

the Folk Resurgence



Back in the early sixties, with the emergence of a young man called Bob Dylan, we were made aware of a type of musical heritage that had been residing in America for a great number of years.

This young minstrel played the tunes of Woody Guthrie and Eric von Schmidt. We began to listen to records by Pete Seeger; Leadbelly; Josh White; Ramblin Jack Elliott and many more. The records of Dave Van Ronk began to hold a special place in our hearts.

With the rise of Dylan many other new young artist's appeared on the scene. Eric Anderson, Phil Ochs, Odetta, Mark Spoelstra, John Hammond, Spider John Koerner, and a couple of guys whose names sounded like a law firm, Tom and Jerry, I mean Simon and Garfunkel, were in great demands. Thousands flocked to the Newport Folk Festival each year to hear their idols perform. Folk music was heard to stay, or so it seemed.

Then in about 1965 a strange thing happened. A group of young artists called the Byrds put out Dylan's "Mr. Tamborine Man" and Pete Seeger's "Turn, Turn, Turn" in a new style of music called "folk-rock." Dylan himself adopted this style and met with strong opposition from his followers. Yet, the sound was good and from the heart, and would not be denied.



Thus with the "folk-rock" sound, and the invasion of the English and West Coast groups, we were soon swept off our feet by this new dream music. We floated on down this river until we found ourselves caught in the whirlpool of the Led Zeppelin and Iron Butterfly sound which was trying its hardest to suck us all down into the quagmire. But we wanted out! Out of the too heavy lead guitar and screaming lead vocal.

Relief was close at hand. Joni Mitchell's first album, produced by ex-Byrd David Crosby, brought us back from near insanity. Her beautiful lyrics and haunting melodies protected us, warmed us, and most of all brought us back to life. She took us out of the hustle and bustle of the city and back to the simple life of the country:

"Sistowbell Lane

*Go to the city you'll come back again
To wade thru the grain*

*You always do
Yes we always do
Come back to the stars
We wait for you."*

She showed us love and peace and we took it back into the fold. Her second and third albums showed us the troubles and changes she was going through, but her spirit was still there.

Her music and lyrics holding onto us, weaving their magic spell.

The old faces returned to the forefront and rising with them a new breed of young stars. The most prominent being James Taylor.

Taylor, a country boy from Carolina, was discovered in England by Paul McCartney who signed him to a contract with Apple Records. However, Taylor had difficulties with Apple and, soon after his first album, he left this company and signed with Warner Bros. His songs, though, still stayed as beautiful as ever. They tell of his life and his loves, and above all they are honest. His music was the kind that you immediately fell in love with and could be counted upon to make you feel good at anytime:

*"Slipping away, What can I say.
Won't you come into my month of may
And hold on to your Golden Day
Slippin Away."*

With Taylor and the "Crazy Cajun" fiddler Doug Kershaw, arose some kinfolk. Their brothers Livingston Taylor and Rusty Kershaw have both put out albums that deserve a good listening to. They are very fine performers in their own right.

The elder statesman of this new group is a man by the name of Paul Siebel. Though about thirty years old his first album was just released last January and has not received the acclaim that it is due. The melodies are so beautiful that you feel like you're floating on a cloud, yet the words show a great insight into human emotional reactions.

On the album called "Woodsmoke and Orange" is also another bright young star, David Bromberg. Bromberg is one of the finest guitar players to come along in quite awhile and his appearance on Dylan's "Self-Portrait" album as well, shows that people are beginning to take notice of his talent.

The Mariposa Folk Festival in Toronto (the only decent festival left), opened up a new wealth of talent from all over the world (as well as Canada). Such people as David Rea, Norman Kennedy, Owen McBride and Michael Cooney became familiar names to the audiences.

Two groups from England have come along that also deserve notice here. The Incredible String Band and Pentangle.

The String Band is aptly named in that they have used just about every instrument that has a string on it during the course of their albums. Their music is all their own and can be summed up in one word — beautiful.

Pentangle on the other hand is made up of five people with very deep folk backgrounds. They play a lot of traditional English ballads as well as some of their own songs. Their intricate guitar work and beautiful harmonies blend together in a pastiche of soft coloring and wavy green meadows overflowing with sunshine and life.

Folk music has risen out of the Dark Ages to take the place that it rightly deserves. With all the turmoil in life it is a welcome release from all the madness. Let us hope that we will always have it with us. Of course, we all know that a certain Mr. Zimmerman will be with us for awhile to come yet and that certainly is a comforting consolation isn't it?