

THE BROADSIDE

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THE SEARCH FOR CRITERIA

This article is actually a contradiction in terms: it is a protest against talking about folk music which protests by talking about folk music.

Wherever and whenever folk music is played we inevitably ask ourselves and/or our companions "Is so and so good?". But we cannot ask this without automatically considering the question "What do we mean by 'good'?" We seem to feel the lack of established criteria for judging and evaluating folk music, for this is the subject of our discussions. We put down the Kingston Trio because they are not ethnic, but feel that someone is "coming on" if they adapt a hill-billy twang or negro pronunciation. We say that Joan Baez has no emotional empathy with her music because she fails to weep hysterically for Old Blue, but let someone crack their voice or shed a tear over the hardships of prison life and we demand to know whether or not they spent two years in Angola. If you repeat a song verbatim you are nothing more than a tape recorder, but heaven help you if you omit a verse.

...And so we talk and argue, tossing about three terms - Ethnic, Empathy, and Authenticity - which are really nothing more than pseudo-criteria (What else can one call them? They cannot have any intrinsic worth if they swing so helplessly between pro and con). And for those who realize the meaninglessness and insecurity of these there yet remain two "rules of thumb". The first is Background, or to put it more bluntly, if you're not black you can't sing blues, but if you're from New York, you had better not try to sing anything at all. Those who feel the need for this crutch (a synonym for "rule of thumb") must then be content to eliminate Rick Von Schmidt from the ranks of the blues singers or Bill Keith and Jim Rooney from the blue grass and western.

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TERRI's PLACE TO OPEN IN HYANNIS

A new Coffee Shop with folk entertainment will be opened in Hyannis by the time this edition is published. TERRI's PLACE will open across from the Hyannis Theatre on Main Street. The atmosphere we are told will be "continental" with a rather unusual decor, and there will be a unique line of beverages, pastries and tid bits. Folk entertainment will be presented every evening and will draw from the name talent appearing at the Ballad and Banjo Room and from local performers. TERRI's PLACE will be open daily from 5 PM to 1 AM. Plans are to charge a nominal minimum rather than a cover charge.

BOSTON BLUEGRASS GROUP GAINING FAME

It is interesting to note that all of a sudden there is a rash of folk festivals in colleges and major cities in the New England area featuring traditional music. To illustrate this, Don Stover and the Lily Brothers, originally from Virginia, who play regularly at the Hillbilly Rance in downtown Boston have been invited to play at both a Folk Music Festival at Cornell University and at the Annual Sing Out Carnegie Hall Concert (put on for the benefit of the publication "Sing Out!" and m. c'd by Pete Seeger).

Five years ago, Mike Seeger became very interested in this fine Bluegrass Group and last year was aided by Manny Greenhill in an attempt to bring them to the public's attention. The result of their efforts is not only the invitations to the Festivals, but also an album entitled "Don Stover and the Lily Brothers" which was recorded at the Boston YMCA and just recently released on the Folkways Label.