



ALI'S CORNER

I've always felt that a folk club should do more than act as a booking agent for itinerant musicians. Equally important are encouraging local talent, providing a platform for them, creating a good social event out of the club's activities (it's meant to be fun, remember?) and, of course, generating interest in folk music and fostering an awareness of what is going on generally around the country.

With that last point in mind, we at the Cuckoo's Nest have always placed considerable emphasis on our club newsletter. A few lines of news and background on other folk clubs are extremely useful to club organizers: to find out who is touring, for example, if you haven't been approached directly, or to help performers out with a list of other places to play. Newsletters tend to get passed around, and are a very effective and cheap form of publicity.

Here is how we do ours: the Cuckoo's Nest Newsletter has approximately 10-12 pages and comes out roughly every two months (actually, whenever we need to publish a new calendar.) All our copy is typed onto 8½ x 11 sheets which are folded lengthways. This way, we have two columns to the page—much easier for layout, advertisements (more later) and graphics (ditto). I suppose all this sounds very simple to people already well-versed in typography (I shudder to think what the editorial geniuses at CFB are thinking) but we discovered a lot of these hints for el cheapo printing by a process of trial and error, and perhaps this can help others avoid expensive, or, more likely, frustrating mistakes. By the way, always do your typing with a carbon ribbon, to ensure even black printing. Uneven density of type will be very obvious in the finished product, and the electric typewriter also helps to avoid this.

And now to the question of graphics. Letraset (or whatever) is very handy for all kinds of gothic nonsense like borders etc. as well as headlines. If you want a cheaper decorative border you can cut one out of a newspaper or magazine, make photocopies till you have the length you want, and use that. For illustrations, any reasonably well-printed black-and-white picture

will reproduce. Most solid colours will come out black, although you should watch out for light blue, which will not. Beware of large areas of solid colour, too. They tend to fade towards the centre, unless you use more expensive commercial printing systems. Unless you have a talented artist in your ranks, your illustrations will have to be already prepared. Obviously, to cheerfully clip other people's work out of magazines is asking for trouble, but help is at hand. Dover Publications of New York have a great number of books printed for this very purpose. They range from exotic Victoriana to medieval woodcuts and illuminated letters. A quick look through their books will show that a surprising number of established magazines already use this source. If you are short of cash, you may find, like us, that their catalogue provides enough material to give you a start. The important thing is to make the newsletter visually interesting. It's easily done, and doesn't cost much.

Surprisingly, we've never had any trouble getting copy. The newsletter, obviously, will feature a calendar of events, which will account for at least two pages, and a resumé of recent activities, which puts paid to another couple. Then you could publish a song—preferably locally made or collected—and perhaps some local folklore. Use the resources of your club membership for reviews of records, books and concerts, as well as an opinions page. Another suggestion would be an interview with a visiting performer. A ten-minute conversation can, with the aid of a tape recorder, provide a lot of valuable insights into the person listed on your calendar. There are a few limits to what could be included. We ran a cryptic crossword for several issues, until it had to be excluded for reasons of space. Funnily enough, the dubious quality of the clues raised more controversy than any other issue before or since.

We found the newsletter less of an economic burden than you might suppose. The club's membership fee helps defray postage costs (we have a membership list) and we charge other subscribers \$2 a year for the same purpose. As for the printing costs, 300 copies printed 5 double sides costs around \$100 if you use your local instant printer. Don't forget that schools and community colleges often provide this kind of service to non-profit groups at cost, as a kind of in-service training for commercial students. Remember that quality here can be a bit spotty, depending upon whether the student operative that day rates an A or a C-. Don't bother having them collate and staple it. It only adds to the expense, and, for me, one of the high points of our production cycle (if you'll pardon the expression) is when a gang of volunteers gets round the