

Marvellous Mariposa



by Billy Altman
Music Editor

—Cohen

Another year at Mariposa, the folk festival that attempts to work on a "no stars" principle. So who shows up for this three day gathering at Toronto Islands? Well, do the names Jackson Browne, Gordon Lightfoot, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell or Bob Dylan ring any bells?

Yes, they all were there and other than Dylan, they all played unscheduled surprise sets, much to the amazement and delight of the thousands who were there. I guess you could think of it as a giant bonus for all the faithful-folkies who come each year to take part in a festival that places more importance on the people that attend it than on the money that they spend.

While that first paragraph is sinking in, I'll backtrack and try to reassemble the festival as best I can. Arriving in Toronto a bit behind schedule late Friday afternoon, we went over to the island on the old ferry boat that somehow fits in perfectly with the whole spirit of things at Mariposa. It's a friendly, somehow personal ride even though there's lots of folks on the boat.

Programs, programs

There are six workshop areas at Mariposa, and they run simultaneously from ten each morning till dusk, which can drive you nuts if you don't have a program, but that only costs a quarter so everybody buys one. Then you know for sure that you're missing Bonnie Raitt while you're seeing Taj Mahal or vice versa. Really everybody plays at three or more workshops, so you do get to see everyone by the time the whole thing's over.

The first person I saw Friday when I got there was Michael Cooney, which figures, cause he plays at at least half of all the workshops. He's a jack of all trades at Mariposa, hosting anything cause he knows everything.

The first big surprise of the weekend was a band of thirties barroom singers, Martin, Bogan and Armstrong. Guitar, mandolin, fiddle and standup bass. The fiddle player had three different pairs of sunglasses, one for each day. They did outrageous versions of "Tiger Rag," "Downtown Strutter's Ball" and "La Cucaracha." Every time they'd finish a set, the mandolin player would say "The sun's gonna go down now, cause more stars have gotta shine." Each time they played, people went crazy. Now I know where Dan Hicks stole all his hot licks.

Taj Mahal was around doing a concert, and it was great. He really got people happy, and he's really coming into his own as a solo performer. "Ain't Nobody's Business (but your own)" was a big

favorite, as well as "Fishin' Blues" and "Corrina." Unfortunately, he sang a and it started raining pretty hard. W our fortunes on Yonge Street, Tor

After Murray, yet!

Saturday began on a good Pennywhistlers did an inspired se amazing Balkan songs that conve without translation. In one slow s people began dancing in a circle ar was very moving. Utah Phillips an Fred McKenna did a workshop on plays his guitar on his lap, walking o with his fingers, and he's got thousa his adventures hitchhiking through C train man himself, with a husky voi of bad jokes.

It was only after Michael Co workshop that I found out that J played a few tunes. She came o McLaughlin, whom I can't stand. S songs, "Clouds," "Woodstock" (sh piano with her), and some others African band, who played electri possibly have heard her distinctive other end of the island. Needless to ruined.

After a workshop on Hank featured McKenna playing his am John Prine forgetting all the verses attempted, it started pouring. Woodstock, we left as quickly as pos

Somehow, it cleared up Satur was sunny and hot on Sunday. T fiddler's workshop, hosted by Rambler Tracy Schwartz.

Bob who?

Around this time, some frie informed us that a certain Mr. Dy around with his pal David Bromber to play at a singaround in a bit, so w in case. Also at the singaround w and Leon Redbone, who was decke bowler, white shirt, vest and slacks. falling asleep as usual, revived ever some inane number like "Marie" or "Top of the World" in that absurd o of his.

As I said, we knew Dylan was th question of when he'd jump on a st be on your toes.

Bonnie Raitt was scheduled so ran over to see her. Instead of her was doing an impromptu mini sho



uriposa delivers



—Cohen

—Prusansky



ell as "Fishin' Blues" and, of course, unfortunately, he sang a song about rain raining pretty hard. We left and sought on Yonge Street, Toronto's Broadway.

yet!
began on a good note as the s did an inspired set, full of those an songs that convey their message lation. In one slow song, a group of dancing in a circle around the stage. It ving. Utah Phillips and blind phenom a did a workshop on bums. McKenna r on his lap, walking over the fretboard s, and he's got thousands of stories on hitchiking through Canada. Utah is a self, with a husky voice and hundreds

ly after Michael Cooney's fifteenth t I found out that Joni Mitchell had tunes. She came on after Murray whom I can't stand. She did a few new s," "Woodstock" (she had an electric er), and some others. Thanks to the who played electrically, I couldn't heard her distinctive voice over at the he island. Needless to say, my day was

workshop on Hank Williams, that enna playing his amazing leads, and rgetting all the verses to each song he t started pouring. Remembering e left as quickly as possible.

, it cleared up Saturday night, and it d hot on Sunday. There was a huge hshop, hosted by New Lost City y Schwartz.

his time, some friends who knew hat a certain Mr. Dylan was hanging is pal David Bromberg. Bromberg was arground in a bit, so we held tight, just at the singaround were Cooney, Prine bone, who was decked out in a black shirt, vest and slacks. He sat on stage is usual, revived every so often to do mber like "Marie" or "I'm Sittin' On rld" in that absurd old drunken voice

ve knew Dylan was there. It was just a en he'd jump on a stage. You had to s.

itt was scheduled somewhere, so we e her. Instead of her, Leon Redbone mpromptu mini show. I don't know

how he got over there so fast. Anyway, Bonnie came on after a bit, and announced that Jackson Browne was going to play a little. We all went nuts, and everyone looked at us (guess they don't know him yet up north). Joni Mitchell was hangin' out, encouraging him to get up there and play. I think they're going out together. Miss Raitt showed off her incredible slide playing on her old National Steel, and after a few tunes, Jackson came out.

He's shaved off his moustache so he looks like his picture on the album cover. Very cute, indeed. He sang a song about rednecks as Bukka danced around him. Then he did "Sweet Little Sixteen," with Bonnie on slide. And he knew all the words. Good to know he can rock if he has to. Then "Jesus in 3/4s" and ah, yes, "These Days," which was first recorded by Nico many years ago when Jackson played guitar for her.

It was a great treat to hear him play, especially since I missed him when he was here. The rumor about Neil Young had brought thousands to area five, and sure enough, Bruce Cockburn, an excellent songwriter, brought him out. Neil did a candy set, with "Harvest," "Helpless," "Sugar Mountain," and "Heart of Gold." A real wimp bunch, but it was neat to see him without a flannel shirt on. These country hippies, God.

Speaking of country hippies, a hot tip led us to the performer's area, and there's Bob Dylan! A real legend, thirty feet away. Click, click Bob. Give us a pic, huh? His hair's getting long again, with a red bandanna around his head and a pair of jeans on. He looked pissed, and we found out why. He had planned to play at that singaround with Prine and Bromberg (he's also a good friend of Redbone's, so there's still hope), but Cooney was afraid a riot would start, so he told him he couldn't.

He left around six thirty, but then he came back, I guess convinced that he should try to sing a few tunes. Some yo yo announced that he would be at area three, and Dylan got caught in a crowd that was rushing to see him. He tried to get through, got halfway around, gave up and left on a special water taxi. Personally, it was more fun to see him than it would have been to hear him, because he just would have done some cobwebs anyway.

Through all of this mayhem, Gordon Lightfoot had parked himself under a tree and began playing for a few hundred people. Atta way, Gordon.

We finally left around nine, our heads swimming. With Leon Redbone and Bob Dylan sharing the same common space, I was sure it was the apocalypse, but I'm still here, I think. I was disappointed that that great jug band, the South Happiness Street whatever, didn't play. Well, maybe next year.

