

# Calgary's folk scene:

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



**THE WILD COLONIAL BOYS PERFORM**  
... strong house band is the key

The folk scene is flourishing in Calgary again. Remember how it was, about 10 or 15 years ago, when the art band sang out for the college kids, the Kingston Trio sang Tom Dooley for kids who had not grown, Frankie Avalon and Peter, Paul and Mary sang endless choruses of the Hammer Song?

These were the million days, the trend, the period of the big folk music revival in North America, when acoustic instruments and stringbands temporarily took over from the electric guitars of rock, it fell in terms of mass popularity and the word "folk-music" became part of the language.

Just about all a coffeehouse called the Depression, a 20-year-old art student named Joni Anderson used to play, decided, a 19-year-old named Will Miller played harp occasionally, and a Torontonian named Peter Dinklage played sometime comedian.

It was a time when commercially oriented folkies resorted to old ballads about stabbing and hanging out, tried their own what British rock writer Nik Cohn calls "Shirley Temple nursery rhymes."

By Brian Brennan

Three-part series

Then, the performers became more serious; the next lot of folkies moved to The Events recorded Mr. Lumbago. Man on electric guitars, and coffee houses all over the continent started to shut down for lack of business.

The popularity of folk music faded and the per-

John Martland to become the Wild Colonial Boys, musical mainstays of the new club.

"We must have spent the first year training the audience to keep quiet and listen to the music," says Welsh-born Davies.

"We assessed that it wasn't a coffeehouse, but a club where people could have a few drinks and hear good acoustic entertainment. Our philosophy was that the house band, ourselves, should offer a contrast to the material being performed by the guest artists."

The club was modelled, says Davies, after The Fire of Punch in Birmingham, England, where he used to perform as a member of the Ian Campbell Folk Group.

## No need to advertise

As well as featuring guest artists, a goal of the club was to encourage participation by local performers, some of whom are now involved in the operation of Calgary's other folk clubs.

At this juncture, the Calgary Folk Club is being held twice monthly in the Calgary Community Centre, 729 20th Ave. N.W., after being run for a couple of years in St. Andrew's parish hall in southeast Calgary.

The club has a British pub style atmosphere, with audience singalongs. The Wild Colonial Boys, meet



**DICK HOWE (LEFT) PAULINE MORGAN, 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, co-ordinated 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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