

Michigan music for beginners

by E. Jane Westlake

You have to wonder at some of the things people will do to hear good music. Indeed, why would 6,000 perfectly sane women live for five days out in the wilderness with smelly Porta-Janes, the coldest of cold showers, and an army of hungry mosquitos? To hear some of the best women's music around.

I was one of several at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival this year to be attending this event for the first time. I discovered quickly that it was nearly impossible to attend all of the performances. (I also discovered that you are out of luck if you neglected to bring eating utensils and toilet paper with you.) There was always a show going on somewhere. Major artists played from noon until midnight and other folks stayed up until the wee hours to hear people playing in the jam tent and the after-hours cafe. Wherever there was a campfire somebody (or a few somebodies) had a guitar. Workshops from anti-racism to erotic story-telling to Buddhist lesbians were held from six in the morning to past midnight. Meetings were held in the sober support tent and in the counseling tent at all hours. A bazaar area had been set up with over a hundred booths to blow all of your money at. And . . . music? Oh, I nearly forgot.

It's hard to say who I was the most impressed with. Out of the fifteen performers I did manage to see, I can't say there was a dull one in the lot. Rhiannon, formerly the vocalist from Alive, gave a smashing performance doing mostly vocal improvisation. She later led a workshop called "Singing Your Story" drawing elements from theatre and music. It was appropriate that she was followed in

performance by Sweet Honey in the Rock. They took the use of the voice in another direction, using five women and no instrumental back-up.

The Reel World String Band caused a few impromptu square dances to occur during their night performance and then conducted an organized one during their day performance the next day. Maxine Howard gave a very exciting performance filled with surprises. At one point she invited Tracy Chapman on stage to sing with her. Yes artists sing with each other all the time, but, Maxine and Tracy? Maxie who wears black hot pants and a white tuxedo jacket and jumps around the stage and won't sing unless the audience is on its feet dancing, with Tracy in her jeans and white muscle shirt who has the corner market on shyness and modesty? They were wonderful. Unfortunately, it took a great deal of calming down to listen to Teresa Trull, who was next. The order should have been reversed on that one.

On the last day (in the rain) Debbie Fier proved that we don't have to rely on George Winston for mellow piano music. At the acoustic stage Judy Sloan did Sophie, a wonderful, old, Jewish woman, and Jan Oxenberg, led us through some relaxation exercises: "Close your eyes, take a deep breath, picture the woman who rejected you. Think about what she looked like, and think about exactly what she said to you, how you felt. You're relaxed, right?"

So, after a while you don't care about the lack of toilet paper, or the fact that the mosquitos are removing all of the blood from your body (they are, after all, female, you tell yourself). The Festival is a great place to hear great music and to be around all kinds of interesting women. When you go next August, don't forget your plate and fork, some toilet paper, a warm sleeping bag, bug spray, a truckload of friends. . . .

Art association plans busy fall

The Metro Artisans Guild, a gay art association, is off to a good start, according to spokesperson Allen Matthews. Many people have expressed interest in participating and over 40 people — photographers, framemakers, painters, sculptors, and collectors — are currently on the mailing list.

Matthews says the summer was spent pre-

paring floating exhibits and completing organizational details. Starting this fall, though, the guild will plan exhibits, gallery visits, and classes. Matthews hopes that eventually the group can form its own gallery. He projects that the art association, like the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, will promote a good image of gays in the city.

The Metro Artisans Guild meets next at the home of Mike Knowles, 2111 NE 23rd, Portland, on Sunday, September 28, 2:30. For more information, call 641-8132.

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