

# LETTERS

Congratulations to Ali Brown on his penetrating article on folk music and the media. It certainly clarified for me a big "why" in folk music—why it is continually ignored or misrepresented by the media. Super, Ali; I agree completely. I often get into discussions about folk music with my less informed friends, and I inevitably come up against the quandry of definition. It is so much easier to say what folk music is not! And perhaps a big reason that people are not exposed to folk music is because it cannot be pigeon-holed for the convenience of the music packagers. Thanks for the ammunition!

Boos, however, to William Sarjeant, for his remarks about a trained voice. Mr. Sarjeant should be very careful not to confuse a style of delivery with a vocal characteristic. "That special wobbliness on sustained notes which apparently is...desirable" is called a vibrato, and it is *not* a characteristic of a trained voice.

Buffy St. Marie, for example, has a strong vibrato in her voice, and it is untrained. The vibrato is a characteristic of some voices, and it also can indicate a lack of breath behind a note, incidentally. But it is not definitive of vocal training; I have what is a trained voice and it has no vibrato. I think what Mr. Sarjeant is trying to say in his article is that Joyce Sullivan is attempting to perform a folk song in a classical style and it does not work—for the reasons so aptly pointed out by Ali Brown in his article.

Sue Unia  
Kamloops, B.C.



*(Ed. note: the following is an extract from a recent letter Alistair Brown of "Ali's Corner" wrote to the Editorial Board. It seemed to us to be a succinct piece raising some good points about who the Bulletin is serving. Any comments in this area would be very welcome.)*

The general feeling among people I've talked to (both here and across the country) is that people want the *Bulletin* to reflect more what is happening in their clubs and festivals. They want *news*. In fact, this function of the maga-

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zine has been universally praised, and I think you are to be commended for your change in this direction.

Are the articles too dry? In a word, yes. The emphasis in the *Bulletin* has always been from the folklorist's point of view, and while I think this function is important, philosophical discussions on the ethics of collecting are going to grab the attention of only a few, who are probably all members of the Canadian Folk Music Society, and could probably carry on the discussion by letter, anyway.

I don't want to sound too negative, but if the *Bulletin* is to reflect Canadian folk music, then for the thousands of people who go to clubs and coffeehouses, not to mention festivals, regularly, it should talk more about what they are hearing. I think it should deal more with the familiar: more news on performers (both revivalist and contemporary), more extended book and record reviews, and concert reviews. We've had lots about the transition of music from traditional singer to collector, but for most people it's the next stage of distribution that is more relevant, and they want to know more about that. One of my favourite magazines has long been Emily Friedman's *Come For To Sing*. I think the balance in that is worth aiming at.

I hope my point of view is of some use. I think the *Bulletin* is a smashing piece of work, and a

very valuable one. I guess you probably had a good idea of my interpretation of the role anyway from my articles, which I hope have always been along the lines I've been talking about.

*Alistair Brown,  
London, Ont.*

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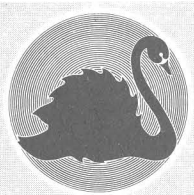
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