

A GENTLE REMINDER (re: SONG SWAPS)

By Steve Glickstein

There have been a few articles over the past issues describing proper etiquette at a song swap. They have been an attempt to instruct and educate all of protocol that will help make song swaps enjoyable for all. It is not a given that all automatically know what a song swap is about.

Song swaps differ from jam sessions in that the person playing the song has the floor at that time and may or may not wish others to join in. It is very difficult for one to play through a song while different accompaniments are also being played. While most do not mind a little “back-up,” please be aware of others who are also playing “back-up.” Be courteous and take “turns” with back-up. Also remember the person playing their song may not be used to an audience and might be nervous. It is very distracting when different styles are playing along at the same time.

The most important thing to remember about a song swap is that this is just what it is, a “SONG SWAP.” This means taking turns playing songs and listening when others are playing. Recently there have been some changes occurring at the BFC Open House song swaps that are detracting from the sense of community intended. It is the Club’s job to educate the members so that all experiences can be as pleasant as possible for all. It is not an effort to control but rather a gentle push to educate.

All participants attend these events to share the music, all of the music. It is not polite to sit down when it is one’s turn to play or sing and not hang around after you are finished to listen to others. No, you don’t have to sit all night, but it has become very evident the repeated commuting musicians.

Nor is it considerate to start another swap in another area excluding others. We must remember that many non-players (i.e. listeners) attend these events and when we break off in a small area to play with a few friends, others may feel alienated and unwelcome.

As far as sound is concerned, while it is true not everyone has an “acoustically conducive” room in their home, it is impolite to select an area which is not large enough to accommodate the people who came to share music. This is not a professional “gig” but rather a gathering of friends. No one will fault a musician because the acoustics at the song swap are not the best.

I am sure no one intentionally excludes others and are probably not even aware they are doing so. This is why we try to gently remind all of the proper courtesies.

We sincerely hope that this is received in the positive spirit it is intended. So the next time you are sharing music with others at a song swap, look around and take note of all who are there. See if others may wish to be included or prefer to just listen. Help make the experience warm and friendly for all. Remember, there are NO stars at a song swap, just community members.