

The Centrefold

An interesting little newsletter crossed my desk recently. Silver Apple News is published jointly by a record label (Silver Apple Records), a violin maker (Otis A. Thomas Stringed Instruments) and a publisher of books about fiddle music (Cranford Publications). Of course its main purpose is to promote the products of these organizations, but it does so in a classy fashion, with photographs, clean design and—a bonus for fiddler customers—sample tunes excerpted from the books and recordings featured. There are also a couple of short articles in the issue I received: Otis Thomas writes about one of his old fiddles, speculating on its history, and Paul Cranford contributes a marvellously succinct but informative article on "Copyrights and Traditional Music." There's no indication as to how often Silver Apple News is published, but this issue is marked "1994/95." Presumably it's scheduled irregularly as the needs of product publicization dictate. It's free to customers of the merchants involved, \$2.00 to others, available from Cranford Publications, Box 42, North Shore, via RR#1, Englishtown, Cape Breton, N.S. B0C 1H0. [JL]



Canadian blues fans will be glad to learn about the Westcoast Blues Review, published by Andy "Blues Boy" Grigg and Diane Robertson in Victoria. The last time such a publication was attempted, to my knowledge, was the early 70s, and I'm afraid that I wasn't much taken with that one. The most recent issue of Westcoast to cross my desk is 1.4, dated April 1994, so I'm sure it's already outlived its predecessor.

This magazine is large and full. The cover article in 1.4 is on Curtis Tillman, an influential Los Angeles bassist, who worked with such greats as Big Mama Thornton, Lowell Fulson, and Little Johnny Taylor. Articles feature players of recent vintage as well as the stalwarts of earlier eras and from both sides of the color line. Reviews, of recordings, books, and live performances, amount to nearly half of the publication. The journal is full of ads for new releases, which will probably be a major enticement for many purchasers and subscribers.

Their record review section is entitled "Hot Discs," in honor of their unique policy: a release "...will not even get a mention unless it is at least of the 'very good' calibre. We're not here to slam or slag anyone's product or talent(s) so our motto will be: 'If we haven't got anything good to say, then we'll say nothing at all!'" I'd be doing a great disservice to my sainted mother, who hammered that good intention into my youthful head, if I did not at least pay lip service to it. Still, one wonders whether every good blues record can count on a review in "Hot Discs" and how readers can be sure that a record not reviewed isn't also at least "very good." Or a record not reviewed yet—and in a volatile market like the blues, where recordings can disappear with the speed of a vanishing distributor, one can lose the chance to own something if you don't buy it when it's available.

I'd have to say, as well, that I'm less and less comfortable with the idea of reviews as consumer guides, though I acknowledge that that's one function they can serve. I suppose that, sooner or later, we ought to devise a manifesto for the review section of the Bulletin, at least for our tenure at the desk. Meanwhile, I'll be interested to see how well the Westcoast policy works.

While Griggs and Robertson presumably do not have the resources that support the American Living Blues, which is, after all, published at Ole Miss (where you may remember that James Meredith first got the blues on national TV), they have offered a friendly, informative, and complete magazine, one which will only improve from a thoroughly creditable beginning. Blues fans: do yourselves a favor and support them!

Westcoast Blues Review costs \$3.50 for single issues, \$20.00 for a six-issue annual subscription. A bargain. [GWL]



A recent issue (as of this writing) of Sing Out! (39.2, Aug./Sept./Oct. 1994) comes startlingly close to being a Canadian issue: singer/songwriter Lucie Blue Tremblay is featured in the cover article, and Anne Lederman is covered in a substantial essay which covers her careers as performer and scholar. An even more recent issue (39.3, Nov./Dec. 1994) featured Ken Perlman's article on PEI fiddling, with three tunes and a sidebar discussing fiddling techniques. Unfortunately, there was a foulup in the mailing of that issue, and many Canadians will never see it! Former Society member Ian Robb is, as usual, present in his column, The British-North America Act. [GWL]



The dances during the winter months were family affairs. Everybody danced, even the children. I used to tag the men Mother was dancing with, and they were quite willing to dance with a little girl. Therefore, before I was nine years old, I knew how to dance all the dances of the time, such as waltzes, polkas, one steps, two steps, and several others, including the quadrilles (square dances, as they are called now).

Maemi Scout, *From Hoofprints to Highways* (Leslieville. Alberta)