

# REGIONAL REPORTS

## B.C. REPORT

### "SO YOU WANNA RUNNA COFFEEHOUSE"

I heard from Janet Gustavson of Pen-tiction. She wanted to know how to run a coffeehouse, so I sent her what turned out to be a long reply. However, this month I don't feel too much like an expert coffee-house organizer: our last Y-Not Coffee-house in Kamloops came together beautifully—until we found out, two hours before the event, that in the shuffle someone had forgotten to book the Student Lounge, and there was a banquet going on upstairs that night! Oh well, they say experience is the best teacher. . .

What I have planned on doing over the next few issues of CFB is to contribute a series of very short articles on basic coffeehouse organization. This month I will begin with a brief overview of what I will cover. Bear in mind that what I will be offering is a "basic coffeehouse recipe"—what is needed in order to get a coffeehouse off the ground. Each region has its preferences as to committee setup, availability of space and talent, and I would welcome readers' input on their experiences or thoughts in this regard. And please be advised I *do* write back, even though I sometimes take a while.

Having made the decision that you do want to put on a coffeehouse event, now you must turn your attention to what you will need. First and foremost, you need a suitable place in which to hold the event. Next, publicity is really important. The kind of people who come to coffeehouses are often a diverse group, and difficult to reach unless there is an adequate spread of "The Word". You will need posters and liaison with the local radio stations and newspapers. There should be a Refreshments Committee; after all, what

is a coffeehouse without coffee, tea and goodies? You will need a House Committee to look after chairs, tables and staging and the door. And finally you will need an MC to set up the program and coordinate the musicians onstage. It sounds like a lot, but you will agree the above list is a basic one. Hopefully you can get enough people interested in becoming involved that committees will form for publicity, refreshment and house functions.

In the next issue, I will discuss some of the features you should look for in a place suitable for holding a coffeehouse.

## SEATTLE FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL

The Northwest Regional Folklife Festival 1980 was held as usual, on a damp Memorial Day weekend, 23-26 May. This is the 9th year of the Folklife and it has become the biggest amateur folk festival in the Pacific Northwest, a testimony to the dedication of its volunteers and to the many performers (unpaid, except for expenses) and audience who participate. The Festival is living proof that a good festival can happen without big business backers and bucks. And at a festival like Folklife, there is far more contact between audience and performers than at a "big bucks" festival.

The best way to see this type of festival is, as Bernard Hughes of Vancouver put it, "Throw away the program and just walk around, letting your ears guide you." This was harder to do when we had to go on Rain Schedule (indoor stages) on Sunday, but for an open-air festival, it is really the best way. A wander through the Food Circus and through the Crafts Fair provides alternatives to music—getting O.D.'ed on Folklife can spoil its purpose, which is to leave you with a warm sense of having participated in an exchange of simple human, musical and artistic experiences.

The Folklife is very people-oriented. We, of course, were delighted to see a lot of our former Vancouver Folk Song

Society friends. But we also met new friends. This, too, is part of the magic of Folklife. I look forward to next year and recommend it highly to anyone who can go!

### TIDBITS

At Folklife I participated in a Children's Songs workshop, during which we adults re-entered the amazing world of the child, ably assisted by **Mark Weiss** and the **Maple Trio**. I was surprised, however, that Mark had never heard of Canada's **Sharon, Lois and Bram** who sing folksongs for children, so I am sending him down information on **Mariposa in the Schools** and on **Elephant Records**. It seems Mark has had similar experiences to those of Sharon, Lois, Bram and Bill Usher with recording companies who don't understand the art of children's songs.

I heard from the **Back Door Coffeehouse** in Prince George and am very pleased! The Back Door is one of the **Northern Music Circuit** coffeehouses. It began operation using volunteers from the Highwater Food Co-op, but now is being run as a separate function by a society consisting of musicians and other interested people. It is hoping to open on a consistent basis a few nights each week, using Northern Music Circuit performers and an open mike interchangeably. **Mary Cosman** wrote me a fine informative letter and anyone wishing further information on the Northern Music Circuit or the back Door Coffeehouse, contact the Northern Music Circuit in Quesnel (see News directory for address). Also, **Bob Sharples' Daybreak radio program** on CBC from 6-9 a.m. weekdays provides information on who is performing at the Back Door.

According to **Sheila Baker**, Vancouver's **Skoocum Coffeehouse** will now be running Friday nights. This is in competition with the Green Cove Coffeehouse which operates on the first and third Friday of the month—I sincerely hope neither suffers as a result.

"The **White Swan Coffeehouse** near Victoria is a function of the Metchosin Hall Committee to promote regional music and the arts. We operate every Friday from 8 p.m. on. Admission is \$2. We pay feature performers 40% of the gate. The opening act is not paid and is usually local talent. Every third week of the month is open stage. Our location is about 14 miles west of Victoria at 4401 Metchosin Road (at Happy Valley Road). For further information contact **Dave Turchynsky** at 478-7422, evenings. The White Swan is a large Community Hall available for Music Festivals. It is available at \$75 per night for Dances. This seems a good space, given proper promotion, for staging a festival for introducing Vancouver Island musicians to Vancouver musicians. There is an incredible amount of good music to be enjoyed." (Garth Edgar, *Open Door Magazine*, Vol. 3 No. 8).

The **Shuswap Festival** is proceeding. **Jake Jacobson** has the thing well in hand and it should go July 3, 4, 5 without a hitch. The **Vancouver Folk Music Festival** is gearing up for July 18, 19, 20 at Jericho Park again. Last year *Folkscene* magazine said that Vancouver was the "one to watch in 1980". There is no doubt that this festival has brought a lot of good music to Vancouver, but if **Bim** and **Ferron** are local *folk* musicians, I think I'll donate a 400-watt amplifier and system to **Phil Thomas**, **Michael Pratt** and **Lynn McGown**, just to set the record straight for Vancouverites!

Here in Kamloops there are some wheels in motion to get a place for folk musicians to play. The place in mind is the **Stagehouse**, a cabaret just off the beaten path downtown. **Mary Ann Milobar** is the "guiding light", and she wants to provide an alternative to the loud C&W bars which seem to be the only places to go here. Certainly she is going against the stream but she has a place with good potential folk atmosphere and, who knows, it might work.

*Sue Unia*

## NORTHERN MUSIC CIRCUIT

For the past several months I have been working closely with Karen Borsato in an effort to expand the Northern Music Circuit by improving tour schedules, expanding services to the performers on tour, and aiding failing, new, and prospective coffeehouses in their organizational problems. The Circuit, in the past year, has achieved an amount of notoriety among both Canadian and American folk performers and the mountain of audition tapes grows steadily. We are very pleased with the quality of performers booked on the circuit, and they, in turn, have expressed very positive reactions to their tours. Besides having the opportunity to be acquainted with every nook and cranny of northern B.C. (and Tofino as well), they have enjoyed the billeting arrangements (rather than hotels), and meeting and playing with our fine, but hidden, local musicians.

For this last reason alone, I would recommend coffeehouses already in operation with local open stages to consider bringing in professional performers on our tour circuit. I don't believe they detract from the following that local musicians have, rather, I feel that the opportunity to share and learn is a basic function of folk music and should be welcome!

If you are in contact with any coffeehouses in the province that are not on the NMC, or with any folks who are interested in organizing a facility for touring artists, please let them know about us, or let us know about them!

*Mary Cosman*