

## JOAN BAEZ AND THE ANTI-WAR REVOLT

Folk singing has come out of its cellars and is heading for the top of the pop charts: singers command large followings for their political views as well as for their musical skills. JAMES FOX takes a look at the movement, both here and in the United States

**T**HE small band of earnest followers who have enjoyed folk music all these years are now sharing their enthusiasm with a wider audience. Today the folk movement, spun out of an obscure semi-literary heritage, has become mass entertainment. It is a booming industry. It has produced a spate of contemporary poetry, good and bad, and some

*JAMES FOX, 20-year-old Manchester journalist, has enjoyed—and been writing about—folk music since he was at school*

rich and original musical sounds. It has even allied itself with pop music.

In America, the movement has gone hand in hand with a youth revolution, with the civil rights movement and anti-war demonstrations. Folk music, by definition, has always been associated with struggle; the songs are therefore predominantly left-wing, which suits the aspirations of American youth and the climate of nihilism on the festering campuses of the United States. Singers like Bob Dylan and Joan Baez have become the prophets

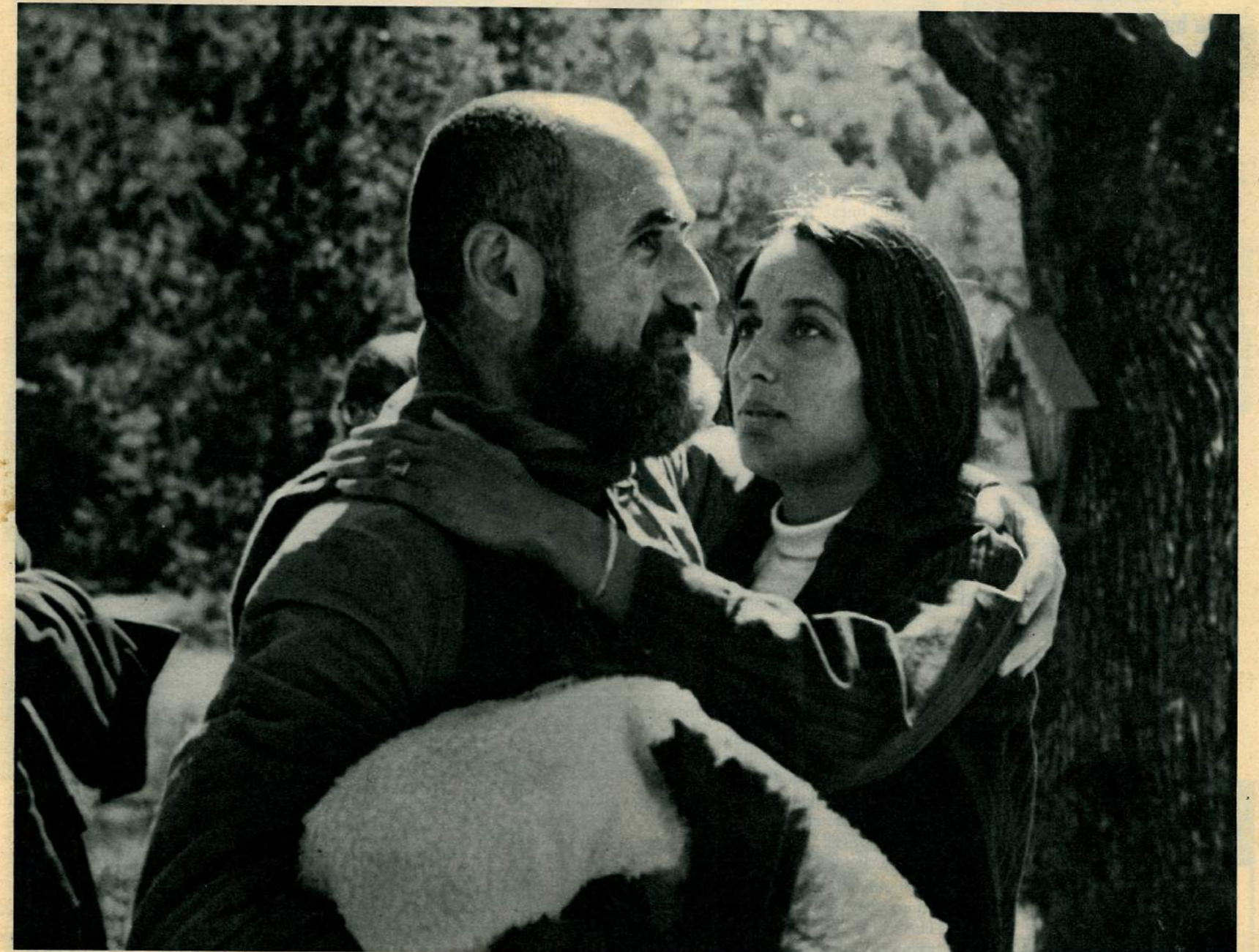
and spokesmen of a generation, and are held in awe. In Britain, their concerts were both sell-outs after three days.

In Britain, too, folk clubs have spread into every town, and a National Federation has been formed. The movement has unearthed a richness of language which has the makings of a new music-poetry tradition.

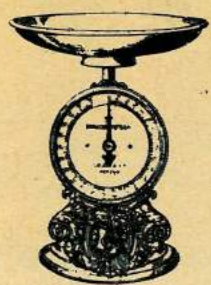
Joan Baez, the reigning queen of the movement, set the stage six years ago for a wave of popularity both here and in the United States for a form of

music which the general public had hitherto associated with school singing, *The Foggy, Foggy Dew* and a few cellar-bound Bohemians.

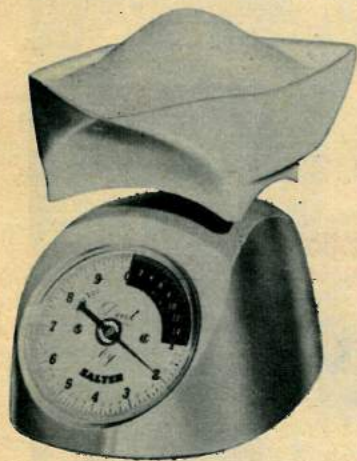
She brought it from underground and gave it a universal appeal, with her magical voice and her irresistibly gentle personality. People were first charmed by her singing, and then listened to the words of her sad, poetic songs. In a world of pop banality, they tugged at the mind with a refreshing simplicity and sincerity. Folk music was suddenly high popular entertainment. But she



JOAN BAEZ, left, has a brooding beauty which is part of her Mexican heritage and adds a sense of passionate involvement to her protest songs. With her, above, is Ira Sandperl, a former schoolteacher whom she regards as her personal guru. No longer thinking of herself as just a folksinger, she has founded, with Sandperl, an Institute for the Study of Non-Violence in Carmel Valley, where college students from San Francisco come for weekends of meditation and discussion



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AT A RECORDING SESSION Joan Baez tries out a song for her new album, to be released by Fontana later in the year. Her style is beginning to change from pure folk singing. Recently she made a rock'n'roll album directed by her brother-in-law, the late Richard Farina, and thoroughly enjoyed herself. "It's the first time I've really let go," she said

doesn't see herself merely as a working folk singer now. She has been a singer, she says, because she has an intense feeling for certain songs, pretty ones and beautiful ones—afid the feeling comes through, in the love songs, the sad songs, the murder ballads and the civil rights songs. Her appeal on stage is a deeply romantic one which lends itself perfectly to her various causes, but she has no love for "stupid protest songs" with no musical qualities. Her latest LP is a new departure—she uses electric guitars and a heavy beat. This would have been unheard of in folk circles even a year ago.

**O**N the other hand, perhaps the most sensitive interpretation of folk songs is in the traditional camp, from a singer called Judy Collins. Judy, 27, from Denver, Colorado, turned to folk music after an intensive classical music education, for its "informality, spontaneity and emotional power". She has already had a solo concert at New York's Carnegie Hall. As a folk singer, her music has the passion of Piaf without the personal drama, evoking sympathy. Her voice has a vibrating sadness, rises and falls at perfect pitch and weaves a rich tapestry around her songs. In her singing one hardly notices a time lapse between traditional and contemporary songs.

Despite all this, the most interesting things may be happening in Britain. The revival, carefully planned by song writer Ewan McColl and others, has resisted a protest boom, even though the music has reached the concert platform. This is perhaps because there



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JOAN LEADS a session of gymnastics at the Institute. Afterwards come group discussions, sometimes aimless but often intensely stimulating. "The school is dead serious," she insists. "Non-violence prepares you for the next life"

has been no hint of an age war on the British scene. In America, diatribes against the older generation have been a form of age therapy. *The times they are a-changing* by Dylan is the ultimate example. But folk clubs in Britain have none of this spite, and groups like the Liverpool Spinners and the Waterson family are entertainers with universal appeal.

Another singer who has shown how folk music, delivered as polished entertainment, can have mass appeal is Julie Felix, a 25-year-old from California who is probably the best-known of all the folk singers in Britain after her numerous television appearances (including *The Frost Report*) and sell-out solo concert at the Albert Hall. She has now made her home in this country, which she says is a better place to live, and gets much of her material from young song writers she meets at folk clubs all over the country. Although her appeal reaches every age group, she preaches civil rights and anti-war specifically to the generation she hopes will change these values. "I sing mainly to young

people," she says; "perhaps to clarify what they think."

What is emerging in Britain from the revival is a collection of new writers who are putting the Anglo-Saxon language into a song form comparable to the *chansonnier* tradition in France as typified by singers like George Brassens and Jacques Douai, whose songs follow the tradition of the troubadours of old Provence.

**A**LASDAIR CLAYRE—a poet and novelist, and Leon Rosselson—a London teacher, appeared at the Albert Hall recently in a concert simply called *The New Songs* and got a warm reception. Clayre explained: "There are so many different threads in the English language. We are being made very aware of how rich they are. Poetry has been written to be read or for the theatre, but few English poets have written poetry which fits into song form. The folk revival has brought people up against poetry to be heard, and has revived the use of vernacular speech. Individual singers now have a great creative freedom."