

FOLK-MUSIC FETE CALLED A SUCCESS

3-Day Newport Event Ends With \$70,000 in Box Office

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Special to *The New York Times*

NEWPORT, R. I., July 28—

On almost every level, the three-day Newport Folk Festival of 1963, which closed tonight with more than 13,000 listeners filling Freebody Park, was an enormous success.

The 47,000 paid admissions for the event surpassed the attendance at the Newport Jazz Festival earlier this month by 11,000. Because of this turnout and the fact that more than 70 performers who appeared here since Friday worked for minimum wages, the nonprofit Newport Folk Foundation will have about \$70,000 to use for enriching the field of folk music with educational projects.

The folk festival can be praised for its high esthetic level, for imaginative programming and skillful choice of performers. It can be praised for educating an audience. Amid all this, despite scorching temperatures, the weekend was truly festive. A tirelessly enthusiastic audience of teen-agers and young adults, looking as fresh and wholesome as the cast of an Andy Hardy film, made the event almost as exciting as the performers did.

A listener reels away from this resort city as from a buffet of rich food. There was a cross section of the top level of professionals, and a legion of lesser-known performers. So that the audience could pick and choose, nearly 20 daytime panels and workshops, as many as four at a time, were deployed on the grass tennis courts of the Newport Casino.

Credit to George Wein

For tying together what might have been an atomized circus, and converting the whole into a unified event, credit must go to George Wein, president of the Newport Folk Foundation and technical producer, and the seven performer-board members who volunteered their time and devotion; Theodore Bikel, Bill Clifton, Clarence Cooper, Erik Darling, Jean Ritchie, Pete Seeger and Peter Yarrow.

There were many voices at the festival not heard before in the East. To mention a few, there were the folk blues giants of two generations, Mississippi John Hurt, 69-years-old, and John Hammond Jr., 20. There was a superb troupe of Indian dancers and musicians, the Albuquerque Intertribal Dancers. Re-creating the abandon of pre-Civil War Negro shouts, jubilees and ring dances were Bessie Jones, and the Sea Island Singers.

There was intelligent talk about the copyright tangle by lawyers and singers, and talk about collecting by Alan Lomax. There were topical songs by a half dozen young composers and old timers such as Jim Garland and Dorsey Dixon. There were many firms of folk musicians practicing their art. Representing the authentic country folk world were such venerated performers as Doc Boggs and Maybelle Carter.

Many Strong Performances

To single out particularly strong performances from this marathon is difficult. Yet, one will not soon forget Bob Dylan closing the first concert singing "We Shall Overcome," with a chorus behind him made up of the Freedom Singers, Peter, Paul and Mary; Joan Baez and the Messrs. Bikel and Seeger. One will remember Doc Watson and Bill Monroe in the taut, Faustian white gospel song, "What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?" One will remember Tony Saletan leading African songs, and Ian and Sylvia from Canada, and Bob Davenport from England and much, much more.

The Newport Folk Foundation will have its challenges in tightening the programming, improving the physical setup of the festival, and moving into other areas of folk tradition not covered here this weekend. But the dominant impression was one of a cooperative production by devotees more concerned with artistic purpose than commercial considerations. The audience, who enjoyed such a large ratio of ethnic music without sugarcoating, showed a maturity beyond the years of most of those who attended.

The triumph of the Newport Folk Festival this weekend should be resounding for a long time to come. Integrity in folk music had a field day at the box office.