

THE

Volume VI, Number 12

August 2, 1967

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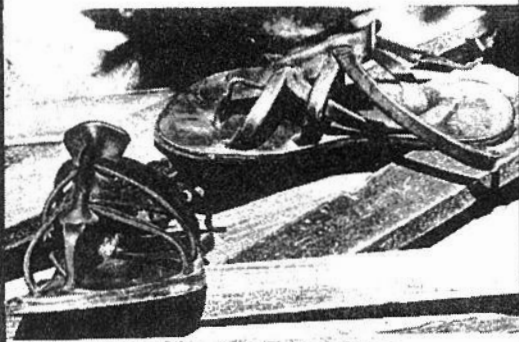
enforced by Don Gibson's vocal style. Another (related) point is that a whole album full of songs in the Don Gibson style is bound to be exceedingly monotonous listening unless virtually all of the songs are tailor made for Gibson's style.

Actually there is no substitute for a hearing of the music in question. As a partial substitute, however, here are some specific examples. Don Gibson does a good version of "I'd Just Be Fool Enough," the lead-off song. One might compare his version of "... Fool Enough" with that of Stu Phillips on his Grassroots Country album, two rather good but very different treatments of the same song. On the other hand, compare Gibson's version of "I Thought I Heard You Calling My Name" with any of the versions recorded by Porter Wagoner. In this case Don Gibson doesn't come close. The Things that Don Gibson does to Hank Williams' beautiful "Lost Highway" shouldn't happen to Trini Lopez. The rest of the album is just one example after another of Don Gibson's rather whining style.

Bob Jones



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Newport 1967

This was to be a crucial year for The Newport Folk Festival. Last year's festival had displeased a large number of performers who felt that the attempt to jam as many acts as possible into the stage had resulted in only stifling the musicians' ability to give of themselves. Also, by the time this festival came around again, it seemed quite evident that the folk boom had had it. Would Newport fight a losing battle by marshalling all the folk luminaries it could and parade them all across the stage? Or would it retrench and return to the concept of a folk festival as opposed to a folk performer's festival? Would it feel confident that there existed a loyal following of folk music who did not have to be titillated or even entertained:

Personally, I was not optimistic about the direction Newport would take this year. But I was very pleased to find my pessimism unjustified. This year's festival was in several crucial respects a significant improvement over last year's and I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Perhaps the best single improvement was the workshop arrangement on Friday. Not only was the number of workshop areas large (fifteen) but they were left unamplified, a good idea which not only allowed you to move from area to area without being disturbed by other workshops, but also presented the performers in a far more natural setting.

The workshops on both Saturday and Friday started to move back towards the original intent of explaining how folk music developed in its various forms. Louis Killen, Bob Davenport and Norman Kennedy, for example, undertook to point out and explain the various singing styles and their origins of the British Isles. Most of the performers were encouraged by the workshop hosts to trace their own development and therefore the development of their type of music, but in a personal and therefore absorbing way.

The Saturday workshops, although only three in number and amplified, also tried to be explanatory as well as entertaining. And I think a strong case can be made for the balance of both which they struck. For many, the cost of good seats to the evening concerts is prohibitive; the Saturday workshops, being a little more of a concert nature, offer both a good deal of pleasure as well as information for a small price.

The evening concerts were another noticeable improvement. In general, performers this year were given more time to get to the audience and the results were worth the decrease in the number of people appearing. Pass hassles kept me from Thursday night's concert, but those to whom I talked agreed that it was excellent, with the Staple Singers

Reviews

being singled out most often. Friday night's was a little below average for me because of the excessive time given over to Theo Bikel and Oscar Brand. As was the case last year, I got the most pleasure at this year's festival from those people who were living their music as part of an ongoing way of life. I mean not to disparage Bikel and Brand; it is simply that in my dotage my preference lies for the "real thing." Concert performers I can catch other times, other places. Newport's unique offering is people like Robert Pete Williams, Sister Rosetta Thorpe, J. B. Smith, Sippie Wallace, and Russell Fluharty whom unfortunately you rarely can hear elsewhere.

The most impressive performance on Saturday and Sunday night was given by Joan Baez. Both on stage and in an informal press interview she radiated a maturity and serenity that was wonderful to behold. Before Newport I had considered writing an article, "How Good Is Joan Baez, Really?" Well, she is damn good. She seems totally at peace with herself and shows it in her material. Her performances were confident and tasteful, but the word which prompts itself as being most appropriate is "wise."

Sunday afternoon's concert was the only one which produced mixed emotions. It is the one concert set aside specifically for new talent and as such it probably received the most criticism, because in a short time it cannot possibly present everyone's favorite new performer. For example, I agree on the basis of simply ability Leonard Cohen, the Siegel-Schwall Band and especially Joni Mitchell, who besides being beautiful, sang and played so well and with such grace and poise that she deserved to be emulated by all performers there, deserved to be there. And on the basis of talent and direction, The Incredible String Band, The Young Tradition and Peter Walker warranted a spot. But I was very disappointed to see a fellow by the name of Jack Andrews being given a big build-up by Judy Collins and being allowed to sing six songs alone, and two more with Joan Baez. (No other performer - Bill Monroe, Baez, Collins, Seeger - got space for six songs in one concert.) It is disturbing to realize that who you know can so enhance what you can do, for, although Andrews can carry a tune in a not unpleasant voice, he is probably best summed up by a comment by Phil Spiro: "I've got a dime. Want a dozen?"

It is fairly well agreed (among would-be writers, anyway) that covering festivals on a performer-by-performer basis is a fruitless

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task in anything less than short-book form. Let me add, then, just a few more generalities about the festival.

There exists a loyal audience for folk music, but the mass response is thinning out. Now, festivals have to make money. So I suggest that Newport is on the right track. Keep the workshops intimate. Provide semi-concerts on Saturday. Clear the evening stages for big names to bring in the money. (Don't put J. B. Smith on for just one unaccompanied blues. It does not get to the audience and does not make musical sense.) And, as in this year's festival began to do, do not limit yourself to American folk music. Bring on the Irish step-dancers, The Swiss yodelers, the Hindu dancers. And how about some real, live American Indians?

The 1967 Newport Folk Festival was a thorough pleasure. It's most poignant moment came when Sister Rosetta Tharpe spoke to the audience after they had loudly applauded her 83-year-old mother, Katy Bell Nubin. "Thank you," she said, "you have given her new life." Well, it gave me new life, too.

Ralph Earle

