

# MARIPOSA

— in its early days, the Mariposa Folk Festival seemed to be little more than just a beer bash, but all that has changed



Friday night audience: it was hard to find your friends among the thousands who turned out.

By JOHN KRAGLUND

**M**OST OF THE KIDS in Northern Ontario, it seemed, and a lot of those in Southern Ontario roared into Orillia back in 1961. They had all heard about the festival of folk music and folk music was in; so the way to be where it was at was to go to Orillia.

But it was obvious that for many of the audience, the music was secondary. They had seen the festival as primarily an opportunity for an uninhibited weekend. Thus another Canadian cultural event turned into a beer-soaked brawl and the Mariposa Festival was saddled with an image that had not even flickered through the minds of its organizers.

Doubtless, that image still loomed brightly in the minds of that portion of the older generation who consider suspect anything that has the approval of their juniors, when the ninth Mariposa Folk Festival swung into action yesterday at Toronto Island. The Island became its home last year after much image polishing and several moves since the rowdy Orillia beginnings.

Has the image actually been changed or has it merely been whitewashed? And is it really a folk festival or merely an extension of Toronto's recent pop-rock festival?

Judged by the smoothness of last year's festival and by this year's flow of advance orders—more than three times last year's—there is nothing to sully the image. An eight-man police force maintained order and made no arrests in 1968.

As to whether it is really a folk festival, that remains to be heard. And even then it is doubtful those who listen will be in complete agreement about the proper label for the style of music. The sponsors know it is not an extension of the pop-rock festival, and a glance at the list

of participants supports this belief. Only Taj Mahal and his Band can be definitely identified as a rock group, and even it features blues, which must be considered a type of folk music.

On the other hand, Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians would scupper the whole festival. It defines folk music as "any music which has entered into the heritage of the people, but can be assigned to no composer, school or as a rule even period. In general it may be defined as a type of music which has been submitted for many generations to the process of oral transmission."

Even so, the purists and traditionalists need not boycott the entire festival, for there are several traditional folksingers on the program.

Among them are John Alan Cameron, a Maritimer who favors the songs rooted in the Scottish and Irish folk tradition; Alanis Obomsawin, a very pretty Indian girl whose repertoire is drawn from the traditional music of numerous tribes; the Cape Breton Fiddlers, a quartet who now reside in Toronto and make their living in non-musical ways; Bessie Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers, whose Gospel songs and pre-blues music have ignored popular trends; Jean Redpath, who harks back to her native Scotland; Owen McBride, favoring Irish rebel songs; and Jean Ritchie, whose family has helped to keep alive the music of the Appalachian Mountains.

They may also be the only ones who know for sure where the popularity of folk music stands today. Public interest in the Mariposa Folk Festival would seem to indicate this elusive art is currently enjoying a revival. But the reported path of folk music in the past decade bears a close resemblance to the profile of a roller coaster.

Other folk festivals, including the famous

one at Newport, provide no accurate measure, for they are likely to include jazz and rock, which have enjoyed little success with the patrons of the Mariposa Festival.

Regardless of authenticity, it is likely to be the composer-performers who will prove the major attractions at the evening performances. Among those heard last night—all Canadians—were **Joni Mitchell**, who provides the most astounding evidence that Canada can have a profound influence upon the North American folk-music scene without following the trend to total electrification; Ian and Sylvia; Bonnie Dobson; Gilles Vigneault, one of French Canada's most popular chansonniers; and Bruce Cockburn, who escaped from the rock scene to folk music.

Tonight's concert included, in addition to Taj Mahal and Bessie Jones, the one-man band known as Jesse Fuller; Nigerian dancers

Review on Page 26

Makeda Myorba and Aoyade Aderinto Tella; Mac Wiseman; New Lost City Ramblers; and Doc Watson.

Sunday's will offer Michael Cooney, who loves all kinds of old songs; Joan Baéz; Oscar Brand, who may become nostalgic; the topical songs of Vera Johnson; Jean Ritchie; Owen McBride; Jean Redpath; and the South Happiness Street Society Skiffle Band, a seven-piece jug band from the University of Buffalo.

Those will all be formal concerts. The daylight hours when Toronto Island is for everyone, will provide what may be a folk chaos with at least two major children's concerts, folkdance groups, folksong workshops and displays of arts and crafts in the making.

An afternoon concert tomorrow may reveal some of the talent of the future, for it will feature unknown, little known and totally inexperienced folksingers.