'Old men' of folk are often big-city products

Music by Gary Mullinax

It used to be that the old men of folk music were the fellows who learned 'authentic' folk ballads in the backwoods at their mother's knee, and the young men were the ones in the cities who discovered those songs, reshaping them, adding

those songs, reshaping them, adding new lyrics.

But that wasn't always the case at the Philadelphia Folk Festival, held last, weekend near, Schwenksville.

Pa.

Time passes, and among the "old men" at the festival were Bob Gibson and Oscar Brand. Both made their mark in cities, and both acknowledge that what they do is a lot different from what the "traditional" mysteiner did.

ditional" musicians did.

Both Gibson and Brand were part
of the New York City folk scene
in the '50s, which led up to the folk
"boom" in the early part of the next
decade, when youngsters like Bob
Dylan and Joan Baez made folk perhaps the dominant form of popular

music for a while.

Actually, Brand's work in New
York goes back to the mid '40s.
Gibson, growing up in New York in
the '40s, probably got much of his
early dose of folk music from
Brand's popular folk music radio
show, which is still on.

"When I started in 1955 there were only a few people to learn from," said Gibson, who wrote songs for Phil Octs and other young folk singers in the '60s and introduced Joan Baez to the Newport Folk Pestival in 1959.
"Hearned a let from a few people."

"I learned a lot from a few people like Erik Darling and Pete Seeger. But this was before the big folk festivals.

"Those were the days of the Washington Square folk scene (in New York's Greenwich Village). Roger Sprung (who was at the festival with his Progressive Bluegrassers) used to come to the park every Sunday. And Woody Guthrie used to come by and show us things."

The folk scene was even less crowded when Brand, who also grew up in New York, began his career.

"Tknew ail the folk singers in New York then," said Brand. "There weren't very many. There were Ledbelly, Burl Ives. Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and a few others. "The left wing supported us and

The tert wing supported us and did a lot in popularizing folk music. The audience grew larger, and then one day I saw someone walk into a coffee hosse with bis guitar and I didn't know who it was: That's when I knew folk music had 'boometa'. The new popularity of folk music

The new popularity of folk music meant a certain amount of commercialization, but commercialism was in evidence even before. Gibson, for instance, spent plenty of time on the 'Arthur Godfrey Talent

Career program slated for women by NYU

NEW YORK (AP) — A program aimed at giving women the skills and experience they need to succeed in areas from which they have largely been excluded will be offered this fall by New York University's School of Continuing Edu-

Known as "Women Advancing Through Career Help" (WATCH), the program provides counseling course work and unpaid internships. It is supported by a number of corporations and is open to women who wish to change fields, enter or reenter the job market or advance in

Scouts: TV show in the '36s.

"Back then you took whatever avenue you could find,' said Gibson, who stopped touring in 1970 to do commercials and television. returning to the road only a year and a half ago 'after I started writing songs again.' And, be continued, "a lot of folk singers then, like Josh White, were playing in post bein to New York. It was only later that the folk clobs and coffee houses

opened."

Some might consider Gibson's activities to be something other than folk music, and Gibson would

agree. "Thave a hard time with the term 'folk singer," said Gibson. "I'm one of the American 'song-folk." I may do something traditional to show off my roots, but mainly I write new songs. And I was influenced by Gregorian chant and Gilbert and Sullivan as much as traditional music.

The traditional sources only know 12 songs and do them all their lives — but they do those 12 songs better than anybody. Brand, who has written theatrical musicals is, the curator of the

musicals, is the curator of the National Academy of Popular Music. He thinks that folk and pop are similar in some important ways.

"Both of them have a way of

"Both of them have a way of chronicling the daily lives of people," he said.

Ken Whiteley of The Original Sloth Band was also thinking about

Sloth Band was also thinking about similarities between folk and pop. The five-member Sloth Band specializes in rhythm & blues, gospel, country and western, blues and jazz from the '20s, '30s and '40s. The Toronto group is accompanied by the Honolale Heartbreakers, a three-woman vocal harmony group.

It's the kind of music that is often associated as much with pop as with folk, but Whiteley notes the constant influence of folk music. "There's the influence of folk music in country and western and

rhythm & blues, which cornes from gospel music," said Whiteley, who notes that the music is a living thing in the hands of the Sloth Band. "We learn the music off records, but we never play a song the same way twice. We play a song in its same idiom each time, but the members don't have an exact part

The tendency to put music into categories like pop or folk is taking its tell on Toos Bird, who per formed at the festival's Saturday evening concert and will be at The Main Point in Bryn Mawr, Pa., Sept. 14 and 15. Silfy Wizard, a Scottish group which played at the folk festival, is also on that bill.

tival, is also on that bill.

The music of Bird, a 34-year-old
white man from Malawi in Central Africa, has been influenced by
the sounds of his native land, as well
as by folk music and rock. He
learned the latter mostly in
England, where he lived from the
early 68ts to the early 70s, when he
returned to Africa for a few years.

The resulting blend is fascinating

his performance was one of the finest at the festival — but it's also unusual, and Bird hasn't had much success in getting it across to a large audience. (Columbia, however, has thought well enough of it to release two of Bird's albums.) "I'm in the process of trying to define my direction and meet my audience," said the personable Bird, who caid he isn't cure what

Gamble Rogers at the Philadelphia Folk Festival: He loves to work on stage.

approach he'll take when he goes into the studio soon to record his next album.

"Pop music is more lucrative, but I enjoy playing folk festivals more north."

Pop music is more incrative, but I enjoy playing folk festivals more than clubs. There's more communication and warmth. But a man has to make a living." Bird, who said he was disap-

Bard, who said he was distributed by pointed not to be able to participate in more of the festival's workshops — he was in one, but avidly watched others — was heartened by the fact that his latest album went quickly at the booth where the records of the festival's performers were being sold.

These days, virtually all folk musicians, so matter how far they move toward pop, find themselves on a concert stage at one time or another. Gamble Rogers, who performed at the Friday night festival concert and participated in a Saturday morning workshop, is glad that's the case.

Rogers is a singer and storyteller. He often presents his tales in the talking blues form, accompanied by his guitar. For him, working on stage is essential to the creative process.

"I develop stories on my feet, in front of an audience," said Rogers, whose tales of bizarre behavior in the American South often call to mind the work of such short story writers as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Cohnor. "The performance situation is a laboratory." Rogers went on to explain that point, and in doing so explained how

A chick emerges NEW YORK (AP) - A concave

casqued horbill chick recently emerged from its nest at the Bronx. Zoo. The zoo says this is the first time this has happened in the United States, adding. "As far as is known, Singapore is the only other zoo in the world to have reared a chick of this species."

RENAI'S RESTAURANT

the late 20th century.

"My stories are made up out of an initial incident and a series of snappers," said Rogers, who focuses on northern deorgia and north

night concert. His performance, mixing blues and West Indian

the kera accompaniment of Gamb

Konte, was perhaps the most enthu-

siastically received of the three

All 5,000 of the three-day camp-

Approximately another 3,000

to 5,000 people showed up for each

unds and featuring, for two songs.

initial incident and a series of snappers, "said Rogers, who focuses on northern Georgia and northern Florida, where he has lived. "When I have a story cooking on stage, different snappers will occur to me as I go along. I'll use something from a newspaper story, or a conversation." "Nothing is written out. It's done under heat and necessity."

The folk festival was not without its traditional old-timers. One of the highlights was the appearance of 82-year-old Elizabeth Cotten, who wrote the classic "Freight Train."

doing domestic work in the nome of misicologist Charles Seeger, father of Pete. Among the other big names at the festival were Arlo Guthrie, who performed Friday night, Tom Rush, Don McLean and Taj Mahal.

Don McLean and Taj Mahal. Rush, who is sort of the glamor boy of the folk scene, turned in a nice performance in the rain Saturday night. His mellow voice has an impressive range, and he was backed by Robin Batteau, a fine violinist, and David Buskin, equally effective on keyboards.

McLean was a bit uneven as the final act of the festival Sundaininght. He is best known for "ndairion program ple," a big seller in the pop field in the early '70s. He sang that one Sunday, but was obviously a bit bored with it and sort of zipped through it. But he puts on a fun show

RK (AP) — A concaveornbill chick recently orn its nest at the Bronx

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RAW BAR
(Clama, Shu'ray,
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ON THE HOUSE
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with workshops occuring simultaneously. It's an opportunity to learn about the music and to see the performers close up in a relaxed atmo-

There were also a number of crafts booths at the festival — 31 according to one count — including booths displaying leather work, old musical instruments, candles, tin-

Another booth offered pairs of wooden "rhythm bones" for about \$6. Throughout the festival people in the audience accompanied the music on stage by clacking those bones. Which is what a folk festival is all about.

Joni Mitchell show superb

Join Mitchell turned in one of the best concerts of the year at the Robin Hood Dell West Tuesday night in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. Her singing was first-rate, while the band she has assembled for her current tour proved to be one of the sharpest anywhere. Ms. Mitchell's latest album fea-

one of the starpest anywhere.

Ms. Michel's laters album fea.

Ms. Michel's laters album with
ten for her by the late jazzman
Carles Mingus, so there is plenty
of jazz in her current work. Even
several-vear-old classics like "Coyote" and "Black Crow" were performed jazzer than usual, though
On the new songs, Ms. Mitchell
and company tended almest toward

and company tended almest toward pure jazz, especially on "The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines," which cleaner From Des Moines, "which cleaner a long, almost dissonant sax solo by Michael Brecker.

Others in the band were Pat Metheny, one of the most highly regarded young jazz-rock ggi-tarists, Jaco Pastorius, the flamboyant regular basists for Western Percussionist Don Alias and keyboardist Lyle Mays.

One of the highlights in a show with no low points was Ms. Mitchell's performance of the hymalike "Shadows and Light" with the Persuasions, an a cappella group which was also the opening act.

Bromberg due here

Stone Balloon in Newark Wednesere a real treat.

Stone Balloon in Newark Wednesday night. For something completely different, try Kiss at them at one of so the grounds, night.



