

Mariposa Festival: It's a happy picnic... with music

Fun's now in session on Toronto islands

By JIM BEEBE
Star staff writer

Mariposa, the 10-year-old authentic folk festival now in its third year on the Toronto islands, got off to another sunny, easygoing, goodnatured start yesterday, the first of three days of Mariposa.

In contrast to the hyper-intense rock festivals of this year and last, Mariposa is as easy to take as a picnic in the country with music—and that's exactly what it is.

Four afternoon workshop areas were officially set up on Olympic Island, and dozens of others sprang up spontaneously (it seems every guitar and other stringed instrument in Toronto finds its way to Mariposa annually). Subjects ranged from the music of India to the element of the supernatural in folk music, and audiences from just a fellow guitar-picker to upwards of 500 people.

The latter showed up for a concert-picnic-celebration with the Perth County Conspiracy, a communal group from Stratford. Various members of the Conspiracy sang, played and passed out fruits, vegetables and cheeses for two hours.

Elsewhere on the island, the Toronto Blue Grass Committee kept up a seemingly endless series of concerts and picking sessions. Merrick Jarrett hosted a children's concert attended by more than youngsters and Billy Vanaver of the Pennywhistlers demonstrated the how-tos of several styles from Bulgarian folk songs to cowboy ballads.

Except for one brief interval the sun shone continuously on a young, roving crowd (no fences are set up)

short on stylish clothes and mannerisms and long on blue jeans, knapsacks, t-shirts, babies, musical instruments and free-flowing dresses and hair. Many were footloose young Canadians pausing in their travels.

As usual, Mariposa is relying on authentic folk performers more than "name" recording stars. The few well-known pop singers this year are Joni Mitchell (making her sixth consecutive appearance), James Taylor, Doug Kershaw, Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Odetta.

Odetta performed at last night's pre-sunset (7.30 p.m.) to midnight concert along with the Pennywhistlers, Rosalie Sorrels, Elizabeth Cotton, Bruce Murdock, Raoul Roy, the Eskimo Drum Dancers, Perth County Conspiracy and Michael Cooney, who was official folksinger-in-residence at Guelph University last year.

There is a wide spectrum of workshops planned and more likely this afternoon and tomorrow (highlighted by Jack Elliott's session on the legendary Woody Guthrie).

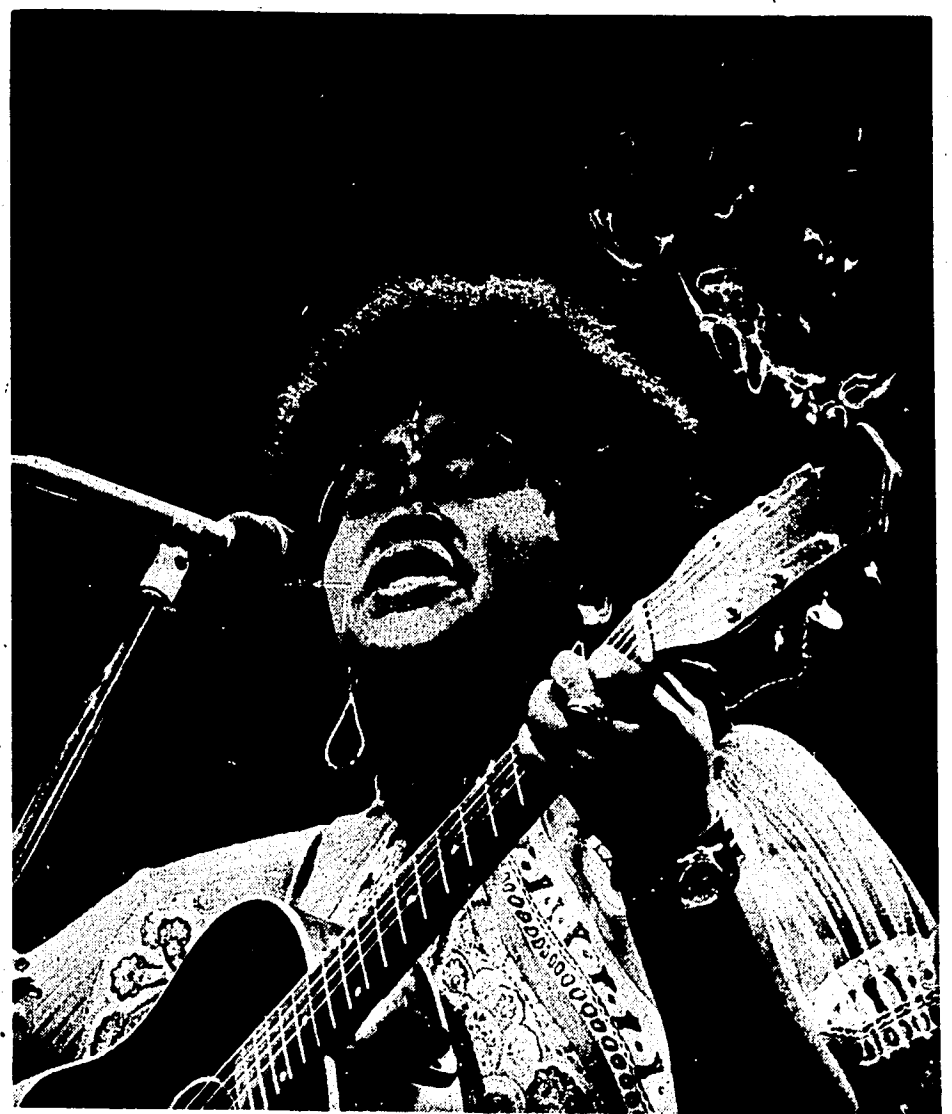
Tonight's concert performers are Edith Butler, Sandy Crawley, Jack Elliott, J. B. Hutto & the Hawks, Doug Kershaw, Fred McDowell, Alanis Obomsawin, the Olympia Brass Band (from New Orleans) and Robert Pete Williams.

Sunday night's performers will be Joni Mitchell, David Campbell, Sara Grey, Norman Kennedy, David Rea, James Taylor, Merle Travis and Alexander Zelkin.

Transportation to the festival is by the Toronto Island ferries, which leave from the foot of Bay St.



TRUE SPIRIT of the Mariposa Festival—it's like a picnic with music—was happily demonstrated yesterday when Stratford's Perth County Conspiracy gave away raisins and nuts to fans. Shown is Gari Brick.



INCENSE BURNED on Odetta's guitar last night when the folksinger entertained happy, relaxed fans as the three-day Mariposa Festival opened its 10th

—Star photos by Doug Griffin and Graham Bezant season. Although Odetta was the star, there was entertainment for every taste on Centre Island, ranging from bluegrass to Bulgarian songs and cowboy ballads.

Why does rich Debbie Reynolds tour? To pay for \$1,500,000 movie museum



—Star photo by Boris Spremo

POSING ATOP Toronto International Airport yesterday was actress Debbie Reynolds. She rushed up to Toronto from Detroit, where she is currently appearing, to publicize her show, opening Aug. 3 at O'Keefe.

Why is the 38-year-old wife of a millionaire shoe manufacturer coming to Toronto to do Mae West imitations, dance and introduce vaudeville acts in an O'Keefe Centre summer variety show?

The answer, says Debbie Reynolds, is simple: to pay part of the cost of a \$1,500,000 movie museum she's organizing in a remodeled 19th-century hotel in downtown Hollywood.

The Hollywood Hall of Fame, whose opening date depends on how soon Miss Reynolds finds a sponsor to help finance it, will consist of hundreds of rooms, each depicting a scene from a movie. It will contain old film props, including \$150,000 worth of movie history the actress bought at the recent MGM auction in Hollywood.

Miss Reynolds is involved in the project because she believes "Hollywood should be very glamorous. Aside from Graumann's Chinese Theatre, there's nothing there."

"Everything went so fast at that auction. You had to buy or it was gone. So I ran to the bank and borrowed the money and I'm hoping if we do good business on this tour, I can pay it back."

The management of the O'Keefe Centre is also hoping Debbie Reynolds does good business when her show opens Aug. 3 for one week. They don't want a repetition of the opening installment of the centre's summer program when Mitzi Gaynor most nights could fill only a third of the theatre's 3,200 seats.

Miss Reynolds got up at 6 a.m. yesterday—"It wasn't easy"—and flew to Toronto to publicize her show "so people will know I'm coming. It's the first time I've been to Canada."

See-through dress

Wearing a see-through dress and a diamond ring the size of a golf ball, she sat in the airport restaurant and talked about the variety show, the museum, her cancelled TV series, and the movie she'll start next December in which she will portray a 40-year-old mother whose son commits a murder.

The O'Keefe Centre show, she said, will have "singing and dancing and all kinds of clowning around." It will feature comedian Rip Taylor and a group called the Weight Watchers, whose members come in all sizes — one is six-foot-four and weighs only 80 pounds. "They're more fun than male dancers," says Miss Reynolds.

Also appearing on the show will be her 13-year-old daughter, Carrie, who aspires to follow her mother into

a show business career. "She sings —oh, yes, she's very good. Of course, that's a mother speaking."

The other child from her marriage to singer Eddie Fisher, son Todd, 12, is also accompanying his mother on the 10-city tour, and husband Harry Karl may join the family in Toronto.

Her TV show, for which she was paid \$1,000,000 for one season, was a situation comedy in which Miss Reynolds was the wife of a sportswriter. NBC decided not to renew the show for next fall.

Would she like to do another TV series? "Not particularly... I didn't enjoy the politics. TV is a big business, like a chess game and I was the pawn."

NBC didn't like it

"They gave me a cigarette sponsor which I hadn't wanted, and when I protested the cigarette sponsor dropped the show and NBC was left with the tab. They didn't like that."

"NBC was going to sue me, but then they said they wouldn't sue me if I'd give up the second-year guarantee. I knew then they would drop the show. I said, 'Fine, I don't want to work with anybody who doesn't want me.' They like conformists which I've never been."

Was she happy with the series itself? "I liked some of the shows, but it would have been better with a more up-to-date format. It was old-fashioned."

"Whatever happens, I just go along with it. I've learned not to be upset at the inevitable... anyway, if I still had the show I couldn't have done the museum."

Twenty years in show business have taught Debbie Reynolds not to be upset at the inevitable. Born in Texas into a poor family, she grew up in California, won a beauty contest and made her screen debut in 1949 in *The Daughter of Rosie O'Grady*. Since then she has made 30 films, including the 1951 Gene Kelly classic *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, in 1964, which she considers her best performance.

She hasn't made a picture since *How Sweet It Is* in 1968, and says the reason is the lack of good roles for women. "The men that are writing aren't interested in women and you can't be brilliant in a part that stinks."

"A lot of these movies where you get undressed and get into bed... they're just dull and boring... No I wouldn't do it even if it was a good script. But they're not short of actresses. A lot of others will do it!"



THE SPECTATORS at the Mariposa Festival are as much a part of the show as the entertainers, what with their colorful costumes and their need to be doing



their own thing. One of the best-dressed pairs there was Alanis Obomsawin and her baby Kisos, from Cut Knife, Sask. The water-cooled violinist is Bernie Jaffe.