In the southwest of Alberta, just as the sun comes up,
Curly Bob is sitting sipping from his coffee cup;
He leans and pats old Banjo, he says, “Come on, girl,
let’s go;
We’ve got lots of miles to make before this day is
through.”
He walks across the pasture to the horses by the barn,
Catches Bandit, leads her in and throws her saddle on;
She takes the bit, and then he picks the reins up from the
ground.
Steps into the saddle, and brings her head around.

Curly Bob goes riding, riding, riding on the “D”.
Through the gates and heading west, as pretty as
you please;
He loves to make his pony lope the foothills of the
eastern slope,
Curly Bob goes riding on the “D”.

From calfing until branding, he's busy all day long,
Riding herd and making sure that nothing's going
wrong;
He drives them to the mountains when the summer
breezes blow,
He rounds them up in autumn, feeds them through the
winter snow.
There's some that say the cowboy way has gone
beneath the plow;
Curly Bob ain't heard that, he's too busy punching
cows;
Well, years will pass, the times will change, but you
will always see
Curly Bob out riding on the “D”.

CHORUS

* The “D” Ranch, south of Longview, Alberta.
EDMONTON FOLK FESTIVAL, 1989

Coming from a predominantly Celtic/traditional perspective, I have chosen to boycott the Edmonton Folk Festival for the past few years! However, as this was the tenth annual, I decided to "give it another shot" – only to reaffirm that my tastes were no more eclectic than they’d ever been! Having said that, I must confess that for the most part, I did enjoy the weekend.

Due to the competent organization, the incredible weather and relaxed, friendly crowds (approximately 12,000 people in all), the atmosphere was warm, welcoming and carefree for young and old alike. In fact, the age difference spanned almost a century, from new-born babies to 90-year-old Rufus Guinchard, a fiddler from Newfoundland. Insomuch as the crowd was diverse, so were the performers, in some cases too diverse for my liking. Despite the large numbers, lineups for food, washrooms, buses, etc. were minimal. I found the Park N' Ride system most convenient. As always, the craft tent had lots of "goodies".

The workshops offered the audience an intimacy and rapport with the performers not easily attained on Main Stage, but needless to say, it is just not possible to see everything and hear everyone. I never made it to any of the performances for the "little folks", but judging by the smiles on the childrens’ faces, they were quite satisfied. I did feel sorry for the animals in the Travelling Petting Zoo, though, and would prefer to visit them at the Wildlife Park.

Two of my favourite workshops were Celtic Heartbeat, hosted by Spirit of the West, with Alan MacLeod, James Keelaghan, Jim Payne and Margaret Crystl performing, and Generations of Fiddling, hosted by Peter Jellard and featuring Kathleen Deighton, Rufus Guinchard, Emile Benoit and Shannon McDade. In this particular case, I really enjoyed the diversity of fiddling styles. I also attended an excellent guitar workshop, One World, hosted by Gaye Delorme, where he and the other musicians (Russ Barenberg, Martin Simpson, Pierre Bensusan and Oscar Lopez) explained their different tunings, etc., and answered questions from the audience, after each had displayed his virtuoso techniques.

On Main Stage, we were treated to some wonderful harmonies from a number of sources, namely, Capercaillie, The James Keelaghan Trio, Free Hot Lunch, Timbuk 3, The Chenille Sisters, Pied Pumpkin, Show of Hands and Juba. It was a sheer delight to hear Capercaillie again. They are a young contemporary band from Scotland, with – as the programme book states – an "exciting blend of stunning Gaelic songs and contemporary sounds". Sarah McLachlan’s unaccompanied rendition of “My Lagan Love” mesmerized us all. Too bad her set hadn’t included more of this stuff!

At the Saturday Main Stage concert, Jerry Douglas, Edgar Meyer and Russ Barenberg together produced incredible instrumentals on dobro, bass and guitar. That evening came to a close with the superb blues of Bobby King and Terry Evans. (I broke free of my Celtic origins briefly; this group had us all "live"!)

What a gentle, melodious performance from Pied Pumpkin to open the Sunday Main Stage! As one of the emcees, Rick Scott’s good-natured humour was most enjoyable. By comparison, I found Bruce Steele somewhat abrasive in this capacity. Sunburned and exhausted, we all sang our hearts out in the finale of "Four Strong Winds", led by James Keelaghan, Connie Kaldor and Spirit of the West, along with all the other performers.

Overall, my criticism of Main Stage concerts is . . . too much noise! I would like to eliminate some of the electronics (the human ear can only stand so much), and return to some traditional/Celtic basics – or at least have a higher percentage of this type of music to satisfy those of us still enthralled by and entrenched in this particular genre. As the old maxim goes, “You can please some of the people some of the time . . .”

Liz Dorman