

Reviews/Comptes rendus

ERRATA: An address correction: in the review of Kantche Kroonk at p. 35 of last issue, the address of Geghard should be "199 Avenue Road", not "1996".

The review credited to Martin Colledge [30.4, p. 35] was actually written by Nan Colledge. (The email is in Martin's name, and I jumped to a conclusion which proved to be erroneous.) [JL]

Live Performance

1997 Canmore Folk Festival

I wrote about Alberta's Canmore Festival 11 years ago (Bulletin 20.3, p. 26). It was one of my favourite festivals at that time, and that hasn't changed. The mountain scenery is still glorious, the ambiance is still laid-back small-town, the music is still mostly up-close and accessible.

This was the 20th festival, and artistic director Ken Rooks decided to mark the occasion by booking as many people from the first festival as possible, plus as many of his personal favourites as possible, plus a few intriguing newcomers. He avoided borderline-folk "draws" and hoped that the good folks of Canmore, Calgary and points around would have the good sense to support good music without hype.

It succeeded beyond anyone's wildest expectations! Of course, magnificent weather played a part. The largest crowds ever swarmed the park, on the hottest two days of the summer. Happily, the water supplies held out in the face of heat and numbers, and those other two essentials of folk festivals, food and washroom facilities, proved adequate to handle the hordes. Our personal coping mechanism against the heat was to pick a spot in the shade of the spruce trees and stay there for both days, letting the music come to us and taking pot luck. The festival is small enough that you can get to see almost everybody on the program without a mad scramble or complex timetabling.

But we were there for music. First the bad news. Canadian traditional music was almost totally absent. A couple of French songs in Hart-Rouge's repertoire, a couple of fiddle tunes during Janet Munson's backup of Lennie Gallant—that was it. And sadly, likely none of the organizers and very few of the audience were even aware of the lack. I'm afraid the level of public awareness of our music, even among "folk" music fans, is lamentably low at present.

On the other hand, there was lots of traditional music from other countries, and it was all well-received. The previously-

unknown favourites of the festival were Linda Tillery's Cultural Heritage Choir, black women from California singing African-American play party songs, field hollers, spirituals and work songs. Magnificent harmonies, transporting rhythms (mostly produced without formal instruments) and intense feeling for and understanding of their music had the audiences rapt. Calgarian Eileen McGann mostly eschewed her composed songs in favour of traditional British material from her newest CD. (I like her own songs too, but this was welcome.) And bluesman Hans Theesink caught the essence of the country blues, albeit some of the songs were his own and his group Blue Groove included a (yes) tuba and West Indian percussion as well as "maybe the world's greatest singer" (Hans's words) Terry Evans. (Yes, he's good, all right.)

Another encouraging trend: many of the singer-songwriters, notably Roy Forbes and Valdy, performed unplugged and without backup musicians. Could it be that the day of the solo singer-songwriter has not passed after all? Have musicians found the courage to let their songs speak for themselves, unbuttressed by volume and numbers? Let's hope...

I could write reams (but I won't) about the other old favourites, including Stephen Fearing, Lennie Gallant, James Keelaghan, Connie Kaldor, Cathy Miller.... The performers list reads like a "who's who" of favourite people who've found their way to Calgary folk clubs, and to the Canmore festival, over the years. Suffice it to say that nobody disappointed.

I have to mention another hit of the festival. The Arrogant Worms sang song after zany song, with no pretension, just clever lyrics, mad premises and boundless energy and good humour. And, unlike many acts, I don't think the Worms repeated a song all weekend in their many appearances.

I went to the Canmore Folk Festival expecting to have a good time. As always, I did. —JL

Videos

The Pipes, The Pipes are Calling. A film by Peter Murphy. Seabright Video Productions, Box 1801, Antigonish, N.S. B2G 2M5.

When I was approached to review this film, I was excited about the idea for a couple of reasons—not only had a friend

from Antigonish mailed me the video only a matter of days previous to the request, but also I had the pleasure of meeting Mr.

Murphy in Scotland when he was filming the Oban/Dunoon portion of the video.

This film is a must-see for anyone who has ever wondered where the pipes originated, or what the difference is between Irish and Scottish bagpipes. The viewer is taken on a journey that starts in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and continues on to Scotland, Ireland, France, Vermont, and back to Nova Scotia. Every venue conceivable is visited, right from the largest pipe band competition in the world to the smallest Irish pubs. Along with learning a bit about the origination of bagpipes, the viewer also learns that there are many many more types of bagpipes than just Irish and Scottish.

After a clip from one of the most prestigious contests in the world for Scottish bagpipes (or the "Great Highland Bagpipe"), in which Dr. Angus MacDonald is highlighted, we are taken to Ireland, where Finbar Furey is filmed giving an extremely clever and witty description and demonstration of his Irish or "Uilleann" ("elbow") pipes. We are then taken to a festival in France featuring the Hurdy-Gurdy and various other types of pipes (not all of them "bag" pipes)—in fact, we are told that over 150 types of pipes can be found in that country alone. Fascinating, especially for those who thought that all bagpipes were either Scottish or Irish!

There is a sidetrack at this point discussing the origin of the pipes, which is very informative. We find out here that, no, the bagpipes weren't the Irish people's joke on the Scots, but in fact they came from as far away as Asia. We are also told that perhaps Nero didn't fiddle at all while Rome burned—he could quite possibly have played the pipes!

The final major destination on the trip is Vermont, where clips from a festival celebrating the Northumbrian smallpipes as well as the Scottish smallpipes are featured. Unfortunately, there is one scene depicting two men playing smallpipes subtitled "Northumbrian Smallpipes", when in fact they're playing Scottish smallpipes—similar instruments in sound and construction,

but altogether different in fingering and technical style—I'm sure Hamish Moore, a leader in the manufacturing of Scottish smallpipes, wouldn't be too pleased at this, especially when the piece the two musicians are playing is Moore's arrangement of the traditional slip jig "Drops of Brandy."

Although this portion of the film is extremely well done with regard to scenery and music, I got a bit confused here—it seemed that the narrator talks about going to Vermont as the last leg of this incredible journey, but then the film somehow gets sidetracked and all of a sudden a bit from a Rawlins Cross video, featuring piper Ian MacKinnon, is shown.

The mislabelled pipes and the somewhat confusing sidetracks are minor complaints regarding this film. The scenery, information and interviews conducted are all first class—in particular I enjoyed the interview with Mr. John Walsh, maker of the recently-marketed "shuttle pipes." Mr. Walsh lives in Antigonish and has some valid comments regarding the "Cape Breton style" of playing the Great Highland Bagpipe which seems to have recently come out of the blue and into the forefront of Nova Scotia music. I strongly agree with Mr. Walsh's views, which are, in short, that, although the "Cape Breton style" places much more emphasis on dance rhythms, and technique is forfeited if it is not inherent to the rhythm of the tune, the more modern military style of playing the Great Highland Bagpipe, complete with its pipe band and solo competitions, is by no means less musical, provided the technique is done correctly.

In spite of the fact that my own background is in the music of the Great Highland Bagpipe, and this probably affected my ability to watch the film with a completely unbiased mind, I strongly recommend it for anyone with any interest in the pipes whatsoever. Even if you despise the bagpipes, the scenery of Scotland and Ireland alone is worth the cost of the video.

—Ann Gray
Calgary, Alberta

Books

Craig Morrison. *Go Cat Go: Rockabilly Music and its Makers*. Urbana and Chicago: U Illinois P, 1996. 326 pp

Penned by Montrealer Craig Morrison, *Go Cat Go* is a thorough exploration of the musical phenomenon known as *rockabilly*. What emerges in *Go Cat Go* is a first-rate account of a short-lived musical style which Carl Perkins described as "a country man's song with a black man's rhythm." Morrison presents the reader with an open definition of style, a complete investigation of rockabilly's antecedents and historical origins, an inclusive account of its movers and shakers, rockabilly's geographical variations, its demise and renewal, notes about the present and complete bibliography and discography.

Of interest is Morrison's claim that the definition of the music as rockabilly—derived as a term of contempt from *rock 'n' roll* and *hillbilly*—did not begin until two decades after its demise. Morrison leaves the definition open-ended while providing a deft history of the nomenclature. Essential to the genre is a blues structure with strong rhythm, emotion, and a wild vocal style. A superb history is given of rockabilly's growth from the

traditions of western swing, bluegrass, country boogie, and rhythm and blues.

Go Cat Go rightly finds the home of rockabilly in Sam Phillips's Sun Studios. Using the trio of guitar, bass, and drums, Phillips's recording techniques, most notably slap back echo, crystallized the style's rhythmically dense sound. Morrison argues that if there was rockabilly before Elvis, it wasn't like rockabilly after Elvis, and it may have been Elvis's concretization of the style which led to the demise of its popularity. He also demonstrates that rockabilly record labels were plagued by distribution problems and mentions other causes which limited the growth of rockabilly as a musical style. The style is also broken down into its geographical variants.

Morrison should be commended for his thorough investigation of regional communities of musicians, as he should for his account of women in rockabilly. Of equal importance is his account of the rockabilly revival. He has collected enough infor-

mation to make a fascinating read.

Morrison is able to trace a fascinating history of many of those who worked in the industry. He pays fair attention to those that have stayed on the circuit, touring Europe and feeding off the frenzy generated by nostalgia traders. Through this he provides an introduction to many little-known moments.

One can take issue with Morrison's claim that rockabilly died a death and was revived. Though this claim has some validity, it works only if you use the commercial success of Elvis as a measure. It may be that Elvis is the anomaly and that the status

of rockabilly has been constant. Perhaps Morrison should content himself with knowing that this style will not disappear and that most large centres feature performers who at least dip into the genre.

Be that as it may, *Go Cat Go* ends with a comprehensive bibliography and a discography which could keep any record collector occupied. Well recommended.

—Oisin McMahon
Calgary, Alberta

Yashinsky, Dan, ed. *Ghostwise, a Book of Midnight Stories*. Charlottetown: Ragweed, 1997. 223pp. (available in the US from August House Publications, Little Rock, Arkansas).

Have you heard the tale of the Newfoundland sealer who, facing certain death, was rescued by the ghost of his deceased father, or the story of the pack of canine cannibals who terrorized parts of Quebec in the 1930s to satisfy a farmer's wish to revenge the death of his father, or the bizarre events surrounding the schooner Onion, which mysteriously capsized one afternoon in the Bay of Fundy, and of the sailor who escaped the ship's fate because of a ghostly warning voice, or the story of a strange boy who rides the bus from Toronto to Winnipeg, disappears near Thunder Bay, and leaves only a ragged toque as a calling card, or the tale of a spectral boat which played a major role in foretelling the death of a lobster fisherman on Prince Edward Island?

All these, and many more besides, can be found within the pages of *Ghostwise*, a collection of bizarre, strange, sometimes haunting, occasionally dreamlike and thought-provoking stories that, in one way or another, take the reader beyond the normal and enter a landscape where wraiths, shadows, and uncertainties reign supreme and are the order of the day. In these tales, the realm of sunlight, everyday experience and the rational world give way to a place which, as the Irish playwright and story writer Lord Dunsany so aptly put it, takes us over the hills and very far away, to a strange land beyond the fields we know.

Like *The Next Teller*, Yashinsky's previously edited story collection, *Ghostwise* succeeds on several levels. First, it shows the ongoing vibrancy and continued strength of the storytelling scene across Canada from the Maritimes to Vancouver Island and from the cultural mosaic that is Toronto to the remote Yukon. The tales in this anthology were heard and collected on traplines in the Arctic, at storytelling festivals all across Canada, in small town shops, in Newfoundland outposts, at elders' gatherings on the Pacific Coast, and in the nation's large urban centers. The tellers represent a true cross section of Canadian society and come from numerous walks of life: technical engineers, tribal

elders, folk musicians, educators, librarians, published authors, lobster fishermen, and many more.

The tales themselves represent some of the very best of the Canadian cultural mosaic. These stories are Jewish, Slavic, Scottish, Irish, Jamaican and African, Indian and Filipino, Nootka and Tlingit, Québécois and Acadian, British from the Maritimes and the Ottawa Valley. If this collection celebrates the world, it also celebrates and acknowledges the very best in the storytelling community from one end of Canada to the other. A list of some of the contributing tellers demonstrates that these tales come from some of the best raconteurs and yarnspinners north of the border today: Johnny Moses, Alice Kane, Helen Porter, Tony Montague, Jim Strickland, Dan Yashinsky, Chris Lindgren, Gale do Vos, Ray Gordezky, Ted Stone, Theresa Doyle, Mike Burns, Rita Cox, Norman Perrin, and Sharon Short.

The stories in this collection are grouped into five broad categories: Tales of Heart and Horror, *Shhh* Stories, Stories of Crossing Over, Tales of Maximum Nightmares, and Bone Stories. The reader will encounter the gruesome Nootka bogeywoman who frightens indolent and miscreant children into the proper path of behavior, the demonic female *No Pair-a-bow* from Japan, the sinister *Fox-faery* from China, the ghostly *Duppy Bird* from Jamaica, and the nocturnal *Mananangal* from the Phillipines, as well as the shadowy *Old Woman of the Woods* from the Ottawa Valley and the demonic *loup-garoux* ghost from Quebec. In one rather unusual tale, a newsboy delivers daily papers to a resident of a graveyard, and in another, a woman returns from beyond the grave to take inexorable vengeance upon the man who stole her wedding ring the night he killed her. To be certain, for those members of the chill and fright fraternity, of which group yours truly cheerfully admits card-carrying membership, who love these sorts of tales, there are ghosts, chills, shivers, and grisly denizens aplenty to satiate even the most fanatical fan of this genre.

—Robert Rodriguez
NYC

Margaret Dunn. *MacEachern's Collection: The Music of Dan Hughie MacEachern, Vol. II. RR#7*, Antigonish, N.S. B2G 2L4

This modest yet polished book includes 170 tunes of Dan Hughie MacEachern, a fiddler from Queensville, Nova Scotia,

published by his niece, Margaret Dunn. The book is modest in design, unpretentious in its presentation, yet charming, well laid

out, and brimming with good tunes.

The book contains a family tree going back four generations to MacEachern's Scottish ancestors who migrated to Nova Scotia. Margaret's "Family Profile" is very interesting and informative, covering Dan Hughie's history from birth in 1913 to the present with many anecdotes. During his long playing career (cut short in the mid-'70s by Parkinson's Disease), Dan Hughie played countless dances, ceilidhs, festivals and other "musical marathons", and appeared on CBC-TV a number of times. He played with the likes of Dan R. MacDonald, Buddy MacMaster, Winnie Chafe, Teresa MacLellan, Angus and Cameron Chisholm and many brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors who also played the fiddle.

In 1975 he published the MacEachern Collection, Volume

Ken Perlman. *The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island: Celtic and Acadian Tunes in Living Tradition*. Mel Bay Publications Inc., #4 Industrial Drive, Pacific, MO 63069-0066, USA

The cover of this fine book explains it all: "Over 425 reels, jigs, set-tunes, waltzes, marches, strathspeys, and airs transcribed from field recordings of traditional fiddlers with extensive explanatory notes and capsule biographies of nearly sixty Old-Time players."

Ken Perlman is a noted ethnomusicologist and folk musician, and the author of several other instructional books, including "Clawhammer Style Banjo", "Fingerstyle Guitar" and "Traditional Dance Tunes for Acoustic Guitar." Several years of meticulous research, recording and transcribing have resulted in this exhaustive and wonderful book on the fiddling of Prince Edward Island. Perlman went to PEI in 1989 to stay with Dan Gillis, who had told him he would likely meet a few fiddlers. After several meetings and informal jam sessions, Perlman says, "I had just met more expert fiddlers in the last five days, than I had encountered on my travels in the States in the last five years!"

Obviously inspired, he turned his attention to meeting fiddlers, documenting their various styles and histories and, over the summers of 1991 and '92, recording many of them playing their favourite tunes. While no book could claim to represent all the repertoire of a people, this one must surely capture the great bulk of popular and obscure tunes played on the Island.

The 34 pages of text at the front of the book contain a concise, well-edited wealth of information on the fiddling and extensive notes on the format of the sheet music pages. He covers the history of PEI fiddling and fiddlers, noting that the "Island fiddle sound reflects directly on the subtle rhythmic nuances of square and step dancing." He covers the regional and individual styles of the counties of PEI. He discusses the nuances of technique that make Island fiddling unique, various graces, bowing ornaments, and double stops recalling Scottish bagpipe drones and fingering.

The pages on the format of the book show the great care taken with transcribing the tunes exactly as played. He notes, however, that the same tune will be played slightly differently by different fiddlers, by the same fiddler on different occasions and even by the same fiddler during the same sitting, the addi-

tion of graces or small improvisations being quite common.

1, consisting of 108 tunes. It was the first book of Cape Breton tunes published since 1940. For MacEachern's Collection, Volume 2, Margaret enlisted music teacher Stan Chapman to go over each tune note by note with Dan Hughie to ensure their complete accuracy. Jackie Dunn, another wonderful fiddler from the area, proofread the music and typeset the text. All in all, a fine effort.

The tunes are split amongst airs, marches, strathspeys, reels and jigs. Dan Hugie is a fiddler of the Cape Breton tradition and a great writer in the tradition. Anyone with an interest in Cape Breton fiddling would do well to add this book to their collection.

—Gord Fisch
Regina, Saskatchewan

tion of graces or small improvisations being quite common.

Perlman struggles in a section called "Pitch and Modes" to categorize the tunes into various modal scales. His analysis does result in a good presentation on accompanist patterns. One difficulty centres on tunes that he hears going to the 2 minor (for example, from an A chord to a B minor). On the Island, the fiddler will often play the fourth scale note quite sharp and Island accompanists will play a major 2 chord. He leaves it up to reader to experiment.

Perlman notes that Island fiddlers pay little attention to tune names, obviously a frustration for the collector! He includes one reel titled "Names Escape Me," with the note, "Named by Kevin Chaisson to tweak those who continually request tune titles."

The tunes themselves cover many bases in type, age, popularity, origin and so on. A few of the transcriptions become cluttered with the many grace notes, double stops, pointers to play slightly sharp or flat, and so on. However, every tune is faithfully represented, and includes origin, player and often an explanatory note. The tunes are ordered by type (reel, jig, &c.), then by key, often with the most popular first or grouped by theme (Scottish, Cape Breton). An alphabetical listing appears at the front. The book also contains many pictures of Island fiddlers, which adds to the feel of familiarity.

My only complaints are few and minor. The typeface used for tune titles I find too stylized, not making for easy reading, and the whole book could use another 100 pages to spread out the layout of the text and sheets, which would improve readability. However, the cost would then rise from the \$19.95 cover price (this may be more in Canada—it doesn't state whether this is a U.S. or universal price).

For sheer quantity (425 tunes), the book is a great value. Perlman's book has quality, quantity, integrity and impeccable research behind it. For any fiddler interested in Maritime tunes, I highly recommend it.

—Gord Fisch
Regina, Saskatchewan

Ken Perlman. *Traditional Dance Tunes for Acoustic Guitar*. Mel Bay Publications Inc., #4 Industrial Drive, Pacific, MO 63069-0066, USA

This book of "Irish, Scottish and American Fiddle Tunes arranged for Fingerstyle Guitar" is a re-release of Ken Perlman's first book, *Fingerpicking Fiddle Tunes: Traditional Dance Music Arranged for Finger Style Guitar*, first published in 1978.

When the book first came out, playing tunes with finger-picking was relatively rare. Of course, Doc Watson and many others could flatpick tunes like crazy, but few had applied the techniques of "pattern picking," fingering the melody on the treble strings over an alternating bass, to danceable fiddle tunes. Ken is justifiably proud of his system of tablature. "By including rhythm notation, being careful about measures, upbeats and downbeats, and by making a special effort to represent an arrangement precisely, this book succeeded...".

New in this edition is a companion CD disk attached to the cover. I seem to remember the first edition having a separately sold cassette. The original recording had been lost, so Ken had to re-record (in some cases re-learn!) the 31 tunes.

The tunes covered are all popular in the common American fiddle repertoire, and most are well known in Canada. For example: "Angeline the Baker," "Arkansas Traveller," "Drowsy Maggie," "Fisher's Hornpipe," "Haste to the Wedding," "Old Joe Clark," "Whiskey Before Breakfast." Ken supplies a thorough explanation of his tablature, the finger styles and techniques used and the origin of the music. Each tune is written in tablature and regular sheet music and played at moderate to slow speed on the CD, which is very well recorded. Several photos of old time players, graphics and notes on the tunes complement the music. A bibliography and discography round out the book.

I had a copy of the original edition (loaned out long ago), and learned a few of the tunes. For a budding guitar player, it opened up the world of fiddle tunes to me. For that I am forever grateful, and I trust this edition will do the same for another generation of players.

—Gord Fisch
Regina, Saskatchewan

Recordings

Bob King. *Space to Run*. Turtle Records. Armchair Publishing, 581 Cathcart Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3R 0S6.

I have been an admirer of Bob King as a songwriter and performer since about the first time I ever heard him. If my memory is right, that was at the Winnipeg Folk Festival some time in the early 80s, and he was singing "Sandwiches" on the main stage. He has an understated way about him and a fine and honest sense of humour (if that makes sense) which you can't help but like. I know him best through his children's music. *Space to Run* is my first exposure to him outside that mode.

The recording is primarily country music interspersed with Cajun flavours and a bit of jazzy blues. The imagery in his lyrics is clear and topical, there's a fair amount of variety in the music (at least from track to track), and the band he has put together, Royal Flush, is as good as you'll find anywhere in this genre. The record conveys a sense of happiness and contentment; it's nice to see Bob still has his quirky, self-effacing humour.

The title track is a slick country rock number about a guy who gets away from the modern urban rush by metaphorically running free in the wide open spaces, like the prairies around Winnipeg. The band is very tight on this tune. I like Daniel Koulack's banjo whenever I hear it, and it really adds to the sound, albeit in the background on this first track. The second track, "The Dance of Life," is also upbeat, but with a distinctly Cajun feel. The message: no matter what stage of life you are in, you can do the dance of life. The refrain goes, "Shake out your troubles, stomp out all your cares. The dance of life is good for people everywhere." This is happy stuff! "Hey Look at Me" follows. It's upbeat as well, but with a bit of a cutting edge. The lyrics are a commentary on how many people do things for the attention they receive. This song made me a little nervous, with

its reference to the reviewer who trashed the play just for the attention it brought him. In the end, the tables turn on Bob and his band, as they are the ones after attention, asking everyone to "Hey, look at me!"

The pace slows with the love song "Rainbow at the End of my Ride." "Home Game" is musically very similar to "The Dance of Life," and I found its theme somewhat similar to that of "Space to Run." When you get to "Awesome Dude," you'll know it! I right away thought of a 1970s western movie theme. It's lighthearted, almost cornball humour. "Master of Illusion," "Out of Season," and "Not I" are all clearly in the country genre. "The Bottle's Empty" is the most striking musical and lyrical divergence, accentuated by Wally Larsson's sensitive and tragic saxophone. The tune seems to be about the final loss of a friend, but unfortunately there was nothing lyrically gripping.

The record immediately jumps back to a lighthearted tune called "Workingman's Prayer," with someone wondering why he has to work so hard when "Bob King?—Why, he just sits and plays the guitar." The second-last track is a country hymn chorus provided in response to the conversation between a dad and his son. The verses, I think, are meant to lighten the message, "There ain't nothing that God can't do." I found the last track, "Isabelle," the most intriguing. It's a simple love song that could have been written any time in the last, say, 75 years, but it struck me as the most original song on the album. The accordion adds a nice touch.

—Mark Wonneck
Calgary, Alberta

Brakin' Tradition. Presence in the Past. CD-09050. Brakin' Tradition, PO Box 381, St. Peters, N.S. B0E 3B

Yes, there are some hoary chestnuts on Brakin' Tradition's *Presence in the Past*—"Star of the County Down," "Sam Hall," and, god help us, "Brennan on the Moor"—but there's also some terrific original material, and the band's "New Country" approach to their music and the album's clean production values gives even "Brennan on the Moor" a bit of a new lift.

The basic instrumentation is acoustic guitars, electric guitar, bass and drums, and the band provides fine vocal harmonies throughout. But the heart of their sound is Cyril MacPhee's tremendous lead vocal delivery and the tasty fiddle and mandolin playing provided by Ray Legere. The latter's not so surprising, perhaps, since Legere is apparently a five-time winner of the Eastern Division Bluegrass Awards on both instruments.

I don't want to downplay the contributions of the rest of the band, who do a great job of providing the solid framework that showcases MacPhee and Legere, but on this recording, if not in concert (I can't tell, not having seen them live), the pair are

what immediately catch the ear and keep you listening.

Highlights of the album for me were the opening cut, "Joe Neil," Arnold Sampson's "Summers in the Country," and the two songs by David Stone that close the set. They provide glimpses into the Cape Breton experience, real stories set against melodies that call up images of the sea, the rugged coastline of Nova Scotia, and the people who call that landscape home. The old traditional "Bonnie Bessie Logan" gets a fine workout as well, and I'm sure that even Stan Rogers would be pleased with their version of "The Jeannie C."

As for those hoary old songs mentioned in the opening paragraph, I might have heard them more times than I care to remember, but the band had me singing along with them anyway, so they must be doing something right.

—Charles de Lint
Ottawa, Ontario

Will Millar. Celtic Reverie. CHACD 047. Chacra Alternative Music Inc., 3155 Halpern St., St-Laurent, P.Q. H4S 1P5

Will Millar.

The name should be familiar. This is the same man who inflicted Shel Silverstein's "The Unicorn" upon us via his old musical vehicle, The Irish Rovers, a song so connected to the "Irish experience" in North Americans' eyes that I can't count the times I've been playing traditional Irish music somewhere, only to have a drunk come up and demand, "Why don't you play a real Irish song...like 'The Unicorn'?" Sigh.

But it's not Millar's fault the song struck such a chord. It helped sell eight million albums for the band, gave them their own TV show (remember what the theme song was?), and generally introduced a lot of people to Celtic music—some few of whom might actually have gone on to explore other, more traditional practitioners.

And Millar obviously has a genuine love for the music. It's true he projected a "party hearty" attitude for some 30 years while he was with the Irish Rovers, but the Celts have always been able to look beyond their troubles to find a smile, and this new project is about as far removed from "Wasn't That A Party?" as Guinness is from a Bud Lite.

What he's done for this album is to continue on with the thematic impulse that fueled his previous release, *The Lark in*

the Clear Aire [reviewed in the *Bulletin*, 30.3, p. 42]. *Celtic Reverie* is another collection of traditional Irish airs played mostly on whistle, harp, guitar, fiddle and a dronal sound which might be strings, might be something sampled on a keyboard—it's hard to tell from the liner notes. The tunes are thematically grouped, cut by cut, so "The Women of Ireland" contains "Rosheen Dubh," "The Women of Ireland," "Star of the County Down," and "Suzie Maguire"; "A Terrible Beauty" is made up of "Boolvogue," "The Foggy Dew," and "Valley of Knockanure"; and so on.

There are no real surprises here, but it's a lovely, quiet album, and should readily appeal to fans of the quieter moments on albums by the Chieftains, or any of those myriad New Age albums with "Celtic" in the title that have begun to appear with increasing regularity. The difference between the latter and Millar's work here is that he's not stretching out these beautiful old airs with New Age twiddling and moody, directionless accompaniment. Instead he plays them straightforwardly, letting the beauty of the music speak for itself.

And that it does, most evocatively.

—Charles de Lint
Ottawa, Ontario

Oliver Schroer. Whirled. Big Dog BCD9302CD. Big Dog Music, 589 Markham St., Toronto, Ont. M6G 2L7

Oliver Schroer's *Whirled*, released in 1993, is one of the most ambitious, inventive and imaginative "fiddle" albums you're ever likely to come across. (Schroer actually calls this *violin* music, but the CD's tunes and rhythms give it a valid passport into *fiddle*-land.) But don't expect "St. Anne's Reel" or "The Butterfly." This music is all composed, and for the most part arranged, by Oliver Schroer.

Oliver Schroer has a variety of musical backgrounds. He's been a winner at the Shelburne Fiddle Competition, and some-

explored Métis and Bulgarian rhythms and a wide variety of traditional musics. He was also a philosophy major. He seems to draw on all these things in *Whirled*, and has produced a fascinating, free-ranging CD.

This is bold music, not necessarily for the purists. Most of the "tunes" have odd metres reminiscent of Bulgarian dances. It's worthwhile to remember that much of Canadian fiddle-dance music (in Newfoundland, Quebec, the Prairies) was built on

odd-metred local variations on Anglo-French tunes, which today are too often rendered only in their "straightened-out" 4/4 incarnations.

Oliver Schroer's music has a "Canadian" perspective in its mix of the wide diversity of world cultures that rub shoulders in downtown Toronto where he lives. There's an impressive lineup of musicians, including pianist Casey Sokol, master South Indian drummer Trichy Sankaran, Nexus member Bob Becker and vocalist Michele George, among others, as well as Schroer's own excellent and multi-talented band.

The opener, "Into the Sun," is a cheerful melody that starts in 5/8, which gets mixed with an unusually-accented 4/4 and then moves to even more entertaining things. The title track alternates between a peppy running melody and a spacey, free-form, atonal jazz-flavoured segment. These textures may be too contrasted for some, but the cut gives a good indication of the range of things to come.

The next two tracks bring world percussion into the mix, both featuring Trichy Sankaran along with an ever-changing and always interesting instrumental mixture (including Uilleann pipes, marimba, hurdy-gurdy, &c.). And the additive rhythms are effective but always challenging. Two of the tracks, "The Humours of Aristotle" and the Carlos-del-Junco-harmonica-flavoured "The Humours of Plato," reflect Schroer's background in philosophy.

Then things start to get even stranger, with a chain-

Daniel Janke. In A Room. Scratch Records. PO Box 5381, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 4Z2: Festival Distribution, 1352 Grant Street, Vancouver BC V5L 2X7 [toll-free mail order 1 800 633-8282]

Daniel Janke's *In A Room* is an evocative, emotive exploration of exotic musical styles. He embellishes his jazz piano roots with an unpretentious mixture of diverse world music influences. Principal among these is African *kora* music. The *kora* is a stringed instrument that has both an endearing, sometimes haunting sound and a long history of aural transmission in regions of West Africa. Janke's travels in Africa have nurtured a fascination with this instrument. He takes the mysterious *kora* and infuses his own unique sensibilities—bending the sound in ways that draw one in for a closer listen.

The musical twists are aided by an impressive grouping of stellar musicians. These include, among others, Colin Linden on guitars, George Koller on bass, Rick Lazar and Alan Hetherington on percussion, Ron Allen on flute and sax and everyone's favorite cross-cultural violin impresario, Hugh Marsh. Janke

Rufus Guinhard. *Fathers of the Newfoundland Fiddle, Volume I*. Pigeon Inlet Productions, Box 1202 St Johns Nfld A1C 5M9

Rufus Guinhard (1899-1990) is one of the few modern Newfoundland fiddlers to become widely known outside of his native island. He grew up in Daniel's Harbour, in a francophone section of the island's west coast, and earned his living (according to the relatively sparse liner notes) as "a fisherman, logger, trapper, carpenter [and] river warden". For many years, he played extensively for dances along the west coast, from "Sally's Cove to Flower Cove," and "learned and retained many of the old tunes played in these communities."

gang-blues-styled "Early in the Morning," with vocals by Michele George, opening into the Central-Asian-flavoured horse-rhythmed "Irkuzan." Visions of the steppe appear before your eyes as David Travers Smith's "pedal trumpet" and "trumpet cloud" seem to take us into equine-rock-techno territory. (You need a lot of hyphens to describe this music.)

This segues into the most ambitious of the album's 13 tracks, perhaps not for the folksy-at-heart, but worth the ride for the adventurous. "Gurka's Retreat" is a programmatic fantasy Schroer calls "a polluted river of noise," describing "the aftermath of battle" and "something so terrible" that even the hardy Gurkas are forced to retreat. In extreme contrast after this, "Sit By Me" is a long, beautiful melody set in a rich and warm electronically-enhanced.

The rest of the CD proceeds in much the same wild and wonderful manner. Almost all of it works very well and bears repeated listening, although I find "Christmas With Poncho/Last Call" disperses the energy and the mood a bit with its wayward flow and party ambience.

All in all, I highly recommend this CD. It may be strong medicine for traditional taste buds, but it's full of excitement for the musically adventurous. The production, mix and sound (all by Schroer) are first-rate.

—Jim Hiscott
Winnipeg, Manitoba

himself joins in on *kora*, prepared piano, and accordion.

If the *kora* influences are principal, they are certainly not exclusive. There are Middle Eastern pulls on the title track, Mediterranean turns—aided by the irresistible lure of the well executed clicking of shoes—on "Spanish Boots," and, finally, moments on "Chorale 1&2" that evoke the intriguingly beautiful Gamelan music of Bali that was popularized in the West by Canadian musicologist and composer Colin McPhee. It is this cross-pollination of carefully selected influences that makes *In A Room* such a compelling musical proposition. And it is the attention to detail and beauty of delivery that makes the concept such a success. This is a highly recommended recording.

—D.D. Cebuliak
Bragg Creek, Alberta

This CD—which was first recorded in 1981—definitely represents a master fiddler at work. The playing is clean, rapid and superbly rhythmic, with impeccable phrasing and a unique personal voice. The quality of the recording and mastering is excellent as well, and just about every note is crystal clear. In one especially nice touch, we hear Guinhard's voice from time to time reciting nonsense lyrics to various tunes.

Clearly this is a far different style from those played across the Gulf of St. Lawrence by the fiddlers of Nova Scotia, Prince

Edward Island and New Brunswick. For one thing, the centre-piece of playing in these latter styles is the classic Scottish- or Irish-based reel; for Guinchard this kind of tune is noticeably absent. The one classic-type reel on the recording, "Flowers of Edinburgh," is played almost as an afterthought, with little feeling or definition.

Assuming that this recording is a representative sampling, Guinchard's repertoire centers mostly on very well-phrased and rapidly-played jigs (substantially faster than those played in the Scottish or Irish traditions). Some of these jig melodies are absolutely fascinating; others, like "Parsons Pond Jig" (AKA "Behind the Bush in the Garden"), are derived from common-place tunes in the Celtic repertoire.

On many of these cuts, Guinchard displays the older fiddlers' tendency to drop beats or add them to various parts of a tune, thereby creating irregular measures. There are some other tunes on the recording, however, such as "Uncle Harry's Out of Shape" and "We are a Set of Jolly Jolly Lads," where irregular measures seem structural to the tune. On closer listening, these tunes are actually based on the principle of using measures of different length. This principle of melody construction is almost

Jim Payne and Fergus O'Byrne. *Wave Over Wave*. O2 50440. Sing-song, PO Box 6371, Stn. C, St. John's, Nfld. A1C 6J9

"Wave Over Wave" (in addition to being the title of this fine album) has become almost the signature song of one of Newfoundland's finest, though perhaps least appreciated, exponents of traditional singing, Jim Payne. Jim has immersed himself in the culture and musical style of his home through many years of coacting with a pantheon of "Newfie" musicians, not the least of whom was the late, great Rufus Guinchard. In a quaint turn of events, the younger man became almost a mentor to the elder.

On this recording Jim has allied himself with another wonderful singer and musician, Fergus O'Byrne, who I would venture to suggest hails originally from Ireland, though I stand to be corrected on this point. I mention Jim first purely because I have had the previous good fortune to have met him and shared his music, but that is to take nothing away from Fergus! From the evidence of this album, Jim and Fergus are a highly talented pair of "separate but equal" singers and multi-instrumentalists. They bring an obvious love and affinity for traditional song to this finely-balanced though varied collection, and their individual contributions mesh seamlessly to produce the impression of a

[Some readers will remember Fergus O'Byrne as a member of *Ryan's Fancy*, the Irish group transplanted to Newfoundland in the 60s, if memory serves.—JL]

Tamarack. *Leaving Inverarden*. Folk Era Records, 705 S. Washington St., Naperville, IL 60540-6654, USA

Tamarack has been described as a musical legend in Canada, with some justification: they have been around in different combinations of members for over 18 years, they have a reputation for being prolific songwriters, and their genre is singing and playing about early and contemporary Canadian history. The group is currently composed of James Gordon (an original Tamarack member, multi-instrumentalist/vocalist), Alex Sinclair

entirely absent from the post-17th-century Scottish and Irish repertoire, but it was quite common in Western Europe prior to the baroque era. It is natural to ask, then, whether these tunes represent a throwback to the music brought to Newfoundland in its earliest days of settlement.

My one problem with this recording is the nature of the accompaniment, which was overdubbed by Kelly Russell in 1995. While Russell's selection of harmonies is generally effective and interesting, he has adopted a very sparse style of playing punctuated by strong rhythmic accents. I found myself constantly distracted from Guinchard's fiddling by this kind of rhythmic treatment, which might have worked much better if it were presented along with a second backup instrument that provided a more rolling attack.

A booklet with notation by Kelly Russell for all the tunes on the recording is available from Pigeon Inlet Productions. This notation is sufficient to get you more or less in the ballpark when used in conjunction with the recording.

—Ken Perlman
Arlington, Massachusetts

much larger group, using only the most sparing touches of overdubbing technology. The overall sound is highly reminiscent of The Dubliners in some their more restrained moments—and none the worse for that.

As well as the aforementioned "Wave over Wave" (by Jim Payne and Janis Spence), two other modern songs here are Jim's "Rig Worker's Alphabet" and Alistair MacGillvary's "Cape Breton Silver." Included in the excellent mix of traditional songs of sea and shore are some of this reviewer's personal favourites, such as "Jolly Roving Tar," "Bound for St. Peter's" ("Goodbye, Fare Ye Well"), and "a newly-discovered favourite", "Duffy's Hotel."

All of the material here is well served by excellent performers who know their stuff, and the recording quality and production values are second to none. *Wave Over Wave* should be a treat for the academic, the enthusiast and any interested listener. It certainly is for this writer!

—Tom Lewis
Salmo, British Columbia

(with Tamarack 11 years, guitar/mandolin/vocals), and the newest member, Molly Kurvink (vocals and bass). *Leaving Inverarden* is their 11th recording. On it are songs about the struggles and triumphs of fur-traders, ironmasters, furniture makers and tugboat operators, to name a few.

Tamarack take Canadian history and breathe life into it through their music. Twelve of the thirteen songs on this re-

ording have some basis in history, and in fact all are written from the perspective of someone living during the event or period. The thirteenth is about making maple syrup, which just happens to be an activity that spans history to the present. Most of the tracks are about events that occurred or were rooted in Ontario and Quebec, which is not surprising given that the trio is based in Guelph. Gordon penned seven of the songs on the album, Sinclair wrote five, and one ("Le Sergent") is traditional.

I quickly developed favourites on this record. "Leaving Inverarden" was one of these. The song is filled with the anger and despair felt by John MacDonald at the end of his life, when he realized that he could no longer enjoy the fur-trading adventures of his youth. The line in the chorus "I believe my heart and I have parted" captures the message very well. "The Ironmaster" is also compelling, with its steady droning beat mimicking the clang of the hammer. "The Banks of the Rocky Saugeen" is about a mother's grief at losing her son, who was

Bourne, Schuld & Stamer. *No Special Rider*. BSCD 97001. Blue Street, 78 Malta Place, Vancouver, B.C. V5M 4C4; Festival Distribution, 1351 Grant St., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2X7

An interesting idea: take three musicians for whom the country blues of Mississippi John Hurt, Booka White, &c., are a part of the foundation they've built their careers on, put them in a recording studio with an assortment of old guitars and old microphones, and see what happens. It works, for the most part, conjuring memories of early Koerner, Ray & Glover recordings in its live-off-the-floor without overdubs approach. Hans Stamer's music has always had a raw, bluesy side, both vocally and on harmonica; Bill Bourne's singer-songwriter stance has always given a big nod to John Hurt, Willie McTell and others. So it's extremely interesting to hear these guys work their way through a set of the music that inspired them.

Recorded in different combinations—Bourne or Stamer on vocals, all on guitars on various tracks, Stamer on harmonica, knee slaps, scat vocals, &c., Bourne on foot, and Schuld on foot

Dave Harris. *Island Street Singer*. MMMCD008. Malahat Mountain Music, Box 30033, Saanich Centre PO, Victoria, B.C. V8X 5E1

A fixture in the clubs and pubs of Victoria, and on the streets busking for the tourists, Dave Harris brings more than 20 years' experience to this, his first (I think) CD outing. Not one to run from hard work, he produced, engineered and mixed this "live in the studio" recording himself, and he performs on "vocal, 6, 12 and steel body guitars, fiddle, harmonica, foot drums and various horns, whistles and bells." Whew! Although Doug Cox, in the liner notes, compares Dave to one-man bands like Jesse Fuller and street singers such as Snooks Eaglin once was, I am put in mind far more of a one-man Holy Modal Rounders. He covers the entire pantheon of pre-electric blues from W.C. Handy to Robert Nighthawk and Robert Lockwood Jr. (the man has truly done his homework), plus offering up eight originals on this 24 (!) song disc, but there is a fine sense

swept away in the spring flood. The melody is haunting and memorable. "Till the Stopwatch is Gone" is probably my favourite, if I had to pick one. The song eloquently describes how the advent of assembly-line manufacturing changed the lives of those who previously took great pride in their craftsmanship. The song has particular relevance today, when there seems to be a tendency to pursue economic efficiency at almost any cost. The recording ends with "The Huntsville Fire." This is a great rousing tune about a fire that destroyed a town. Gordon's vocals are a standout on this one.

Although the other tracks were less memorable, related to somewhat ordinary lyrics and/or melodies, the recording is a worthwhile investment. The cause of making history real and reflecting on the past for the lessons we can learn is a noble one.

—Sue Wonneck
Calgary, Alberta

tambourine and production—they cover the country blues road map with tunes by Skip James, Leadbelly, Robert Johnson, Henry Thomas and Leroy Carr/Scrapper Blackwell (although these last two are credited "Trad."), Highlights include Stamer's reading of "Casey Jones" and Bourne's version of the Jimmie Rodgers "Blue Yodel 10."

Drawbacks? Not that many. Some of the arrangements get a little too close to the coffeehouse (a little too much Merle Travis style arrangements from Mr. Schuld over top of tunes), and an arrangement on the title track ignores the delicate melody of the Skip James classic entirely. Definitely worth hearing if you're a fan of folk blues, however.

—Tim Williams
Calgary, Alberta

of old-timey music from the time when there was less distinction between white and black rural music styles which permeates this recording. Listening to it conjures up images of Dave playing drums with his feet while moving from guitar to harmonica to fiddle effortlessly on the same song. "Feeling For The Blues" is my favourite among the originals, while the Big Bill Broonzy medley "Just A Dream/When I Been Drinking" is a standout among the covers. The only unfortunate effort here is an attempt to duplicate Blind Lemon Jefferson's falsetto on "Happy New Year Blues" which just doesn't measure up to the original. But if you like good-time folk-blues, particularly of the one-man band variety, check Dave Harris out for sure.

—Tim Williams
Calgary, Alberta

Catherine Crowe, Martin Gould and Ian Goodfellow. *Dark is the Colour*. CGG 002. Martin Gould, 501 Clinton St., 2nd floor, Toronto, Ont. M6G 2Z3

---. *This Ancient Fabric*. CGG 001. Martin Gould, 501 Clinton St., 2nd floor, Toronto, Ont. M6G 2Z3

These two cassettes, released in 1986 and 1994 respectively, show a remarkable consistency of style, considering the long span of time between them.

Each cassette features Catherine singing traditional songs of Ireland, England and Canada, accompanied by Martin on guitar and Ian on whistle, flute and Uilleann pipes. This instrumentation makes their arrangements somewhat limited in variety, but they more than compensate by excellent musicianship and and by Catherine's rich voice. For devotees of British singing, she has a similar range and style to June Tabor. The somewhat spare arrangements enable her to deliver the songs expressively, supported by the accompanists but never in danger of being overwhelmed by them.

The trio have obviously undertaken considerable research to

James Gordon. *Dim Lights, Small City*. SGB28. SGB Records, Box 714, Guelph, Ontario N1H 6L3

James Gordon, a prolific singer-songwriter, has numerous albums to his credit—several as a soloist and many more with the band Tamarack. For this project, Gordon brought together eight musicians he had previously worked with. They arranged the songs as a band, performed to a small but obviously enthusiastic audience, and produced the album from the best of those live performances.

Gordon takes some classic North American singer-songwriter themes—the lure of the highway, the struggling small town—and gives them a Canadian twist. At first the album runs the risk of romanticizing the cliché of the young individualist who yearns for freedom:

She thought about her man and her job and her mortgage
She knew that she could not go on...
And as she pointed her car towards the Morning Star
And disappeared into the snow, she knew that she was
home.

Ad Vielle Que Pourra. *Ménage à Quatre*. Xenophile 4048. Green Linnet Records, 43 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, Connecticut USA 06810.

Some years ago I interviewed guitar wildman Eugene Chadbourne, who objected to the term *experimental*, which was (and probably still is) often applied to his work. "That's a guy in a lab and a white coat. I don't do that." The objection is well taken—to say that a musician is experimenting suggests that what she has to offer may not be entirely satisfying. It's a way of marginalizing the experience beforehand, and it gives audiences an excuse not to give themselves over to the experience. (This can mean *liking* something too easily as well as *disliking* it too readily.)

And yet, experimenting has always been a part of what musicians do, and sometimes audiences have failed musicians by not giving themselves the necessary background to be able to

develop their repertoire. Many of the songs on these tapes were completely new to me, and a couple of old chestnuts like "John Barleycorn" and "Dark is the Colour" are quite different to the versions usually heard. They take pains to acknowledge the source of each of their songs. "Dark is the Colour" features a brief appearance by Catherine Keenan, playing the hurdy-gurdy. She has subsequently joined the band, introducing some French musical traditions.

The quartet now perform as TaleSpin. To the best of my knowledge they have not performed outside Ontario, but they'd certainly be worth checking out in concert if you get the opportunity.

—Nan Colledge
Winnipeg, Manitoba

But Gordon knows there is a thin line between the romantic individualist and the older embittered loner, who crops up in songs like "When Death Came to the Quickie Mart" and "St Patrick's Day." The title song features a man who left the "Dim Lights, Small City" for broader pastures, only to return sadder and wiser, realizing what he had lost in his quest for freedom.

Gordon effectively captures the psyche of the aging baby boomers who have come to accept the strength of family and community, even though we still secretly yearn for:

Back when my life still fit in milk-crates,
The world was small, you couldn't get lost.
In the good old hard times, before Bill Gates
Made everything so Micro soft.

—Nan Colledge
Winnipeg, Manitoba

keep up with the new ideas.

Experimentation has a major role in the work of Ad Vielle Que Pourra, a fact often reflected in the punning titles they love: the dance suite "Ça Manque Pas De Celtes," for example, which translates as "There Is Plenty Of Salt," though only a clod would miss the ethnic reference. In his notes, Thonon draws the pun back upon itself: "A little bit of Brittany with a pinch of Québec."

One might suppose that a certain amount of experimentation is unavoidable in a group whose membership is fairly fluid; people enter and leave, bringing their particular backgrounds with them. This CD, their fourth, was made with the group in transition. One touring group, which consisted of founder Daniel

Thonon (Belgium), Pierre Imbert (France), Benoit Bourque (Québec), and Gaston Bernard (New Brunswick), recorded parts of it, but before the recording was completed, Bourque and Bernard had gone on to other activities, and former members Alain Leroux (also a founder, Brittany) and Jean-Louis Cros (France, Algeria) had rejoined the group. Daniel's brother Luc (also a sometime member) and son Felix, along with guitarist Claude Schnéegans, completed certain cuts.

This is not to say that the group always mixes idioms (or metaphors). Sometimes they stay fairly close to the original genres. Though the instrumentation to Bernard's "Kalamatiano," for example, is not traditional to the Greek *rebetika* from which the tune comes, the reading of the tune is basically straightforward, with nothing particularly far out about it.

I'm not sure that all Québécois will appreciate the pronunciation of "Un Français Au Kébak," but this disc features two French Canadian members and has more Québécois influence than other recordings. This particular medley very comfortably joins two of Thonon's own tunes with a reel and gigue from Quebec.

Imbert may be known for his work with Lo Jai, a French group which moved from fairly traditional readings of music from the Limousin region to a sort of latter-day impressionism. He may be the only full time hurdy gurdy player in the world. "Petit Solo du Matin" shows both his wide listening in contemporary music (including rock and roll) and the effects possible on an electrified instrument. This item is intense and moving and, petit though it be, it doesn't seem slight. I suspect that it's Imbert's ax making the heavy metal-type screams that introduce and punctuate Benoit Bourque's song, "Le Cultivateur." Bizarre!

I'm not always convinced that the experiments are successful. "Les Bois Noirs" features hurdy gurdy and other European instruments over a marimba background, achieving a

Finest Kind. Lost in a Song. FAM02CD. Fallen Angle Music, 285 Spencer St., Ottawa, Ont. K1Y 2R1

Big British harmonies. That what I expected from any group with Ian Robb and Shelley Posen in it. And I wasn't disappointed. They hit me right off with "The Banks of Sweet Primroses," Copper-style. With Ann Downey adding a female voice, the rendition is reminiscent of The Young Tradition. Later on, Ian adds multiple concertina lines to the three voices on "Sussex Drinking Song," creating a delicious wall of sound you can really sink your mental teeth into. Strong British-style harmonies show up elsewhere, on "The Miner's Dream of Home" and "Gower Wassail," to name a couple of songs.

But a group this versatile aren't going to confine themselves to one genre. Ann has a fine edgy country-style voice and takes the lead on such numbers as "The Storms May Roll the Ocean" and "What Was I Supposed to Do?" It was a surprise to find Hod Pharris's "I Heard the Bluebird Sing"—the song used to drive me crazy at Stampede time, but passing years have increased my fondness for its bouncy sentimentality. Some hardcore cowboy material here, surprisingly enough, such as "Blue Mountain" and Utah Phillips's "Goodnight-Loving Trail." Shelley contributes a song of his own, "Fa-Sol-La," based on his

pleasant sound that is reminiscent, God help us, of Martin Denny's "Exotica," the Les Baxter theme lps of the early 60s (Les Baxter's *Barbarians*, for example), or the jungle moments of a Harrison Ford adventure movie. I was tempted to say that I prefer Ad Vielle Que Pourra at more driving tempos, but the Parisian waltzes "Je Ne Voulais Voir L'Oiseau" and "Flambée Saint-Marcoise" (with its playful quote of Coltrane's reading of "My Favorite Things") quickly reminded me that they can certainly play beautifully at slow speeds, as well, so perhaps it's a matter of taste.

Thonon's motto is "Down with musical apartheid!" It's an admirable notion in some ways—David Amram, the jazz French horn player, classical composer, singer-songwriter, pianist, and virtuoso pennywhistler (did I leave anything out?) used to say "No More Walls!"—but I worry sometimes that sometimes walls (like trade barriers) allow delicate, minor traditions to flourish. I'm afraid that, too often, the removal of walls encourages nothing more than tiki tacky lounge music. I don't think Ad Vielle Que Pourra would ever play lounge music, but "Les Bois Noirs" comes a bit close for my taste.

It's easy to get caught up in the instrumental variety and virtuosity of Ad Vielle Que Pourra, to forget that Leroux and Thonon are also singers and songwriters. Leroux's preference is to make new tunes for old texts (sort of Woody Guthrie in reverse!), two of which are featured here. Thonon's own bittersweet "Ecoutez! Les Mamans" (here's where his son joins in) is a lovely lament for the situation of fathers and sons separated by divorce.

If you don't have one of the group's records (or are only going to get one), *Ménage à Quature* is a great place to start, though don't count on them sounding the same by the time they get back to your town!

—GWL

love for shape-note singing, and an Ottawa Valley version of an Irish music hall song "The Night Pat Murphy Died." (I'm less comfortable with stage-Irish stereotyping these days, but the group gives the song a rollicking interpretation that lets you know they don't really mean it.) There's of course a Victorian sentimental song, "A Handful of Maple Leaves," but Ian crosses us up by not singing the lead on the kind of song he has a certain reputation for.

The voices are the stars of this album—there are no instrumental cuts, and the instruments mostly just back up the singers. Which they do admirably, and with some imagination; for example, Ann's frailing banjo coexists quite nicely with Ian's concertina on "Going to the West."

I could think of something complimentary to say about every track on this CD—there are no weak links and no throw-away numbers. But space prohibits, so I'll just recommend to you this compilation from three singers who master many styles and present them to you with utter integrity.

JL

Rick Fines. Arcadia. RAF001. Festival Records, 1352 Grant Street, Vancouver BC V5L 2X7

Guitarist and singer Rick Fines will perhaps be familiar to readers as part of the Peterborough blues group, Jackson Delta. On Arcadia he steps out front, presenting songs in a variety of idioms, including blues. (I started to call this a solo album, using the parlance of the popular music world, but this is really "fronting," not "soloing." There are a handful of accompanying musicians, though a couple of cuts feature only bass and/or drums as accompaniment.)

Fines is notable for his stylized vocals. Like Bob Dylan and many others, he took a relatively weak instrument and found a good way to use it. I'd say that Fines's oddly pleasing vocal production and his ability to create or choose a good song lift this disc above the level of standard country-rock music. One might add his guitar chops to the list, but most records these days feature good chops. I like Fines's playing, especially his acoustic slide work, but his playing isn't as individual as his singing or

his tunesmithing.

Generally, I'm more interested in the bluesier items, the standard "Goin' Down The Road," for example, given a reading that is not definitive, but is quite listenable. I was hoping that "Muskoka Moon" would be a useful addition to our upcoming conceptual Canadian blues festival, but while the tune is appealing, it's really a rock song, whose ancestors are Little Willie John and Dee Clark, not Robert Johnson or Lightning Hopkins.

As a songwriter, Fines has the splendid ability to set straightforward lyrics in conversational mode to a snappy tune, breaking Louis B. Mayer's rule, "If you got a message, send a telegram." "Try a Little Harder to be Kind" is only one of several items that present a point of view which is unpopular in these days of yuppie ascendancy.

—GWL

The Whiteley Brothers. Sixteen Shades of Blue. BCD002. Borealis Records, 67 Mowatt Avenue, Suite 233, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 3E3.

Chris and Ken, the Whiteley brothers, are workhorses of Canadian music since the days of the Original Sloth Band (damn! I wish I'd been on the scene to catch them in those days!). Since then, they've been lurking (not always all that inconspicuously) on many a recording, occasionally fronting their own projects. One wonders why they haven't a higher profile—on CBC, for instance....

Sixteen Shades presents the brothers playing more kinds of guitars, primarily, but also keyboards, harmonica, trumpet, and tenor banjo. Chris's son Dan (a very impressive guitarist, himself) joins a variety of players on the session. Both brothers can shout or croon and offer plenty of variety.

There may not be precisely sixteen different shades of blues here, but it doesn't matter—the album really isn't a history or even a family portrait; it's a stack of sixteen good songs the brothers wrote that happen to be in various forms that are associated with blues. Which is not to say that everyone would necessarily react to all of them as blues—if your idea of blues is the stereotypical electric thudthud, you probably wouldn't think of Chris's "Mr. Weatherman" as one. Not say that the Whiteleys can't bang out a southside puncher (try Chris's "Forgetful Baby Blues" or Ken's "Gotta Stop Running"), but they never forget to swing, which can't be said about all of the bar bands (of whatever color) crossing the continent these days.

Then again, I'm not sure everything here really is a blues, though I've heard the blues defined as anything a blues singer sings. Charles Brown could easily move from "Drifting and Drifting" (a certified blues, 12-bar, as I recall) to the pop ballad

"Our Day Will Come," and I'm sure he'd have loved Chris's "I Depend on You Too Much." At any rate, the influences here are wide, but also deep—they've been listening and playing long enough to have internalized the work of a lot of heroes.

When we requested a *Canadian* blues song for the next issue from Ken, he suggested both "Come A Little Closer" and "She Makes Her Own Way." The latter, he suggested, is interestingly Canadian in its non-sexist outlook. We could go even further. Many of the songs on Sixteen Shades are happily inclusive and non- (if not always anti-) establishment. Consider—

Well I'm not rich like some folks say,
Still I'm able to pay my way,
Though at the end of the month,
Sometimes it's a bit of a fight,
But I'm not broke yet so I must be
doing something right. (Ken)

or—

You're feeling down in the mouth
And right at the end of your tether
All your investments went south
Well I never had two shares to rub together
My old car died, they came and towed it away
My landlady gave me final notice today
I've got holes in the soles of my dancing shoes
Now tell me that you've got the blues. (Chris, with Sylvia Tyson)

You've probably noticed that the Whiteleys also have a good sense of humor—it goes with swinging, you know. —GWL

Oscar Brand. Pie in the Sky. Tradition TCD 1021.

Ed McCurdy. Cowboy Songs. Tradition TCD 1025. Tradition Shetland Park, 27 Congress Street, Salem, Massachusetts 01970

Herewith are two items in a reissue series of material primarily recorded in the late 50s and early 60s on the folk music label founded in New York City by the Clancy Brothers. The se-

ries includes the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, as well as Ewan McColl, A.L. Lloyd, Seamus Ennis, and a slew of very fine blues artists. We note these items because of their (at least

putative) Canadian content.

Oscar Brand is a long term resident in New York, whose Canuck roots are probably quite unknown to most of his fans. He was a prominent as a performer and radio host during the folk scare of the 50s, and undoubtedly helped to shape its course with his many activities. Sadly, I don't suppose he profited as well from the frenzy that followed this pioneering work as did the smiling young bulletheads with the big banjos. Nowadays, he's mostly remembered for a variety of novelty lps, mostly on the Elektra label, with punning titles on the content: songs for skiers, songs for soldiers, songs for shrinks and their patients.

I suppose the present album should be considered as part of that activity. *Pie in the Sky* is a collection of historical satires from the USA. (You see why I said "putative Canadian content"?) It's very interesting to listen to the music at this later date—I find it stands up remarkably well. This surprises me because Brand and his coworker, Pete Sears, are known, not as students of traditional performance style, like Mike Seeger or John Cohen, nor as virtuosos, like Dave van Ronk or Erik Darling (who accompanies McCurdy on *Cowboy Songs*), but as the followers of the middle of the familiar road created by Pete Seeger and later thoroughly tramped down by the aforementioned bulletheads. This sort of generic "folk music" too often was simply bland and uncommitted. But on this set, at least, Brand knew the value of a good song, clearly vigorously presented. These *are* good songs, even those that you need to read the historical notes to understand.

Ed McCurdy (nowadays of Nova Scotia, but originally from Pennsylvania and Oklahoma) also knew who to choose and deliver a good song. McCurdy also had a theme series on Elektra in the early 60s, the *Dalliance* records, eponymously remembered after the first release, *When Dalliance Was In Flower*

Ken Perlman. *Island Boy*. W579-29. Wizmak Productions, PO Box 477, Wingdale, NY 12594, USA

What happens when you take a guy who happens to be a co-inventor and prominent player of the "melodic clawhammer" banjo style and set him to studying fiddle music in Prince Edward Island? You guessed it—soon Ken Perlman was developing ways to play PEI tunes on the banjo, and now he's put out the results on CD for us all to hear.

Trying to play fiddle tunes on the banjo presents a couple of immediate problems. First, the instrument doesn't have the sustain of the fiddle. Banjo notes are short and choppy, so long-bow notes and other fiddle effects have to be fudged or left out completely. It's hard to be mellow on the banjo! Secondly, the characteristic metric patterns of the clawhammer banjo style don't always lend themselves to "non-square" rhythms. Witness banjo players' struggles to play in 6/8 time, for example. A clawhammer player who's locked into the style may find it impossible to play anything other than reel-type melodies; if he wants to play other types of tunes, he'll have to be creative, and find ways to break free of the right-hand strait jacket.

So the jigs are the first touchstone as to whether this recording succeeds. I'm happy to report that Ken comes through admirably on the two tracks of jig medleys included. The notes are crisp, emphasized properly in the triplets, and Ken even gets

(*And Maidens Lost Their Heads*); these featured Renaissance (I think; it's been a while—actually, I wish I still had my copies) bawdy songs (actually, I suspect some may have been composed) and funny/sexy cover photos of people dressed in period costumes, standing in front of artificial castles, men in fake beards and women in real (though enhanced) cleavages.

In fact, the first serious record purchase I think I ever made was McCurdy's *Ballad Record* on Riverside. I still own it, and would tell you any day of the week that I learned a great deal of what I know about singing from it. Still, I was a little worried about *Cowboy Songs*—there have been an awful lot of recordings of this material since then. However, like Brand, McCurdy knows how to present the song without getting in its way. We live in a period of melisma, and some of it's quite pleasant—but perhaps it's time to recognize that good singing is not necessarily made of decorations. McCurdy's singing of "The Days of '49," in particular, deserves attention. The last time I remember being this transfixed by a ballad performance was when I chanced upon Grandpa Jones's "Lord Thomas" some years back. McCurdy's straightforward offering gives the poignancy without sentimentality, masculinity without sexism. I recommend it!

Nowadays the term "unplugged" is used about as meaninglessly as are "folk music" and "roots music"—it usually means only that an acoustic guitar was present on the set when the concert or tune was recorded. If there is any reason to prefer or even to single out acoustic music (and I'm not always sure that there is), it can only be that we sometimes prefer the song itself, delivered with a minimum of mediation, be it electricity, melisma, or hot licks. Reissues like *Pie in the Sky* and *Cowboy Songs* might help us get back to the point of acoustic music.

—GWL

in some of the "cranning" twists that a fiddler might use to attack the notes. Pickers wanting to venture into the wilds of 6/8 time should pay close heed to tracks 4 and 11 on the CD.

For the recording as a whole, Ken seems to have made a sincere attempt to capture the individual feel of the original PEI fiddlers' versions of the tunes; at least, the "feel" varies from brushy and rhythmic to precise and staccato on various tunes. (Perhaps when I get to listen to the newly-released *Rounder* CDs of PEI fiddle music, I'll have more understanding of how well he succeeded.) Even without hearing the fiddlers, though, this set of tunes is fine listening, and stands up well on its own merits. Ken went to PEI for piano accompanist Kevin Chiasson, which I'm sure helps flavour the tunes as they'd be played on the Island. John Rossbach's guitar fills out the sound, sometimes helps drive the up-tempo numbers, and—the mark of a good rhythm guitarist—doesn't get in the way.

These days "Celtic" music is being played on many instruments from outside the tradition, and clawhammer-style banjo fits nicely into this spectrum—quite differently than the tenor banjo, which has already become a staple. Several cuts of tunes played on finger-style guitar are included on the CD as well, for a pleasant change of pace on some mellower melodies.

Ken Perlman's explorations will be of interest to Celtic music fanciers as well as banjo players, I'm sure. And pickers can revel in superb playing—this recording is a must-own for anyone who plays the style.

And anyone whose interest is piqued by this demonstration

Ian Bell with The Dawnbreakers and other friends. *Free Range: Songs From Right Here*. FR961. Free Range Recordings, 41 Jane St., Paris, Ont. N3L 2X8

Where can you find a flock of free range chickens standing perfectly still? I'll tell you where. Same place you can find Time stopped in midair. Where a faded newspaper tucked into a new CD cover eternally dates itself "Wednesday afternoon" and the songs are from "right here." Ian Bell's *Free Range* is a whimsical waltz into a more trusting, more now-centred time. The entire town of Zenda, population 12, is invited to pack their nighties and visit New York. One unlucky soul, of course, needs to stay behind and mind the cheese factory. It's all documented in the little newspaper that, honestly, is tucked right into the CD cover. The news stories and the songs work together to form a sweet journey into small town Ontario.

The music is right for a barn dance: even-rhythmed 3/4s and 2/4s for button accordion, banjo, dulcimer and mandolin, with soaring solos for Oliver Schroer, the world's tallest fiddler. "The Frog Bridge at Drumbo," we read in the newspaper, is a suite for mandolin and peepers, played at an outdoor concert on location at the bridge, and attended by "a trio of anglers and a passing dog."

A simple piano backs the words, all in dactyl rhythm, of a

Ian Bell, Professor Chalupka's Celebrated Singing School, The Dawnbreakers, Enoch Kent, Willie Henry. *The Farmer Feeds Us All*. SR 003.

Ian Bell, Professor Chalupka's Celebrated Singing School, Enoch Kent, Anne Lederman, John Maibury, Kate Murphy, Ken Purvis, Oliver Schroer, David Travers-Smith, Jackie Washington. *A Grand Musical Entertainment: Grassroots Music of Early Ontario*. KS-095030.

Ian Bell, Professor Chalupka's Celebrated Singing School, The Norwich Nightingale, The Dawnbreakers, Schneider Haus Quartette, Ian Robb, The Grand Chorus, The Band of Musick. *Singing in a Strange Land: Shape Notes and Homespun Harmonies from Waterloo Co.* JSH 001.

Ian Bell (compiler). *29 Selections from Sacred Harmony*. All available from Sound Reconstructions, 41 Jane St., Paris, Ont. N3L 2X8.

These three tapes involve many of the same musicians, and all fall under the general category of "country and eastern." All celebrate non-contemporary rural music from southern Ontario. However, the tapes each have a different repertory and are aimed at different audiences. *The Farmer Feeds Us All* is a somewhat bittersweet celebration of rural life under threat. It is a reminder that this threat has been around since early in the last century, yet includes some new pieces as well. The threats can come from outright financial ruin ("Don't Take Our Farm Away"), from neglect or failing to see the values in rural living ("Stay on the Farm"), or from put-downs of the satirical type that see the farmer only as a naïve, somewhat stupid target for more sophisticated folk ("Wal I Swan"). Of the three tapes, this one has the widest range of styles and dates among its selections, and includes a fair bit of vaudeville and other humour in addition to the songs glorifying and lamenting rural life.

of what the clawhammer banjo style can do might want to get hold of Ken's book/CD *Basic Clawhammer Banjo*, from Mel Bay Publications, Inc., #4 Industrial Drive, Pacific, MO 63069-0066, USA. —JL

young boy's letter to Charles Atlas. Tap out the dactyls in

[For] only a dime and ten minutes a day
I can banish my self-doubts and firm my abdominals.

No note of sarcasm or cuteness here. This is here and now, authentic re-entry into a more innocent time.

That's what I love about *Free Range*—the sincerity of the thing. You can listen to this music on the front porch in early fall. Soon your whole backyard will be up and dancing. Most of the music and lyrics are Ian Bell's own creations, and Ian has both a wondrously delightful sense of rhyme and a lilting way with melody and harmonies. For most of the CD you'll be up dancing, but then, for the last cut, you'll be singing along softly, with a teardrop in the corner of your eye, to a gorgeously simple rendition of the song that sums up the spirit of *Free Range*: "Gently, gently, touch us gently, Time."

—Nomi Kaston
Calgary, Alberta

A Grand Musical Entertainment includes various instrumentals and vocals, generally reproducing an evening's gathering as it might have been in the last century. The tracks include several dinner horns blowing—a nice interlude, even if the birds singing in the background are unnaturally loud, unless our listener is asleep in some lush stream bed instead of out working in the fields! To my ear, some of the vocals are somewhat strident and unpleasant to listen to; others are quite delightful. The instrumental pieces are on the whole well done. I suppose this in itself is a faithful rendition of a country musical party. My only other criticism is that most of the track designations are medley titles, and do not indicate the individual pieces within them. This can make it very frustrating to try to identify a particular tune, or even to find where one is on the tape.

Of the three tapes, *Singing in a Strange Land* is the best realized. It comes with extensive notes, including the text to

what is apparently a museum exhibit featuring traditional instruments and scores. Sources are listed for all the cuts, as are texts of the vocals. The musical treatments are avowedly varied, ranging from traditional to somewhat "dressed up," often taking the form of adding instrumental accompaniment to what would have been vocal-only music. While this can grate on the ear of a purist who wants to hear tradition, the liner notes make it abundantly clear what is traditional and what is not.

I particularly welcome this recording since it is a small beginning at recapturing the Canadian tradition in shaped-note hymnody. The resurgence of interest in this musical style that has been going on for the last 20+ years across North America has to date depended mostly on the Sacred Harp tradition. This has descended to us as both a written tradition and a decidedly oral tradition kept alive in the southern US. Some (few, happily) purists occasionally sneer at northern—especially New England—attempts to resurrect their own traditions. These folks believe that any continuing oral tradition in northern regions succumbed to the "better music boys" starting in the 1840s, and believe modern revivals of it are composed of equal parts academic snobbery and cultural theft. However, the present recording, along with those by Nova Scotia's Elastic Millenium Choir, reminds us that shaped-note singing was alive and well throughout 19th-Century Canada, and indeed has continued in some communities to this day. The rediscovery and popularization of these books and people can only enrich the "revival."

One exception, though: the rendering of "How Firm a

Foundation" is "straight traditional," according to the liner notes. It sounds like my worst nightmares of a bad church choir, with enough vibrato in all parts to make it hard to tell if they're singing in harmony, or indeed in tune. I'll take the older "hard" sound associated with the Maritime and Appalachian voices any day—even if the vibrato represents the current style of a singing community—the oral tradition!

Along with these recordings, Ian Bell has compiled a thin book, *29 Selections from the Sacred Harmony*, published in 1838, at the height of the shaped-note style's popularity. Many of the tunes Bell selects were written in Ontario. They are mostly undated, but have the feel of tunes composed close to the publication date. Many are in three-part harmony. Rumour has it that in the late 19th Century some altos threatened to stop cooking for the singing gatherings unless they were given their own parts! An early manifestation of the women's rights movement? While this story is apochryphal, alto parts did indeed become more common late in the last century. The tune book predates that movement. It will be fun to sing from.

In sum, these are three tapes and a book to be applauded by lovers of rural and traditional music. Each appeals to a different audience. Each is somewhat internally variable in polish and style, but this does not detract from an overall positive evaluation. This reviewer would recommend all of them.

—Mryka Hall-Boyer
Calgary, Alberta