

MUSICAL NOTES

As yet, no submissions on live performances have been received from the readers of the Bulletin. Feel free to send material for this column to me care of the Bulletin, so that we can have a balanced view of live performance across the country.

A recent visitor to Brandon was singer/songwriter Jon Sirkis from Boulder, Colorado. Jon frequently performs in Canada, and has another Canadian connection in that he recorded his latest cassette, 'The Wild West' in Vancouver. Several Canadian musicians took part in the recording including Daniel Lapp of Spirit of the West. Jon's live performance in Brandon was well attended, and he felt it was the most successful gig of his mini-tour up to that point. He has an extensive repertoire of humorous songs, but he prefers, if the audience is sympathetic, to perform some of his political material. He describes his music as a 'cross between Donny & Marie Osmond and Van Halen' or as 'Gregorian Rap'. His qualifications include a 'degree in Celsius from B.T.U.'. Jon's live performance includes between-song observations on various aspects of life, spiced with a gentle humour, which provide insight into some U.S. political issues in particular.

I talked to Jon after his concert and he revealed that for the last seven or eight years he has organised a September folk festival in Boulder, Colorado. The festival has usually included about 60 acts, and has been run on a budget of about \$10,000. Sadly, it may not be held this year, as there is a limit to how much Jon can contribute of his time on a volunteer basis. Jon mentioned how impressed he is with the level of funding available for music in Canada. He was on the Arts Commission in Colorado which had a total yearly budget of about \$50,000 for the whole state. So although we might grumble about the state of live music in Canada, some other places have it worse.

A new band, the Armchair Radicals, is burgeoning in Brandon. The group includes well-known Manitoba singer-songwriter Murray D. Evans, who is fresh from the acclaimed release of his self-titled tape, and button accordion player Geoff Butler, late of the band Figgy Duff. The Armchair Radicals have already performed live at a number of local venues to an enthusiastic reception. They play a wide variety of contemporary and traditional folk music, including original material, and they describe their music as 'post new-age prairie Celtic cubist folk fusion'. They will be

touring across western Canada this summer.

The Jacques Lussier band from Winnipeg have played in Brandon twice in the last few months, as well as at a number of gigs in Winnipeg. The band's lineup has altered somewhat in recent times, but it is anchored by singer/songwriter Jacques Lussier, who plays guitar and a hot mandolin, and Bill Spornitz, a mean saxophonist who also has 'his beginners permit in Accordion Sciences'. The group includes a lot of original material, both in French and in English, in their repertoire. While their original music is for listening (in my opinion) rather than dancing, these seasoned performers ensured that everyone at the Brandon Folk Music and Arts Festival association had a rocking good time at the Christmas social.

Speaking of the Brandon Folk Music and Arts Festival association, it is only by the efforts of these sterling volunteers that we are able to hear live folk music from across Canada in Brandon. This is true across the country from the St. John's Folk Music Club to Winnipeg's Red River Folk Connection and west. So volunteer for your local folk music association -- in the words of Jon Sirkis, "Going to a folk concert is more fun than football and almost as important". Live music is best!

Louise Quinn

