A number of the stories, particularly those from the old-timers, are fascinating, some are boring, and some are so embarrassing in their cute folksiness that one wonders whether their tellers are actually serious or if the stuff is recycled publicity flack dreamed up by an agent who overdosed on homemade granola and organic orange juice.

This kind of inconsistency is something that can be overlooked, however, because the book is designed to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover. The reader can be selective, sifting through, taking in that which is of particular interest and ignoring the rest.

How accurately the book reflects the festival, I can't say, since I've never attended the festival itself. Assuming that it is an accurate reflection, it prompts some interesting questions about the role of festivals in general and Mariposa in particular in Canadian folk music.

One contribution which should not be ignored by anyone who cares about the state of folk music in this country is Debra Sharp's history of Mariposa at the end of the book. Not only does it provide some tantalizing background gossip on the ups and downs and ins and outs of Mariposa office politics over the years (a lot of dirty linen is washed very publicly), but it also goes a long way towards explaining Mariposa's place in the Canadian folk scene. From this history, it appears that the festival's main contribution to date has been more to the careers of certain artists (Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, etc.) whose connections with any
tradition is tenuous, than to the cause of folk music on a national scale. In view of its position as Canada’s longest-running and most prestigious folk music event I believe Mariposa owes more the Canadian folk music community than the grooming of a handful of national and international “stars”.

For whatever reasons, the people involved in putting on Mariposa have consistently either refused to admit any responsibility to the national folk music community or have not known how to go about fulfilling it. As a result the cultural composition of the festival has been overwhelmingly non-Canadian with the bulk of the representation coming from the United States.

Admittedly there have been attempts made to increase Canadian participation in the festival in recent years. The festival has brought in more Francophones and developed a native people’s area and, in 1975, after a year of research, brought in a contingent of musicians and craftspeople from Newfoundland, all laudable endeavours.

Sharp tells us that Mariposa has been expanding its horizons in other directions over the past several years. In addition to the research into the Newfoundland contingent, she cites the Mariposa In The Schools program and the present book of stories as examples. Disregarding whatever problems and faults of composition and content may be involved in the schools program, it strikes me as being a concept worth the expenditure of whatever time, effort and money that have gone into it.

Still, one can’t help but wonder how long it will be before the Mariposa people begin looking to other regions of Canada — the other maritime provinces, the prairies and British Columbia — as sources of future contributions to the festival. That there is an abundance of tradition and talent right across this country deserving of national exposure is demonstrated in at least one respect by the enthusiastic welcome which has greeted this magazine in all parts of Canada. Mariposa now has both the resources and the prestige to make that exposure possible by bringing these talents together and making itself a truly Canadian event. Whether or not it rises to meet this challenge is up to those involved.

As regards “For What Time I Am in this World”, I can only regret that the Mariposa people chose to put their resources into an essentially frivolous project rather than into the investigation and exposure of the wealth of folk culture in the regions of its host country which Mariposa has so far ignored.

Al Grierson