Now that the 1979 festival season is over I feel it is time to pay tribute to that stalwart band of unsung heroes, the organizers of Canada's Folk Festivals. A straw poll among a number of performers produced the following results:

The Thomas Crapper ring of confidence prize goes to the Festival of Friends in Hamilton for providing a Johnny-on-the-Spot that ACTUALLY FLUSHED! A close runner-up here was Summerfolk in Owen Sound, who provided "Wet Ones" in their Johns. (I always thought the little trough at the side was a wash basin.) The Scope bad taste award goes to the meanie who pasted that newspaper clipping about VD and toilet seats on the door of the toilet at Owen Sound. One can only levitate for so long!

Ottawa's Festival for the Folks deserved, from all accounts, a number of wilting bouquets, but our correspondents were unanimous on two of them. They receive the Otis elevator company award for enforced intimacy for putting four workshop stages on a space less than half the size of a football field, thus ensuring that every performer got to play with everybody else, all at the same time. They also receive a scholarship for research into foot and mouth disease for their disembodied announcer (he ought to be) who, after giving Stan Rogers his big buildup, announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, Dave Rogers." This same sensitive soul introduced Hang the Piper with the phrase, "And now, still working on their record..."

Wolfville, Nova Scotia receives the London Chamber of Commerce good citizenship award for taking their entire line-up from the southern Ontario area.

The Incredible String Cosmic Nostalgia award, consisting of a pre-faded, hand-woven headband, goes, of course, to the Vancouver Folk Festival for assembling the entire 60's beat generation in a single field in 1979. (This prize was donated by the Indian cotton clothing manufacturers' association, who provided the costumes for the event.)

The Winnipeg Folk Festival qualifies for a special commendation from the federal government for contributing to an 18% reduction in unemployment, by hiring every single folk performer at present working in North America. There are, in addition, three special categories for individuals who have made outstanding contributions by their presence (or absence) at folk festivals:

The D.C. Shorem (stage reinforcements) Ltd. award for having the greatest number of unscheduled accompanists during an evening concert—Willie P. Bennett. The Vancouver ubiquity award (crossed clarinets with oak leaves) for making the greatest number of unscheduled appearances in other people's concerts—Ken Bloom. The Billy Carter award for insensitivity to current issues to Duck Donald for his noisy appreciation of the T-shirt slogan "Let's Nuke the Whales and get it over with". To the Home Country Folk Festival, the Andrew Carnegie Philanthropy award for selfless generosity in ensuring that all the performers, craftspeople, food concessionnaires, etc. connected with the festival made lots of money, while taking care that the festival itself lost money.

Now that I've got that off my chest, here is some news from the southern Ontario region: the people at Mariposa have at last opened a folk club. It is held every Wednesday evening at Harbourfront in Toronto. The admission is $3.50, and Marilyn Koop, the organizer, tells me that one of the aims is to bring to Toronto a number of performers who would not otherwise appear there, for financial or other reasons. The lineup so far looks very exciting, and is quite in keeping with Mariposa's policy of representing folk music in its broadest sense. People interested in finding out more should contact the Mariposa Folk Foundation at 525 Adelaide St. E., Toronto M5A 3W4.

Grit Laskin, better known across Canada for the fine guitars he builds than for his singing, has at last completed his first solo album for Stan Rogers' Fogarty's Cove label. I say solo, but use the term loosely, for many of Grit's old friends join him in various choruses, bodhran bashing, and multi-tracked rhythm guitar. For those who have not heard him, one of his specialties is writing priceless parodies of traditional song in which he somehow manages to satire both the sometimes laboured conventions of these songs, and the slavish way in which over-reverential 'folk buffs' will allow age to add credibility to someone else's mistake.
He once presented the Cuckoo’s Nest Newsletter with a copy of “Cosmic and Freaky” (a southern California version of “Pleasant and Delightful”) complete with a Child-like resume of its history, variants (Synge in der Reis, Engellsy Og Trotske Folkensyngr, No. 51) and fragmentary verses. His well-known “Photography Song” manages well to ape the rather strained use of symbolism in traditional lyrical song with its generous use of terms like “tripod, filter, shutter” etc. Grit, of course, is also an accomplished instrumentalist, writer of serious songs, and singer of traditional songs, but his parodies do give the outsider an enlightening view into how folk songs work.

We were shocked to hear of Michael Cooney’s serious injury in a road accident this summer. An extended stay in hospital is serious enough for anyone, but especially for a working musician who relies on a regular income. All Michael’s many friends in London join in wishing him a speedy recovery, and we hope to see him back in business very soon.

Alistair Brown