Calgary's folk scene:

... folk clubs are flourishing again as music's popularity returns

The folk scene is flourishing in Calgary, again. Remarkably, this was about 15 or 20 years ago. With the '60s and '70s, the folk music scene was at its peak, with the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Bruce Springsteen dominating the airwaves.

The revival began in the late 1980s with the emergence of new talent and the renewed interest in traditional folk music. This revival has been fueled by the growth of folk clubs and festivals all over the city, where both established and emerging artists perform.

One such club is the Wild Colonial Boys, a group of traditional folk musicians based in Calgary. They have gained a reputation for their lively performances and engaging stage presence.

The key to their success is their strong musical foundation and their ability to connect with their audience.

Dick Howe (left), Pauline Morgan, and Tim Rogers

... traditional music at Rocky Mountain club
ALBERTA

The Alberta folk club scene continues to thrive. The recent introduction of three new clubs in the province, two up-coming summer festivals, plus a proposed series of folk music concerts in Banff illustrate the ever-growing acceptance of this type of music. Alberta’s 75th Birthday celebrations will also see many folk-oriented projects (thanks largely to Alberta Culture).

Rumours are rife, but it seems to be almost certain that there will be two major festivals in Alberta this summer. The first Alberta Folk Festival is scheduled for June 30/July 1 in Red Deer. It is being sponsored by the City of Red Deer, and administration is in the hands of Jim MacLachlan of Edmonton. Jim has been very active in promoting folk music in this province, so the festival is bound to be a success. It will feature almost entirely Alberta performers, except for The Tannahill Weavers from Britain. The Edmonton Folk Festival, August 8, 9 and 10 is an Alberta Culture-sponsored event under the direction of Don Whalen. It will feature many Alberta performers as well as a “caravan” of big name folk performers being planned by Mitch Podolak. This “caravan” will also be touring throughout the province during the month of August. More details in the next issue.

Almost from day one, the attitude of established folk clubs in Alberta towards new clubs has been one of co-operation and encouragement. Right now, relations between clubs have never been better. Three new clubs have opened in recent months: The Lethbridge Folk Club in southern Alberta has been operating since December. Initial reports from performers, administrators, audiences and the media have been very positive. We all wish it the best of luck! In Calgary, two more clubs have opened, bringing the total to seven. The Nickelodeon Music Club focuses on swing, ragtime, blues and folk, while the Foothills Bluegrass Club is obviously interested in Bluegrass. A series of monthly children’s folk concerts, coordinated by Judy Woodgate (255-4624) has also been very successful in Calgary. A big workshop and performance weekend featuring the Friends of Fiddlers Green from Toronto is scheduled for March 28/29, co-sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Folk Club, Alberta Culture, Calgary Board of Education, Buckdancer’s Choice and the Calgary Folk Club—truly a co-operative affair!

Anne Davies

The University of Calgary is beginning to show some interest in the active “folk scene” in town. Two shows involving local performers and clubs have just recently been completed for the University’s “Reaction” series. The first involves interviews and singing performances by Bev Bandur—Canada’s Blue Yodler. Bev reflects on how he learned his music during the ’30’s, and shares some of his memories in a show that features songs such as “Miss the Mississippi and You”, “Goodbye Pinto” and one of his own cowboy songs, “Lonesome Drifter”.

The second show features a brief overview of the folk scene in Calgary, including interviews with local playwrights, songwriters and folk club organizers, local musicians in the studio, and some live footage from the Rocky Mountain Folk Club. In its concern for the preservation and study of local culture, the University obviously sees the folk movement in Calgary as quite significant.

Tim Rogers

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