

Review

Seamus and Manus McGuire: *Humours of Lissadell*
(Folk-Legacy FES-78).

So how does a record by a pair of Irish fiddlers, recorded in the United States, come to be reviewed in a magazine devoted to Canadian traditional music? It's not just the pervasive influence of Irish fiddle music on the Canadian tradition; it's also the fact that Seamus McGuire, one of the brothers featured on this album, is a member of the influential Ottawa-based group Hang the Piper (whose first record is also to be found in the Folk-Legacy catalogue). It's a good bet that many of the tunes on this album are going to find their way into the repertoires of aware folk musicians across Canada. And well they might, because they're good tunes, impeccably played.

Seamus and Manus McGuire grew up in a musical family in Sligo, Ireland, and were imbued with that region's fiddle tradition from an early age. They "had little option in the matter of taking up the fiddle" (according to Seamus' liner notes), and developed into excellent exponents of the tradition. They've broadened their horizons a bit, too; although Irish jigs, reels and slow airs comprise most of the tunes on this album, there's a sprinkling from elsewhere: Shetland, Scot-

land, Northumberland, the United States and Canada (the Cape Breton waltz "Seamus McManus").

Not that this is a record likely to be snapped up by the general public. The Sligo tradition (like the Canadian one) is basically melodic; you'll find few lush harmonies here, and no complex arrangements. Tasteful guitar backup is provided throughout by Terry Rudden; on one track Ian Robb lays down unobtrusive but fitting concertina chords. There's lots of instrumental pyrotechnics by Seamus and Manus, but they're never telegraphed, always subordinated to the general concept of the tune.

The doices are almost all "fresh" material, little heard on this side of the Atlantic, making the record a good tune source for players (although the brothers do a bang-up job on the standard showpiece "The Banks Hornpipe" as well).

This is not a flashy recording, but a good solid one. We need lots more of that sort.

- John Leeder

