NEWPORT, R.I.—A tremendously exciting Newport Folk Festival this year was highlighted by superlative performances in many fields of music. Producer George Wein, realizing that there are many aspects to folk music—tailored the work-long event to cover the roots of folk music—such as old-time fiddle and dulcimer playing—and a goodly slate of various forms of blues, country music, bluegrass, r&b, folk-rock, Cajun and gospel.

A highlight of the Friday night show was when Theodore Bikel, Pete Seeger and Oscar Brand teamed up. More than 7,000 turned out on a foggy night. Saturday, 15,200 turned out in pleasant weather to hear a trio of Joan Baez, Mimi Farina and Judy Collins. But the main excitement of the festival, it would seem, was in a series of workshops. The Chambers Brothers, a Columbia Records act, put on a show for more than 3,000 who sat on the fence and turned everybody on, especially their power-packed version of "In the Midnight Hour."

The Staple Singers were another group that created a charged effect on the crowd, with tunes like "He's All Right" and a Negro protest version of "For What It's Worth." Sister Rosetta Tharpe, a veteran of more than one label, also scored with her gospel music.

To many fans, however, the key point in the festival was when many new performers, some not yet on record, bowed their own material Sunday afternoon at a workshop. The victory of the afternoon was racked up by one man with one song, a long song—"Alice's Restaurant," by Arlo Guthrie, son of Woody Guthrie. By popular demand, producer Wein had to schedule the recently signed Reprise Records artist for the Sunday night show, too. Leonard Cohen, Joan Mitchell, the Incredible String Band (Elektra Records artists), the Siegel-Schwall Blues Band (hampered because an electric piano had shorted during a brief rain), and Gordon Lightfoot all did well. The material was mostly original and nearly all was very good. Cohen has already made considerable strides as a writer; Judy Collins performed Cohen's "Suzanne" at the festival. From the tunes he exhibited Sunday afternoon, he's heading for a great career.

Bill Monroe, father of bluegrass, doing the original version of "Blue Moon of Kentucky." The festival, of course, had its name artists—not only those mentioned previously, but artists like Mother Maybelle Carter, Bill Monroe, Jean Ritchie, Grandpa Jones, Dave Dudley, Merle Travis, Muddy Waters, and Buffy Sainte-Marie.

CLAUDE HALL