

VFMS Discussion Meeting (& Potluck)

February 28, 2010 5:00PM - 7:00PM

Norway House

VFMS Purpose from constitution (1986):

- “Preserve and promote Folk Music in the CRD” and to “develop and offer to all interested parties whatever programs and functions may be deemed desirable to achieve this”.

Suggested goals:

- Promote the enjoyment, performance and advancement of “Folk Music”
- Maintain and improve the vibrancy and quality of the VFMS experience
- Keep VFMS an affordable, welcoming and friendly “Folk Music” community
- Preserve the legacy of VFMS and pass it on to following generations

Current Situation:

Is there really a problem?:

- There is **no crisis** currently, but we need to evolve VFMS for the future based on trends that are emerging
- Attendance is down somewhat compared to historical levels
- VFMS still has a healthy financial cushion but it is being slowly eaten into
- Average age of attendees is increasing

Suggested Strategies:

- Raise membership rates marginally in the interim to maintain healthy finances
- Work on increasing attendance (i.e. increase promotional activities)
- Attract/engage younger audiences, performers, volunteers

Suggested immediate actions:

Funding:

- Maintain door price at \$5 to continue encouraging paid attendance
- Raise individual membership fees (current \$65, proposed \$75), this is still a great value:
 - attend once per month at door price = \$60, twice per month = \$120, every week (50 weeks) = \$250
- Raise family membership fees (current \$100, proposed \$120), this is still a great value:
 - attend once per month at door price (assuming two people attend) = \$120, twice per month = \$240, every week (50 weeks) at door price = \$500
- Try to negotiate a better deal for our venue - underway
- Distribute VFMS newsletter via email by default to reduce postage and printing costs. Printed copies would still be available at the front table and would still be mailed to those specifically requesting this method.
- Encourage new memberships (e.g. host announcements, signage at door, handouts)
- Explore Bring a Friend pass, CD, etc. raffle as a fund raiser

Attendance:

- Improve promotion (see possibilities below)
- Implement two “Bring a friend 1st time” free passes with new/renewed membership
- Encourage audience to bring a friend to introduce them to VFMS
- Specifically identify and welcome newcomers (Host and Regulars)
- Hold periodic external participatory Jam sessions and promote attendance at VFMS
- Explore a weekly warm-up jam (6:30-7:30) to enable more participation

Scheduling/Format:

- Continue weekly scheduling (consider other scheduling options only if we can't maintain/improve attendance)
- Maintain current “Open stage – Break - Feature” format

Other suggestions to explore over time based on survey results:

Format:

- Strive for more groups, less singer/songwriters, variety (Give groups and variety acts more priority for Open stage and for Bookings?)
- Pursue younger acts:
 - a) Banyan Tree guaranteed weekly open stage spot (compete for it at Banyan Tree)?
 - b) Encourage capable children, grandchildren to perform open stage?
 - c) Invite younger acts from Victoria Fiddle Orchestra?
 - d) Engage music teachers to encourage their better students to perform on open stage?
- Encourage multi-cultural acts (World beat)
- Schedule periodic panel concerts
- Explore sing-a-long nights

Promotion:

- Build the VFMS Story for Web site and Promotional activities:
 - a) Document VFMS history (i.e. 35 years, continuous, weekly live music)
 - b) Develop a Motto (i.e. "Best weekly live music entertainment value in Victoria")
 - c) Describe VFMS credentials (e.g. longest running regular music event in Victoria, main communication linkage to other folk clubs/events, VFMS features through the years – maybe try for performer endorsements, etc.)
- Seek media interviews to promote VFMS (e.g. CBC, CFUV, AM900, SHAW Daily, etc.)
- Increase regular event announcements (e.g. CBC, CFUV, AM900, SHAW, A Channel, CHEK, Monday, Time Colonist, etc.)
- Increase distribution of Posters, find and schedule volunteers to regularly post each month's poster at:
 - a) all local music stores
 - b) all "folk-friendly" cafes/bars
 - c) university (student union building)
 - d) Camosun
 - e) other folk clubs
 - f) community bulletin boards
 - g) Tourism Victoria
- Post schedule of features to Victoria Event web sites (i.e. Tourism Victoria, etc.)
- Establish a VFMS Facebook presence

Audibility/Amplification:

- Maintain "Acoustic" only approach (except in extraordinary circumstances), allow tasteful bass amp
- Develop suggested performer guidelines (e.g. don't mumble, project, engage audience, don't over-power singing with instrumentals)
- Host to provide constructive feedback to performers (maybe visible up/down sign?)
- Cut down chatter at back (Host to scold offenders)
- Explore sound focusing/enhancing stage background

Ambience:

- Over time explore options to:
 - soften current harsh lighting
 - raise the level of the stage so performers are easier to see/hear at back
 - add some decoration (flowers, etc.)