the greatest festival of music and entertainment Canada has to offer.

It would indeed be a great loss if this festival does not continue. Let us hope that with planning and good fortune, the Mariposa Folk Festival will continue for many years to come. It would be sorely missed.



TONI MITCHELL



GORD LIGHTFOOT

DANCE
at
THE JUNCTION
Estimote Rec. Centre
Montreal Rd., with
MOTHER NATURE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

TOP TIE
LONDON (CP) — It was a neck-and-neck result between actor Roger Moore and TV personality Michael Aspel for the best taste in ties, a poll among Britain's men's wear shops discovered. The shopkeepers were

ASIDE FROM the tremendous range of musical offerings it presents to the public, there is also an intangible spirit, impossible to put into words working among the performers themselves.

It manifests itself in that even the biggest stars will sit down under a shady tree and play informally for anyone who wants to listen and discover that they are there.

Jerry Jeff Walker, for example, took an afternoon off from his engagement at the Riverboat and came to see his friends and sing with them.

Joni Mitchell rapping with people under a tree and later jamming with James Taylor in a quiet corner of the island is another example.

So is the unscheduled arrival of Gordon Lightfoot, his right hand in a cast, walking around the sight chatting with performers and anyone else who recognized him.

At 4:30 p.m. the grounds were cleared in preparation for the evening concerts and people could either watch or take part in the folk dancing just outside the gates, or wander around the other small islands to the zoo or the playground.

The evening concerts are more along the lines of what most folks relate to when they hear of the festival. They are formal five hour performances

THE RESULT of this juvenile display of bad manners is that the festival itself is now in danger of losing the Toronto Island site, and perhaps in danger of its very existence.

On the one hand it is difficult to imagine that the organizers did not expect such things and should have taken steps to avoid them after witnessing the result of the rock

In a recent column, you had Lorne Greene's age as born in 1916 and 54 years of age. I think this is incorrect. I checked up in the library there and according to Who's Who, he was born February 12, 1915. If I am right would you put a correction in the paper?

You are right. We took his age from a TV biography which obviously was wrong.

Why isn't the Englebert Humperdink show on TV now? The program has been cancelled because of poor ratings. It has been replaced in Canada, for the summer only, by the Des O'Connor show.

Could you please tell your BE HEARD readers what has happened to the Smothers Brothers summer TV show which was supposed to start July 27? The show did start on schedule but on the ABC-TV network in the U.S. ABC does not come into Ottawa via the cable.

Last year we lived in Pembroke and got the program, "Love American Style." I was wondering if it was shown here in Ottawa on any of the channels received locally?

No. The program, also on the ABC network in the U.S., was not shown here.

I would like to know why the rock group of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young didn't show the song "Woodstock" on the