

The evolution of a German Folk music journal

From fanzine ...



... to

FOLKER

„One of the world’s most
important Folk and World Music
magazines“

(Ken Hunt in Rough Guide to World Music, 2009)

MICHEL-Folkzeitung



- Founded 1977 as a bi-monthly fanzine by Mike Kamp in Bonn
- Target: create an independent magazine for Folk and World Music which had no space in established Pop Music journals and had no lobby in public media like German television or radio programmes
- The magazine ironically was named after the „German Michel“ a figure representing the national character of the German people, like John Bull represents the British or Marianne the French people

The challenges of editing

MICHEL-Folkzeitung was made by volunteering enthusiasts spread over Germany and beyond



MICHEL crew in 1982: front middle Mike Kamp, far left: Ulrich Joosten

The challenges of editing



- In the first decade there was no personal computer, no internet, no e-mailing, no desk-top publishing software, no scanners, no skype conferencing, no „information at your fingertips“
- High amount of freetime hours besides the regular jobs werde spent by the editors, writers and contributors
- Contact between authors and editors just by snail mail, telephone and in personal meetings

The challenges of editing



- AND: there was NO payment for articles, NO salary for editors and NO expense accounts
- JUST: Pure idealism and economic self exploitation
- Layout was done on weekend sessions after typewriting the articles in columns, cutting and pasting them into the layout sheets that were to be sent to the printing company

Evolution in the 80ies



- The magazine grew over the years and changed its name from *MICHEL Folkzeitung* to *MICHEL – Zeitschrift für Volksmusik*
- From the beginning background features dealing with traditions of folk and world music and the immanent political aspects were important part of the magazine
- More and more professional music journalists were attracted by the opportunity to publish features on the music they liked and which were rejected by established Popular Music magazines

Evolution in the 80ies



- First contacts to the Folk and World music scene in the former German Democratic Republic (Folklorewerkstatt in Leipzig) in the mid-eighties
- These contacts later triggered the collaboration of *MICHEL* editor in chief, **Bernhard Hanneken** from Bonn and **Uli Doberenz** from Leipzig. Both became directors of the **Tanz & Folkfestival Rudolstadt (TFF)**

New name, new format, new logo



- In 1989 with the January/February issue not only the name was changed to *Folk-MICHEL*, also the format grew from the small A5 size to a bigger magazine format of A4, which is the regular journal format nowadays
- A new author entered the *Folk-MICHEL* crew:
Michael Kleff, professional magazine and radio journalist

1995: 100 issues of *Folk-MICHEL*



- Issue # 2 1995 was the 100th issue, celebrated by an exclusive interview with Arlo Guthrie

Exitus after 20 years!



- In September 1997 *Folk-MICHEL* „shocked“ with the announcement that our competitor, the East Germany based *FOLKSBLATT* would stop publishing.
- At the same time *FOLKSBLATT* proclaimed on their cover that *Folk-MICHEL* published its last issue.
- What happened?

Two magazines joined forces

- After the German reunification the editors-in-chief of both *Folk-MICHEL* and Leipzig based *FOLKSBLATT* decided to join their forces and create **one** brand new magazine, professionally written, edited and layouted
- Publisher became *Christian Ludwig Verlag*
- The new magazine was run by three editors: Mike Kamp, Jürgen Brehme and Ulrich Joosten
- Editor-in-Chief became (and still is) from the very first issue Michael Kleff
- In January 1998 we proudly presented:

FOLKER! – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



- Cover story was on Ani DiFranco – a signal that the new magazine was designed to be modern, open to a young public – without being less political than before, covering the wide range from Folk to World Music and beyond

FOLKER! – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



- Today *FOLKER* is widely accepted by readers and musicians as well
- Over the years more and more professional journalists wanted to get published in *FOLKER* and contributed exclusive stories

FOLKER! – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



- FOLKER today not only covers roots based Folk and World music, but Pop/Rock/Jazz influenced music from around the globe as well
- 88 pages each issue
- 24 pages of tour schedules
- 2 pages of book reviews
- 10 pages news section
- 4 to 5 main features
- 4 concert reviews
- 1 label portrayal per issue
- 5 pages short portrayals
- more than 100 CD/DVD reviews

FOLKER! – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



- More frequently FOLKER publishes special issues focussed on a main topic, e.g. French music ...

FOLKER! – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



➤ ... Scottish music ...

FOLKER – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN

➤ ... Scandinavian music ...



FOLKER – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



- ... Irish Music etc
- A special issue about Polish music is going to be published in the end of 2012

FOLKER – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN



- Focus theme of the first issue in the 15th *Folker* volume was the 100th birthday of Woody Guthrie

FOLKER – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN

- At early state (starting 1994) we were aware of the necessity to run an extensive website to promote and feature the magazine



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying 'www.folker.de'. The page features the 'FOLKER' logo in large red letters, followed by the tagline 'Musik von hier und überall'. Below this, there are three main sections: 'Folker 2/2012' with a list of artists and a magazine cover image, 'Archive' with a list of content types and a descriptive paragraph, and 'Service' with a list of utility links. At the bottom, there is a blue link '[zur aktuellen Ausgabe]' and a footer text.

Folker – Musik von hier und überall

F Folker – Musik von hier und üb... +

www.folker.de

FOLKER

Musik von hier und überall

Folker 2/2012

Loreena McKennit
Eric Bibb
Hamish Henderson
Gilbert Beaud
Marco Zappa
und vieles mehr...



Archive

Ausgaben
Artikel
Rezensionen
Bilder
Pressestimmen

Die Archive des Folker reichen bis Ausgabe 1 vom Januar 1998 zurück! Hier findest Du umfangreiches Material über die Themen des Heftes.

Service

Termine
Anzeigen
Liederbestenliste
WMCE
Bildergalerien
Mailingliste

[\[zur aktuellen Ausgabe\]](#)

Deutschlands größtes Magazin für Folk, Lied u. Weltmusik; alle 2 Monate aktuelle Infos aus der Welt der traditionellen, akustischen, alternativ

FOLKER – DAS MUSIKMAGAZIN

- Since 2009 Folker runs a monthly radio feature on the internet radio station Byte FM hosted by Mike Kamp, Michael Kleff and Sarah Habegger

Der **FOLKER*** für die Ohren:

Alle 4 Wochen im Byte FM Mixtape
Immer sonntags von 23.00-24.00 Uhr

Mike Kamp, Michael Kleff
und Sarah Habegger bringen im
Wechsel den *Folker* zum Klingen.

Die nächsten Termine:
15.01. und 12.02.2012
(Und wer eine Sendung
verpasst, kann die im
Byte-FM-Archiv gegen eine
geringe Gebühr nachhören.)

FOLKER

Musik von hier und überall

auf **Byte**FM
www.byte.fm



Foto: Petra May

*„One of the world's most important folk and world music magazines“
(*Rough Guide to World Music*, 2009)

The challenges of editing today

- Media world has changed dramatically
- Internet publishing has a significant impact on reception
- More and more people want „information at their fingertips“
- Song lyrics, partitions (sheet music), information on songs, biographies of musicians, theory of musical styles, videos and MP3 of virtually EVERYTHING is available at ANY time in the world wide web
- blogs, tweets and social networks replace printed information

The challenges of editing today

➤ So the main and crucial question for a printed magazine will be:

- How to make a difference ?

How to flank and strengthen the print medium via the internet ?

- How to achieve a fruitful coexistence of Johannes Gutenberg and Steve Jobs ?

The challenges of editing today

- The official position of the Folker editorial board regarding the internet information overkill vs quality journalism:
 -
- We regret that „In-depth devotion to literature as a kind of brain food was replaced by a conglomerate of shattered information rudiments. The quick skimming of relevant facts replaces the slow excavation of contents.“
(Nicolas Carr: „The Shallows - What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains“)
- To beat the informational edge of the internet and to combat the concomitant complexity our publishing policy is to score by core competences like power of judgement. That means we need to publish well investigated features and deliver educated critiques instead of courtesy coverage.



Thank you!