

EVELYN LEVISON 10/21/1967

Folk finds a friendly

home

FOR THE FIRST time in a national gathering of folk musicians in Johannesburg, the venue is as folksy as the show.

The New Folk Theatre, specially opened for the 1967 Folk-song Festival, has the informal, impermanent charm of a circus tent. Erected in record time in a hall adjoining a well-known coffee bar, scaffolding tiers rising almost to the roof, hold audiences as eager to be entertained as any aficionados of the big top.

Ingenious invention at the stage end of the hall camouflages some interesting-looking bulges, and provides not only two small, but adequate, performing areas, but also a Juliet-type balcony, used with good effect by folk-favorites Des and Dawn.

In such a setting, the atmosphere becomes charged with warmth and enthusiasm long before the show begins. Test of success, of course, is to keep response at the same high pitch until the finale.

On the whole, I'd say that on

the first night director Richard Daneel achieved this aim, though some of the performances indicated that this was due as much to the popularity of "folk" in this city, as to the talents of the artists.

Biggest lack is a dearth of good original material, particularly indigenous (Dave Marks's "Foster Gang" song, and the North Country Replacements' amusing opus about a rally around Church Square are moves in the right direction), plus the personality impact that gives this medium its biggest boost.

For my money, Father McAleer with his riotous blend of Irish blarney, and the smooth, harmonious polish of the Keith, Barbara and Andy team, gave the '67 Festival's opening show its brightest moments, and most promising start.