Walk into almost any record store in Canada and somewhere, usually as far in the back as it is possible to get, mixed with country, bluegrass and east coast music, you'll find a handful of records in a section called "Fiddle." Unfortunately, some stores don't even have a section for fiddle music. Others have such a poor section that they may as well not have one at all. If you ask a clerk, he or she will probably plead ignorance. If they look in the standard reference books, they'll find very few records listed, as most of the reference books are American and only detail records released in the U.S. Fiddle music fans should not despair, though, there are a respectable number of records available. The purpose of this article is to give you some idea of the recordings that are around so that you can order them for yourself, or have your local record store do it for you.

Until the late 50's and early 60's many of the major record companies were active in recording fiddle music. But, since then, changes in musical tastes and business practices, as well as the advent of our branch plant record industry, have brought any corporate interest in fiddle music to an end. Lost in the vaults of companies such as MCA, Polygram, and RCA, are dozens of recordings by great fiddlers like Andy Dejarlis, Don Messer, Ward Allen Joseph Allard, and Graham Townsend, to name but a few. MCA has two Don Messer albums still in the catalogue: Canadian Gold (MCA 556) and The Very Best of (MCA24037). They also have an album by Isidore Soucy (CB37004). RCA has an album by Al Cherny (KEL18100) and another record with Cherny, King Ganam, and Ned Landry (CL 50027). Quality has plans to release a collection of fiddle music in the summer of '85. And that is it for the majors.

Fortunately a number of smaller commercial distributors have stepped into the gap. Holborne Records handles the Banff, Rodeo, and Celtic labels. These recordings are not new, some date back to the 30's, but the sound is more than adequate, and the performers include some of the best names in Canadian fiddling such as Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald, Don Messer, Johnny Mooring, Reg Hill, Cye Steele, Graham Townsend, Jim Magill, June Eikhard, and
Elmer Briand. A two record set, 50 Fiddle Favourites (CM 593), is highly recommended. It includes several of the above performers and comes at a very reasonable price. Holborne's recordings are too numerous to list so I would suggest that you write for their catalogue, which also lists the songs on each LP. They also have a mail order department and would be happy to hear from you.

Boot Records, long associated in most people's minds with Stompin' Tom Connors, distributes a wide variety of country, ethnic, and classical records, including some fine fiddle records. The Brownrigg line has the Cape Breton Symphony (BRGCBS 001 and BRGGMI 001), Ron Gonella (BRG 004), and Alasdair Fraser (BRG 009). Pigeon Inlet has records by Rufus Guinichard (PIP 737) and Emile Benoit (PIP 732). Records by the Maple Creek Old Tyme Fiddlers (WRC 1466, WRC 1467, and WRC 1468) and the Swift Current Old Time Fiddlers (WRC 1154, WRC 1155, GL 7803, SC8104, and SC 8105) are also available through Boot. Also of interest to fiddle fans is the Shanachie label which Boot represents in Canada. There are many recordings of celtic music on the label including fiddle records by Angus Chisholm (SHAN 14001), Bill Lamey (SHAN 14002), and Michael Coleman (SHAN 33002 and SHAN 33006), amongst others. Boot records has a mail order department and will send catalogues to those interested.

Arc Sound has a fine collection of fiddle music, Fiddler's Gold (AS 8229), featuring Al Cherry, Victor Pasowisty, Brian Barron, Earl Mitton, Carl Elliot, Bunny Petrie, and others. World Champion Fiddler Series (AS 8205) includes Graham Townsend, Ned Landry, and Al Cherry. They also have records by Ti-Blanc Richard (NG 5010), Monsieur Pointu (ABB 7052, ABC 8001, ABC 8002, ABC 8003), and the great Ti-Jean Carignan (AD 8618). They would be glad to send out catalogues. Hillcan Records has albums by Eleanor Townsend (1466 and 1490), Carl Elliot (1495), Bob Ranger (1491) and Eddy Poirier (CR 04). A full list may be obtained by writing to them.

Some of the finest recordings of fiddle music made in recent years have been on an American label, Rounder Records. They include two of Graham Townsend's best, The Fiddle (7002) and Classics of Irish, Scottish, and French Canadian Fiddling (7007), as well as albums by the Beaton Family (7011), Carl Mackenzie (7005), Joe Cormier (7004 and 7001) and Winnie Chafe (7012).

That covers most of the commercial distributors. Here are some other sources. Many fiddlers such as the Hicks Family of New Brunswick (see article on New Brunswick — this issue of Ontario — Ed.) and Ed Gyurki handle their own recordings. The University College of Cape Breton has two albums out in a projected series of Cape Breton music. Festival Records, a project of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival Society, has an eclectic catalogue of traditional and contemporary folk musicians that is certainly worth a look. It includes the Patrimoine label of French Canadian recordings. Tamanoir Records in Quebec has a series called, "Portrait de vieux Kebec", which is worth looking for. A final source, and possibly one of the best, is your own local fiddle contest. Many fiddlers bring along supplies of their own records to sell to the public.

While not a complete discography of Canadian fiddle music, I do hope this article has set at least a few people off in search of records by their favourite and perhaps lesser known performers. If I have missed any labels or sources, please write and let me know. Here is a list of most of the companies mentioned in the article. I should also add that most records are also available on cassette tape and that it should be possible to order any of the recordings referred to in the article through any of the major chain stores, such as Sam's, if you do not wish to order direct. Happy listening.

Addresses:

Holborne Records, 510 Coronation Drive, Unit 17, West Hill, Ontario M1E 4X6.

Boot Records, 1343 Matheson Blvd. E., Mississauga, Ont. L4W 1R1.


Hillcan Sales, 1145 Bellamy Road N., Unit 13/14, Scarborough, Ontario. M1H 1H5
Rounder Records, 186 Willow Ave.,
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA 02144

The Hicks Family, 157 Sussex Ave.,
Riverview, N.B. E1B 3A8

University College of Cape Breton Press, Box 5300
Sydney, N.S. B1P 6L2

Festival Records, 3271 Main St.,
Vancouver, B.C. V5V 3M6

Ed Gyurki, c/o E.G. Productions, 35 Windermere Cresc.,
Woodstock, Ontario N4S 6T3

Editor's Note:

This article was prepared before the Canadian Folk Music Society Mail Order Catalogue was available. Many of the records mentioned above are available through the CFMS service including the Rounder, Pigeon Inlet, Patrimoine, and Boot selections as well as some of the Holbourne (Celtic, Banff and Rodeo) titles (see pp. 32-39 of the Catalogue). The Catalogue also contains some other fine titles from Britain (e.g., two great Cape Breton recordings on Topic), Ontario (e.g., three Glengarry albums, two from Springwater involving the Townsends) and the US (e.g., five from Folkways, two from Philo and one from Folk Legacy). A complete list of recordings available through the CFMS Mail Order Service, and how to obtain them, is included as an article in this monograph.