

The Arbalest

Editors: Phillip Day.
Matt Dickie.

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EDITORIAL

You will have noticed that "The Arbalest" has grown with each issue. We want it to continue growing as quickly as possible, and the only way we can achieve this is for you to begin contributing articles, letters, original poetry and songs, and any information you think is important about the folk scene. However, we have decided that there is no necessity to restrict the paper to folk music alone, so we are asking for contributions on any of the following subjects.

In the music field, we would welcome articles on jazz, classical, blues, country music; original poetry, articles on folk poetry; we'd like to run columns on films, and theatre; if the standard is reasonably good, short stories on fantasy, SF and mainstream themes would be acceptable. In fact, anything on these lines would be welcome.

If you've got something to submit, send it to me typed, double-spaced, with a stamped self-addressed envelope for return, at —

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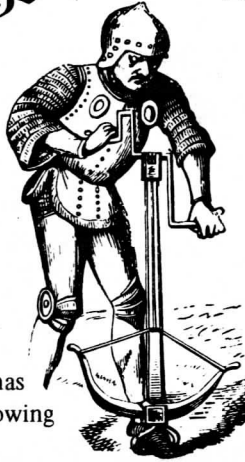
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A P O L O G Y

It is most unfortunate that we are forced into the position of having to apologise for missing an issue, something we had hoped would never happen, but such is the case. Due to both editors being in Sydney last week, and the fact that the printers moved into new premises during that period, time could not be found. We sincerely hope that it will never happen again.



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Official Organ of the
Port Phillip Folk Federation

BLUES NIGHT AT COMMUNE

One of the things missing on the Melbourne scene at the moment is good blues. Most of the singers who were singing blues a couple of years ago have progressed to contemporary music, leaving a distinct void. Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I noticed the Commune have started a night which features Dutch Tilders and regular guests every Tuesday night from 9.00 pm to 11.30 pm.

For those of you who haven't had the pleasure to hear Dutch, here's a short rundown for you. He writes a fair bit of his own material as well as doing most of the old blues classics and even some of the rock blues of the fifties. In fact, at the moment he looks like something out of the fifties, with a 'rocker' hair style and all! His music is exciting, sometimes funny, always good to listen to.

His guests will include such groups as Karass, of whom more will be said in a later issue, and solo singers such as John Crowle. Together with the very friendly atmosphere at Commune, it is a bloody good night.

"DONA NOBIS" TO STAY

The many people who know "Dona Nobis" already will be pleased to hear that they have moved to Melbourne permanently, so you'll now be able to see them much more often. Those of you who haven't yet seen them are in for an unusual experience.

Trying to classify the group by either style or type of music is fruitless, as everything they do is original, both in composition and presentation. It is conceivable that some could dislike their very studied (and obviously much practised) timing and precision, but their music is brilliant and can be tremendously exciting to listen to — if you're given a chance to over the general background noise in most of the places they'll be playing at.

Some of their pieces are very long, a combination of songs and tunes strung together into mini-operas, for which you can imagine them performing in period dress (as I believe they sometimes do). It's unfortunate that most of their appearances will be in places where their full potential can't be shown. Their real place is in concerts, on records, or in theatre. Even so, if you get a chance to see them, even somewhere like Polaris Inn, it's well worth it.

It's very easy to criticise a folk festival, especially if the critic didn't have a particularly good time himself, but I feel that the Port Jackson festival last week deserves some definite criticism along with a fair bit of praise.

It must be kept in mind that very little of this criticism is aimed at the committee, who ran things very smoothly and generally tried to make the festival a varied and interesting one. It's hardly their fault that it rained, or that two of the people involved in workshops didn't turn up and one went missing shortly before he was supposed to start and couldn't be found for forty minutes or so.

The workshops were, as usual, very good, and as these are probably the most important part of a festival, in that respect the weekend was a success. I've been told that, despite its late start, the Irish workshop was good, and from all reports, and from the number of people present, the Humorous workshop was a riot. I found the North Country Music excellent, and Mike Eves' Presentation of Folk Music was to me the highlight of the whole festival, even though I didn't agree with much of what he said. But more of that later. The reports on all the other workshops were also favourable.

The 'Come—all—ye' sessions were a little strange. The interstate session was of a very high standard, even though there were only two interstate singers included. The others I saw included some pretty painful individual performances, but some of the established singers did manage to make them reasonably good, with the exception of one supposedly good singer who absolutely fucked up a good song at one of the come—all—ye sessions and in concert by giving it an atrocious up-tempo treatment — not that the rest of his performances were any better.

The inclusion in the daytime program of several exhibitions of international music and dancing added a lot of colour. Although some of the performances were a little amateurish (and I don't mean any slur on those who did them — I'd hate to see a performance of Australian dancing by expatriate Australians in, say, Switzerland) but their enthusiasm made up for this to a large extent. All in all, I feel that the daytime sessions were a success. It was after dark that the festival flopped, and this was not altogether the fault of the organisers.

Let's skip the concerts for the moment. In fact I wouldn't mind skipping the concerts altogether — I wish I had. It was the 'parties' that were to me the most disappointing musically. One can understand people being a bit buggered on Friday night at the reception, but playing two only dances, Australian, in a whole night of drinking at a folk festival reception seems to be a bit peculiar to say the least. The misprint in Saturday's Sydney Morning Herald advertisement for the festival just about summed up the rest of the parties perfectly — singerbouts. They seemed to be a matter of who could make the most noise — the circle of drunks singing ten part harmony songs at the top of their voices (and you only got into the circle if they knew you), or the lines of drunks swinging each other around the place to sounds made by a twenty piece bush band. Some of the dancers must have been feeling schizzo — dancing jigs and singing The Punch Ladle at the same time? It was a ball if you (a) were drunk, (b) liked dancing, (c) could get into the singing circle, or (d) managed to pick up a shared bed for the night. I know of one bloke who was so disgusted by Saturday night he flew back to Melbourne.

The only real criticism I can aim at the committee is in their selection of singers for the concerts. There were some tremendous performances, particularly from Crystallise, White Nellie, the East Neasden Spasm Band and John Currie. The Shanty Singers and the Ceilid group led by Mike Flanagan and Christy Cooney were

also fair enough. But some of the other acts were nothing short of atrocious. Why folk festival committees insist on putting on groups of kids who try to make like Osmonds singing crappy folk music is beyond me. And how a singer like Gary Tooth, who has an obviously excellent knowledge of traditional folk music, could sing a bracket of shit in an incredibly good imitation of a bad Chad Mitchell Trio (the Wayfarers influence?) is also beyond me. Although admittedly some of his songs were good, the overall result made me walk out. Perhaps I'm being over-critical, but I'm damn sure the concerts could have been much better if the committee had used a little more imagination. A couple of other traditional singers instead of the two poets (?) they put on may have helped.

And this brings me back to Mike Eves' workshop. My interpretation of his argument is that the traditional scene has become reactionary — too many people are looking back at the early revivalist period ('62-'66 in Australia) with a feeling that whatever is wrong with Traditional music today can be cured by going back to the almost imitation A. L. Lloyd style that dominated this period. He believes that we need a "dynamic contemporary scene" which will keep the traditional scene alive as a side effect, and with this in view he claimed that there was too much emphasis on traditional music at this particular festival. Here I must disagree. Since I only came onto the scene (there's that word again, but it seems to be the only one to use) three years ago, I can hardly be accused of nostalgia for the 'good old times' — I wasn't even there. Yet it seems to me that too many of the current singers are heading far and away in the opposite direction, that in an attempt to make folk music more contemporary (or is it to cure their own boredom with what they're doing?) they are losing sight of the beauty of traditional music, and as a result of this people aren't hearing it any more, and it's becoming harder to find. Although I see the validity of contemporary music in the future of folk, I believe that the Port Jackson festival could have been a tremendous success had the committee not decided to experiment with their concerts, had they booked a much more traditional program with perhaps some more chorus-orientation, with their excellent contemporary artists to provide the needed contrast.

Perhaps at this stage I should mention that, although we are the Port Phillip newsletter in part, the views expressed in editorials and articles do not necessarily reflect those of the P.P.F.F., and should any toes be particularly hurt, please don't blame it on them.

CANBERRA WOOLSHED

I have been provided with details of the woolshed dance to be held in Canberra this month. The Monaro Folk Music Society reopens on Thursday 15th February at the New University Union, A.N.U., and their first outside function will begin on Friday 16th with an exhibition dance in the Civic Square followed by a party, and on Saturday 17th, at the Yarralumla woolshed, from 4 p.m. they will hold a full-scale barbecue and woolshed dance. The club will be open every Thursday from 15th onwards. I believe that quite a few cars are going up, so if you are looking for a lift you can probably arrange one at the Dan O'Connell Hotel on Thursdays or Saturdays.

IN MELBOURNE THIS WEEK

Friday 9th February

Frank Traynor's,
100 Little Lonsdale Street, City.
8.00 pm – 12.30 am
John Crowle, Mike O'Rourke, Sam Hall.

Outpost Inn,
52 Collins Street, City.
8.00 pm – 1.00 am
Danny Spooner, Dona Nobis, and others.

Commune,
580 Victoria Street, North Melbourne.
8.00 pm – 1.00 am
Guests (undecided).

Union Hotel,
Fenwick and Amess Streets, North Carlton.
7.30 pm – 12 midnight
Peter Parkhill, Phillip Day, Dona Nobis, Peter Holden and N
Peter Holden and Neil.

Saturday 10th February

Dan O'Connell's Hotel,
Princes and Canning Streets, Carlton.
3.00 pm – 6.00 pm
Come-all-ye.

Frank Traynor's.
8.00 pm – 2.30 am
Julie Wong, Peter Parkhill, John Graham,
John and Juanita, Gordon McIntyre.

Outpost Inn.
8.00 pm – 1.00 am
John Graham, Julie Wong, Brian McCrahan,
and others.

Commune.
8.00 pm – 3.00 am
Russ Shipton, Helen Henry.

Sunday 11th February

Frank Traynor's.
8.00 pm – 12 midnight
Phillip Day, Mike Deany.

Outpost Inn.
8.00 pm – 12 midnight
Margret Roadknight, Peter Parkhill.

Commune.
8.00 pm – 12 midnight
Crucible.

Monday 12th February

Frank Traynor's.
8.15 pm – 11.30 pm
Mike O'Rourke and guests.

Tuesday 13th February

Frank Traynor's.
8.15 pm – 11.30 pm
Peter Parkhill and guests. Auditions.

Commune.
9.00 pm – 11.30 pm
Dutch Tilders and guests.

Outpost Inn.
8.00 pm – 11.30 pm
New Faces, with David Stephens.

Wednesday 14th February

Frank Traynor's.
8.00 pm – midnight
Christy Cooney, Tony Lavin and guests.

Thursday 15th February

Dan O'Connell's Hotel.
7.30 pm – 12 midnight
Mike O'Rourke, Country Fever,
Andrea McIntyre and Peter Howells.

Frank Traynor's.
8.15 pm – 11.30 pm
John Crowle and Julie Wong.

Commune.
8.30 pm – 11.30 pm
Classical Guitar Night.

Friday 16th February

Union Hotel.
7.30 pm – 12 midnight
Danny Spooner, Phillip Day,
Peter Parkhill, Campbell Muir.

Frank Traynor's.
8.00 pm – 12.30 am
Julie Wong, Peter Parkhill, Mike O'Rourke.

Outpost Inn.
8.00 pm – 1.00 am
Tony Kelly and others.

Commune.
8.00 pm – 1.00 am
Guests (undecided).

Saturday 17th February

Dan O'Connell's Hotel.
3.00 pm – 6.00 pm
Come-all-ye.

Frank Traynor's.
8.00 pm – 2.30 am
Danny Spooner, Graham Lowndes,
Eric Gooding, John Crowle, John Graham.

Outpost Inn.
8.00 pm – 1.00 am
John Graham and others.

Commune.
8.00 pm onwards
All-night concert.

Sunday 18th February

Frank Traynor's.
8.00 pm – 12 midnight
Phillip Day, Mike Deany.

Outpost Inn.
8.00 pm – 12 midnight
Margret Roadknight, Russ Shipton.

Commune.
8.00 pm – 12 midnight
Crucible

WHAT HAPPENED TO BLUEGRASS ?

By John Boothroyd.

It is such a shame that here in Melbourne a person interested in Bluegrass music has no opportunity to hear this exciting, emotional, and often spectacular music, live.

A few years ago you could listen to the Hayes Brothers playing at such places as Traynor's and Outpost Inn, and the Hawking Brothers at various pubs. The incentive was there for others to form groups, to try their hand at familiar tunes like 'Cripple Creek' and 'Old Joe Clarke'; as well as adapting either contemporary songs or standard 'folk' tunes into the distinguished 'Bluegrass' sound.

Almost everyone attending National Folk Festivals enjoys the exciting Adelaide group the 'Skillet Lickers'. and although they are of high standard for any to emulate, their incentive originated from the records by groups such as the Stanley Brothers, Country Gentlemen and the Dillards.

Some readers may remember John Boswell, a singer at most folk places in Melbourne, who eventually helped form a Bluegrass group, the James County Cousins. Now living in England, he is the lead singer and guitarist with an excellent group, the Southern Ramblers. (Late last year the group released an LP on Westwood Recordings.) Another Australian, Rick Adams (formerly of the Adelaide group 'Trev, Rick and Dennis'), has also joined the Southern Ramblers, playing banjo, fiddle and dobro.

It is a pity John had to leave Melbourne to find a sustaining influence of Bluegrass and other musicians fully interested in performing this music. The only thing left for us 'starved' fans is records – but here lies a problem. Other than Discurio, Heritage and perhaps Record Collector, there is virtually no Bluegrass in stock at record shops.

There is one easy way out here. By subscribing to such U.S. magazines as 'Bluegrass Unlimited' [Box 111, BURKE, VIRGINIA 22015] and 'Muleskinner News' [RT.2, Box 304, ELON COLLEGE, N.C. 27244], you will find numerous record reviews of latest groups. Particular record companies advertise their releases and include catalogue listings. By purchasing direct, it works out cheaper per record than normal local prices, in most cases. A wait of around eight weeks for shipment just has to be tolerated.

So, good news Bluegrass fans, all is not lost! For a little effort, the exciting banjo picking – high nasal harmonies and spectacular fiddling – can still be yours. Pity though, it won't be live.

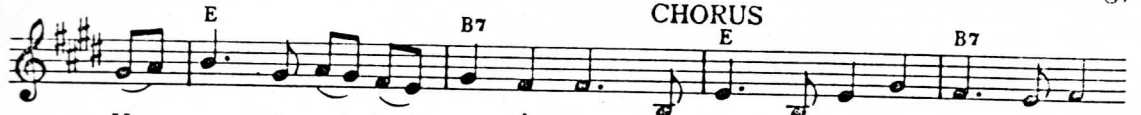
MacPHERSON'S LAMENT

With deliberation

For verse 1 only



Fare-weel, ye dun-geon's dark and strang, Mac-Pher-son's day_will no' be lang,



Up - on the gal-lows tree I'll hang. Sae ran - ting-ly, sae wan-ton-ly,



And sae daunt-ing-ly_ gaed he, He_ played a tune and he danced it roond,



Be - low the gal - lows tree. 2. It was by a wo - man's treach-erous hand



That I was con-demned to_ dee, Be-low a ledge at a win-dow she stood,



And a blank-et she threw over me. Sae ran - ting-ly,- sae wan-ton-ly.

2. It was by a woman's treacherous hand
That I was condemned to dee,
Below a ledge at a window she stood,
And a blanket she threw over me.
3. The Laird o' Grant, that Hieland sant,
That first laid hands on me;
He played the cause on Peter Broom,
To let MacPherson dee.
4. Untie these bands fra' off my hands,
And gie to me my sword,
And there's no' a man in a' Scotland,
But I'll brave him at a word.
5. There's some cam' here to see me hanged,
And some to buy my fiddle,
But before that I do part wi' her,
I'll brak' it through the middle.
6. He took the fiddle into baith of his hands,
And he broke it ower a stane,
Says : "There's nae ither hand shall play on thee,
When I am dead and gane."
7. O, little did my mither think,
When first she cradled me,
That I would turn a rovin' boy
And die on the gallows tree.
8. The reprieve was coming ower the brig o' Banff,
To let MacPherson free;
But they pit the clock at a quarter afore
And hanged him to the tree.