

Helen” and “The Helen Creighton Fonds at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia”. Seven songs collected by Creighton accompanied the article, as well as reviews of *Songs of the Sea*, a CD of songs and stories collected by her, Clary Croft’s biography *Helen Creighton: Canada’s First Lady of Folklore*, the National Film Board video *A Sigh and a Wish: Helen Creighton’s Maritimes* and Clary Croft’s CD *Still the Song Lives On*.

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Reviews

Books

Stephen Calt. *Barrelhouse Words: A Blues Dialect Dictionary*. 2009. 308pp. ISBN: 978-0-252-03347-6 (hard cover), 978-0-252-07660-2 (soft cover). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1325 South Oak Street, Champaign, IL 61820 – 6903, USA.; uipress@uillinois.edu; www.press.uillinois.edu

I had great hopes for this book and, at first glance, Calt’s contribution to dictionaries in general and to blues books in particular is an invaluable work. Even with its faults, no doubt some blues singers will want to include it in their libraries. But the reader should be wary of a number of errors that the author has made, particularly in his transcriptions, errors that have led him to some mistaken conclusions and false assumptions.

As might have been expected, this reviewer first looked at some problem words that had surfaced during his own researches into the songs in his repertoire, many of which have been cited in *Barrelhouse Words*. It is often exceedingly difficult to understand some of the words in early blues, a problem commonly caused either by one not being familiar with the idioms or by not understanding the singer’s enunciation. One can therefore appreciate that major transcription reference sources for blues words are invaluable.

Two of the best of these are Bob Macleod’s thirteen volumes of blues transcriptions (PAT Publications, Edinburgh, 1988–2004), and Michael Taft’s *Talkin’ to Myself* (Routledge, 1983 & 2005). Both Macleod’s and Taft’s transcriptions include some errors, as might be expected, and should be used only as guidelines, but they give complete songs with their essential structure, and the conscientious singer, listening carefully to the

original recordings, can correct words here and there. Neither Macleod nor Taft, whom I consider to form the backbone of research into blues words, is cited in Calt’s bibliography.

The book’s title “barrelhouse” is cited in a number of places throughout the book, one of them in the song “Mr. Crump Don’t Like It,” which can be found under “Crump, Mister”. The entry gives the first verse condensed into three lines, which is fine, but the transcription is incorrect in a couple of places: the first word Frank Stokes sings at the beginning of each of the first three lines is “A” (“A-Mister Crump...”), not “Now,” and the word “God” should be “cards”: “No barrelhouse women, cards n’ drinkin’ no beer.” The song is about Crump’s election promise to clean up the illegal activities in Memphis, and, quite apart from anything else, “God” makes no sense here. A further indignity to the song occurs under the entry “Creeper,” where the author is ostensibly quoting verse four: “I saw the creepers and sisters turn around an’ begin to grin.” He very carefully explains what creeper refers to, but the words being sung are, “I told the Presb’terian sisters, turned round an’ begin to grin.”

For the expression “dead cat on the line” Calt refers the reader to the Blind Boy Fuller song “I’m a Good Stem Winder” from 1935, but it would have been far more appropriate, and Calt could have saved himself quite a bit of explaining, if he had cited Tampa Red’s 1932 recording of his own song, “Dead Cat On the Line,” where each of the seven verses gives an example of what the term means.

Calt’s explanation for “bamalong,” found in the title and first line of Andrew and Jim Baxter’s “Bamalong Blues,” reads:

A brawl or police raid, particularly one that disrupts a party (bib ref.). This term may have been derived from the English dialect term *bammel*, to knock or beat (further bib ref.).

The first line of the song is, “Ain’t gonna be in the second bamalong,” and, although the research is complicated and the correct sources few, the uncorrupted line should be written out, “Ain’t gonna be in the Second ’Bama long.” It refers to the Second Alabama Infantry Regiment, the “Magnolia Regiment”, that was operational in the American Civil War for eleven months during 1861 and 1862.

Other questionable citations exist throughout the book. I’m not at all happy with ‘easy roller,’ for example, being defined simply as a prostitute in the song “Memphis Jug Blues.” At times it may be that (and would then be an extension of “easy rider”), but it seems doubtful in the context of this particular verse where the singer is bragging about his own girlfriend, as compared to the girlfriend of the person to whom he is speaking (or singing).

There is a particular oddness about Calt’s entry for the words “poor robbin [sic].” In his quotation “robbin” occurs twice, and he correctly cites it as coming from the song “Pick Poor Robin Clean,” but why he should insist on writing robin with two ‘b’s’ I don’t know—the song is, after all, a partial play on the name of birds, with Jaybird being referred to elsewhere. This aside, and rather more importantly, it was not recorded by Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas in 1929, as he states. It was written by Luke Jordan and recorded by him in 1927 on Victor 20957. The song was not recorded again until Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas recorded it four years later, in 1931, for Paramount.

One of the most bizarre entries in the book can be found under “Wise Woman.” It begins with the verse transcription:

*Daddy you done put that thing on me
And I guess you’re satisfied,
It took a lot of lovin’ and dick honey
To make a wise woman like me smile.
—Spark Plug Smith, “Vampire Woman
Blues,” 1933.*

I don’t know where Calt got this verse from. Not only is it not part of Smith’s “Vampire Women” (plural, and no “Blues” in the title), but the words bear not the slightest relationship to the song which is a complaint about the infidelity of some husbands and a warning about the potential consequences of allowing their wives to dress in seductive clothing.

Many words that are cited in the book as being archaic are still current, while others don’t have their

correct meaning in the context of the verses given. “Crib,” for instance, is defined as “bed” but properly refers to “house,”: “...that crib of misery...” [the jailhouse], and it is still very much in use as “house” in the U.S.A.

Further, there are many words and expressions that could have been included but inexplicably were not. This list is not exhaustive but, for example, I had hoped to see “Old Hannah” (the Sun), which occurs in the last verse of Ernest Williams 1933 song “Ain’t No More Cane On The Brazos.” Also, the inclusion of the brand name “Nihi,” found in the title and text of Frank Stokes’ 1928 recording “Nihi Blue.” Similarly “Kaye Ola,” which occurs at the end of line 1, verse 3 of Will Shade’s Memphis Jug Band 1928 song “Lindberg Hop,” would have been a valuable addition.

After coming across so many mistakes, I was concerned that something good and positive should be found to temper these problems. I therefore returned to the book’s introduction in an attempt to find something favourable, but instead found the following paragraph on page xiv:

No such strictures [being closely monitored by the recording industry for “off color” material] were applied to black performers, whose avidity for sexual slang was evident as early as the Civil War, when Thomas Wentworth Higginson noted a seemingly inscrutable song called Hangman Johnny produced by mirthful black soldiers:

*O, dey call me Hangman Johnny!
O, ho! O, ho!
But I never hang nobody...*
[Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, 172]

Unknown to Higginson (who would have been mortified by the discovery), “hanging Johnny” was a contemporary slang term for penis.

Well, there is certainly nothing ‘inscrutable’ about “Hanging Johnny,” but neither are there sexual innuendo in the song. As most self-respecting folkies know, this is a snippet from the clean, rather morbid but consequently quite funny, halyard shanty “Hanging Johnny.” The song is perhaps the epitome of gallows humour and it was very much a working shanty when it was collected by Higginson. Lighter, to whom Calt so often refers for definitions of American slang, does not give “hanging johnny” as being used for “penis” until the mid-twentieth century (II, 304, No.6).

In a general sense, *Barrelhouse Words: A Blues Dialect Dictionary* includes some useful bits and pieces, but of course the problem with finding errors in any research work is that they tend to put the rest

of the undertaking into question. And perhaps, after all is said and done, there is no satisfaction like that resulting from one's own researches.

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Note: It is also recommended that the reader refer to Michael Taft's rather more general review of the book, which is on-line at:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~joftr/review.php?id=1013>

Mike Ballantyne, Central Saanich, British Columbia
[Mike has asked us to include his e-mail address. It is mike@folklore.bc.ca]

Paul O'Neill. *Fish for Dinner: Tales from Newfoundland and Labrador*. Saint John's, Newfoundland: Flanker Press, 2009. 176 pages. ISBN 978-1-897317-35-8. P.O. Box 2522, Sta. C, St. John's, NL A1C 6K1; info@flankerpress.com; www.flankerpress.com

Should one peruse what just might be one of the most intriguing story collections to come down the

pike in a long time, one might think of re-titling the volume *Geography 101: Bullfinch Meets Newfoundland-Labrador*. By his own admission, long time actor, CBC producer, and author-storyteller Paul O'Neill has been collecting stories from here, there and everywhere in between since he was a wee lad. These days, at the age of eighty-two, he still loves to do the same. Simply put, what O'Neill has done is to put narrative wings to myths and tales that in some cases may be a thousand years old and perhaps even older, and reset them in various locales throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. These are stories that may originally have been told in places as far afield as China, India, Ancient Greece, France, Ireland, Iceland and the Isle of Man, just to mention a few. Here are tales of whimsy and heroic deeds, mirth and sadness, tricksters and magical confrontations, involving ghosts, witches, Faerie folk, evil water spirits, and the very devil himself. O'Neill skillfully managed to set them in the very heart of a mythical Newfoundland where magic becomes reality and wishes come true at the drop of a hat.

As stated above, O'Neill had taken these very old tales from places far away and times long past, thirteen in number, and happily plunked them down into various locales throughout Newfoundland and Labrador: Bay de Verde, Corner Brook, Fogo, Harbour Grace, L'Anse aux Meadows, Placentia, Petty Harbour, Saint Mary's, Trinity, Makkovik, Nain, Ramea, and Saglek Bay to be exact. In the title tale, "Fish For Dinner," a young sea captain becomes involved in a fish story with a twist, in which he discovers what it means to be on the other end of the line. Other personal favorites include: "The Hundredth Wife," in which a viking warlord meets his match in the person of a clever young woman who shows him that physical strength can be overcome by wit; "Weasel and his Better Half," in which the protagonist learns that pride does indeed come before a fall and that not all bargains are what they might appear to be; "The Lord of the Raven's Gift," in which a young fisherman learns that even the simplest of ordinary gifts may bring a magic truly unlooked-for and wondrous beyond belief; and "The Wisdom of Solomon," in which an eighteenth century magistrate solves a seemingly impossible case using Solomonic sagacity that would do the *Harvard Law Review* justice. Perhaps the most memorable, beautiful, and poignant tale in the entire collection is that entitled "Mam's Zelle and a Perfect Stranger," in which a young woman discovers true love through the magical transformation of a spirit from a white elm, only to have that love taken away when the tree is cut down. The devil appears in two stories, including "How Finnbar Defeated Old Scratch," which also tells of the origin of a peculiar physical manifestation in the vicinity of

Clerner Brook in the shape a human face chiseled on a cliff face.

If I have one major complaint about this collection it is simply this: it wasn't anywhere near long enough. Though most assuredly Newfoundland-Labrador in character, locale, and temperament, these stories are decidedly global in scope and origin. Students and devotees of world myth and legend will recognize many of the plots and motifs. Yet this is Newfoundland story telling at its very best. This should come as no surprise, given that noted raconteur Kelly Russell once stated in my hearing that folks up in Newfoundland sure know how to spin a good yarn or three. Paul O'Neill does, and *Fish For Dinner* comes very highly recommended.

Robert Rodriguez, New York

Johanna Bertin. *Don Messer: The Man Behind the Music*. Goose Lane Editions, 330 – 500 Beaverbrook Court, Fredricton, N.B. E3B 5X4; (888) 926-8377; info@gooselane.com; www.gooselane.com

As the title suggests, this book provides an intimate and personal account of Don Messer's life and career behind his public persona. To do so, author Johanna Bertin uses a variety of sources. She conducted a number of interviews with people who knew Don in various ways, from his own daughters and family friends to band members and special guests on his shows. The interviews are surprisingly candid. Although the overall image of Don is overwhelmingly positive, more than a few of the interviewees were willing to share quirks of Don's personality that they found trying. While making him more human, they do nothing to dispel his public image as a quiet, unassuming, and always honourable man. Bertin also accessed Don's notebooks, in which he recorded "everything from the price of gas to the mileage to the order of tunes at the performances" (p. 61), letters, and newspaper articles located in numerous archives. As an academic, I would have preferred that these had been more thoroughly documented; however, as this book is clearly aimed at Don's fans, this is certainly a minor criticism. A number of historic photos illustrate the story. The family photos, and very early photos of Don's bands before they had achieved much success, were the most interesting, as these have rarely been seen by the public. I was disappointed that there were no reproductions of old posters for shows, even though some were surely accessible; for example, the poster for the Old Time Harvest Dance at the Chapel Grove Country Club in New Brunswick, ca. 1935. Bertin provides only the text: "Let the old timers come and show the young people how to dance the old time dances the way Mother

used to do them. Gents 35 cents. Ladies 15 cents" (p. 63).

One of the strengths of this book is the detail of rural life in early twentieth-century Canada, and specifically in the Maritimes. As a musician, I winced at the stories of how the band traveled to gigs with their instruments. Bertin recounts, for example, how the band had to tie the bass to the running board of a Model A Ford; all was well until they were sideswiped by another vehicle and the bass ended up in pieces. As a baker, I enjoyed reading about the kinds and quantities of food served at a rural wedding (300 doughnuts and 286 peanut cookies, amongst much else!). These kinds of details provide insight into life in the increasingly distant past, the lives of our grandparents and great-grandparents.

Most valuable for me is a clearer understanding of the place of Canadian old-time music and dancing in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century. While I am used to people today referring to fiddle music and square dancing as "old-time" and "traditional", I did not realize that they were seen as such even in the 1930s and 1940s. Bertin writes of Don's travels to Ontario in 1949, where:

... square-dancing had become something of a new craze ... The Ontario Department of Agriculture had begun sponsoring square dances to 'foster rural community spirit,' and the Department of Education regularly held square dances in elementary schools to 'acquaint city schoolchildren with the pioneer culture of their ancestors'. (p. 93)

The text of the poster promoting a dance, described above, is evidence that this attitude toward the music was expressed as early as the mid-1930s.

My primary criticism of this biography is its structure, and particularly that of the first ten chapters. Rather than the usual chronological order of a biography, Bertin alternates chapters between Don's home life and his life in music; therefore, we read about the same time period twice (and sometimes more often), which is not clear to readers until they figure out the pattern. (Although the chapters about family are entitled "Family Life" with a range of dates, the alternating chapters simply refer to some aspects of the life of a traveling musician.) The other problem with this approach is that our lives are seldom separated into home and work, and neither was Don's, so there is lots of overlap and an artificial division between two aspects of the same life that would have been smoothed out with a strictly chronological order.

Three of the last chapters, focusing on Marg Osburne, Charlie Chamberlain and the Buchta Dancers, are a nice addition to this biography. Marg and Char-

lie were popular performers on the show and good friends of Don. Learning about their early lives, and especially their personal lives during the heyday of the band, provides yet another road into the life of their esteemed band leader, Don Messer.

This book is a must-read for every Don Messer fan, of whom many remain despite the cancellation of the show in 1969 and Don's subsequent death in 1973. The personal anecdotes from friends and family, and Don's own notes, as well as the rarely-seen photographs, are reason enough to enjoy the book. A particular slice of the history of Canadian fiddling is an added bonus for fiddle fans and scholars.

Sherry Johnson, Toronto, Ontario

Recordings

Finest Kind. *For Honour & For Gain*. FAM 09. Fallen Angle Music, 285 Spencer St., Ottawa, Ont. K1Y 2R1; ian@ianrobb.com; shelley@shelleyposen.com; www.finestkind.ca

Finest Kind is the trio of Ian Robb, Shelley Posen and Ann Downey. This is their fourth or fifth CD together, depending on what you count; it contains 18 tracks, ranging in duration from 2 to 5 minutes. The CD title comes from a line in the song in track 3, "Claudy Banks". The cover graphic is a scale weighing a laurel crown on one side against coins on the other.

Finest Kind has, and merits, a large and very enthusiastic following across and outside Canada. The magic of Finest Kind is in the extremely rich palette of sound they (or their arrangements) get with just three voices and, consequently, three intervals at a time. The nuances of chord they obtain are as subtle as is heard in much quartet singing.

Ian Robb is gifted with a rich voice which seems capable of arbitrary levels of volume without strain and dead on pitch. Shelley Posen and Ann Downey also sing dead on pitch, but haven't Robb's volume and quality of voice. This makes all the more surprising their ability to blend as seamlessly as they do. Robb leads on 11 of the tracks, Posen on 5, Downey on 1, and the remaining track ("Christmas Trilogy") is done equally by all three.

Seven of the songs are traditional, but are performed in a refined style, the rough sound of the originals having been discarded. All of the songs are arranged painstakingly and could not be performed except by a very expert singing group. The ballad "Thomas and Nancy" may well have come to the attention of collector Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf when she heard it sung in Sally's Cove, Newfoundland, by a group of fishermen galumphing along in

their gumboots, but it is certain that they hadn't just been at the Arranger's Office on Water Street getting their harmonies vetted. There is nothing wrong with musically sophisticated renditions of traditional songs, but some listeners prefer a rougher style. However, Finest Kind give an attractive sound to the traditional material that makes the music accessible to an audience which it likely otherwise would not have. The Finest Kind harmonies are never showy, never sickly sweet, never inappropriate for the songs, and never overproduced, but also never rough.

The mood of the songs is predominantly melancholy. Of the 18 tracks, by a very rough classification, fully nine are melancholy (drowned sailors, abandoned mothers and babies, and such), four are neutral or upbeat, and five are comic. And this reckoning counts two country songs of the Johnny Tear-drop variety ("She Thinks I Still Care" and "Why Should I be Lonely?") as comic, since they were performed with tongue firmly in cheek; at face value, these too are melancholy. Gloomy songs have their place, as death and loss are part of life, but the question here is one of balance. Listening to the CD, at about the 16th track I, at least, began to feel that every last tear had been jerked out of me as if with a tooth extractor. That said, many of the melancholy songs are prime examples of the Finest Kind trio arrangements, and are absolutely beautiful to hear.

The origins of the members of Finest Kind position them well for a broad range of songs in English: Ian Robb is from London, England, Shelley Posen from Toronto, and Ann Downey from the U.S. The trio also play instruments, with Ian Robb playing concertina, Shelley Posen guitar, and Ann Downey banjo and bass. They are also joined on several tracks by other instrumentalists, playing fiddle, piano, brasses, even triangle, but half of the tracks are done *a cappella*.

Several notable tracks are the following:

"Bay of Biscay": The first track on the CD, and a fine example of Finest Kind's trio harmony. The song concerns a dead sailor's ghost visiting his bereaved love, the eerie harmonies strengthening the spectral feeling of the song.

"Short Life of Trouble": This song appears in the repertoire of many bluegrass groups. It is treated seriously here, rather than tongue-in-cheek, and stands well on its merits. It is the only song on the CD led by Ann Downey, who plays a good, understated banjo accompaniment.

"By the Green Grove": This song was recorded by the trio on the 1994 Ian Robb CD *From Different Angels* under the title "Green Groves", but has evolved enough in performance since then to justify another recording. This pleasant Copper Family song describes a moment of joy experienced while listen-

ing to birds singing, and the trio's arrangement makes it all the more enjoyable.

"Christmas Trilogy": Three faces of Christmas, the religious, the familial (Norman Rockwell), and the stressed-out, stated first separately and then sung simultaneously, the tunes having been written to be sung at the same time ("quodlibets", I believe such things are called). The effect of the simultaneous singing is striking, with the juxtaposition of the different words and moods of the voices interacting in unexpected ways.

"Thomas and Nancy": Despite this being a traditional song arranged in a way that the original singers couldn't have sung on the best day of their lives, devotees of *Finest Kind's* harmonies will find much to like in this piece. The harmonies echo the somber words of the song.

There are many other songs of interest on the CD, including some Saskatchewan history in the form of a comic song, and an "as-if" Hovercraft shanty. *For Honour & For Gain* is a worthy successor to *Finest Kind's* previous CDs, and is their first release since *Silks & Spices* (2003).

Jim Grabenstetter, Calgary, Alberta

Robbie and Isaac Fraser. *Right At Home*. ROBI-SA02. 340, Inverness, N.S. B0E 1N0; laurnef@ns.sympatico.ca

Right At Home is the second CD by Cape Breton fiddle and piano duo Robbie and Isaac Fraser. These two brothers from Strathlorne, Inverness County (Nova Scotia), are in their early twenties, but don't let their age fool you: they are both veteran musicians who perform frequently for square dances across Cape Breton and at well-known musical venues, such as The Red Shoe Pub in Mabou. Fiddler Robbie Fraser has performed on stage since he was five years old, and cites Cape Breton legends Buddy MacMaster and Willie Kennedy as his primary influences. Robbie is accompanied by his brother Isaac, a skilful player and strong accompanist who has played piano since he was nine years old.

The album features five lively jig sets, a clog, a number of march-strathspey-reel sets, a lament and two slow airs. One of the most compelling aspects of this recording is the choice of repertoire, which, while keeping within the traditional Cape Breton idiom, features predominantly older Scottish and Cape Breton tunes. This is particularly obvious in comparison with the vast number of contemporary Cape Breton fiddle recordings that highlight recent tune compositions (often with several composed by the fiddler him/herself). In the liner notes, Robbie

notes that most of the tunes on this album were learned from both commercial and non-commercial recordings of well-known Cape Breton fiddlers, such as John Morris Rankin, Howie MacDonald, Ashley MacIsaac and Buddy MacMaster, among others. While some of these tunes will be familiar to fans of Cape Breton fiddling, the duo also features a number of less-widely-played tunes, such as J.S. Skinner's slow air "Our Highland Queen Pastoral Air", "Hand Me Down the Tackle", a reel from the playing of Cameron Chisholm, and Kinnon Beaton's "Black Rocket Reel", to name but a few. The arrangements are well-chosen and original, and will keep the listener's attention through many harings. The album's brief liner notes give some insight into the tune choices, influences and transmission processes behind each arrangement. While it is common practice to refer to musicians by their first names in Cape Breton, a listener who is new to the tradition might find such references in the liner notes confusing.

One of the highlights of this album is a track that features solo piano (track 11). Isaac's rendition of the slow air "Blue Bonnets Over the Border" provides a refreshing break from the dominant jig and reel sets on the album; indeed, this is a welcome twist on the usual choice for an alternative track on fiddle-based albums, which tend to include at least one vocal piece. Isaac's arrangement of the well-known air is pleasingly uncomplicated, moving, and a testament to this young pianist's musicality.

Robbie's fiddling has the driving and rhythmic style that is typical of Cape Breton fiddlers from the Inverness area; I have heard him compared frequently to fiddling icon Buddy MacMaster in his playing style and stage presence. I appreciate that the raw quality of the fiddle has not been mastered and compressed—eliminating the higher and lower volumes in the track—in the recording and editing processes, as you hear so frequently in contemporary fiddle recordings. While it is by no means scratchy or harsh, the final product has preserved a refreshingly live quality.

Right At Home is a superb album, and Robbie and Isaac are certainly a duo to watch. The maturity that these two young musicians have achieved in their playing and their command of the repertoire is commendable. To quote a fiddler friend, *Right At Home* is "true Cape Breton traditional music"; this is a recording for Cape Breton fiddle enthusiasts and newcomers alike that will keep your toes a-tappin' and wanting more. Listening to *Right At Home*, I am nostalgic for a good East Coast square dance; I look forward to getting my hands on their latest album, *Everything Old is New Again* (2009), and catching a live performance soon.

Meghan C. Forsyth, Toronto, Ontario

Enoch Kent, with Pat Simmonds & Kelly Hood.
One More Round. BCD190. Borealis Records, 225
Sterling Rd., Unit 19, Toronto, Ont. M6R 2B2;
www.borealisrecords.com; info@borealisrecords.com

Enoch Kent started recording albums in Canada in 2002, at the age of 70. *One More Round* is his fifth collection since then. Not a bad accomplishment! But let's put it in perspective. Kent's a veteran. We're talking about a man who was a major part of the folk music revival in Scotland and England in the fifties and sixties. He was a founding member of The Singer's Club, where he sang with Ewan McColl and Peggy Seeger. He has been labelled a "folk music legend" more than once. His 36-year break from recording gave him some time to store up a bunch of great songs. He's doing a very good job of catching up.

Enoch Kent's voice catches your attention from the first word. It is a blend of whisky, smoke and gravel. His delivery is pure, clear and authentic. He sings stories; every word is important. His voice is Glasgow to the bone. Even in "The Crematorium," a ragtime parody, every "R" is rolled.

One More Round is finely produced, with simple and tasteful arrangements setting a wonderful stage for each song. Kelly Hood (a variety of pipes and whistles) and Pat Simmonds (accordion, guitar and fiddle), well-known in the Ontario Celtic music scene, add delicate harmonies and rhythms that carry the songs without getting in the way. Make no mistake – this album is about the voice and lyrics.

For this CD, Enoch Kent has chosen a nice variety of traditional songs (mostly from Scotland), a couple of his own and three written by fellow Scotsmen. A few are familiar songs, like "Banks of Newfoundland" and "Itches in Me Britches," but many of these songs are less well known or are variants of standard traditional songs. There is a theme for everyone: love, murder, sex, death, war, play, hunger and more. Kent can do humour as well as compassion.

I have a couple of favourites. One is the witty "McFarlane O' The Sprouts of Burnieboosie", a story about a fellow who sends his ugly pal to do his courting for him and finds out too late that he made the wrong decision. In a more serious vein, "Some Ha'e Meat", penned by Ian Walker, speaks of the absurdity of a world where millions of dollars are spent advertising food and at the same time millions of people are starving.

There is something special about *One More Round*. It's real. It almost makes you forget for a moment that we are tied to computers, satellite dishes and iphones, and that most of us spend as much time

"social networking" as really communicating. It sort of makes me feel grounded. Or maybe it just makes me want to break out the bottle of Glenlivet. Thanks, Enoch, for another great CD.

Blaine Hrabi, Calgary, Alberta

Various. *NTO: North to Ontario 2006. North to Ontario 2007. North to Ontario 2008. North to Ontario 2009.* Tom McCreight, General Delivery, Udora, Ont. L0C 1L0; TJMcCreight@aol.com; www.cootmusic.com

NTO is not a single Canadian bluegrass CD, it's a series of albums, with four released so far and another due toward the end of 2010. The first was made available in 2006, so the most recent is *North to Ontario 2009*.

While employed with CBC Radio for many years, I ran a weekly country music and bluegrass show in the West and North for 22 years, ending with my retirement in 1996. How I would have loved to have had a wonderful musical treat like this series available then! This was BI (Before Internet), so it was very hard to locate bands with recordings and/or get one's hands on those recordings.

The main folks behind the production and release of this series are Gene Gouthro, a musician who owns a recording studio in Everett, Ontario, and Tom McCreight, a musician who has owned a music distributing business in Udora, Ontario, for many years. Most of the selections were recorded at the Everett studio.

The players and singers are some of Ontario's best bluegrass musicians, and they prove that good bluegrass doesn't have to come from the southern states. While a few of the songs indicate a country music influence or old-time feeling, there's no question that the music, vocals and a few instrumentals are all bluegrass. Some of the names are well known, and others are in the "who are they?" category to those of us who are away from Ontario. Names like Emory Lester, The Good Brothers, The Dick Smith/Mike O'Reilly band, Lorne Buck, The Abrams Brothers, Foxtail, The Foggy Hogtown Boys, Ray Legere and Hard Ryde may be familiar to many Canadian bluegrass fans. Mike O'Reilly was the lead singer and mando man with the best band in the country for the years when CODY was alive and well. Emory Lester will probably be the best known, as he seems to be the most well-travelled of all the names on the four CDs. His reputation is as a superb mandolin player, but on this set he can be heard also playing banjo, cello, fiddle, bass, guitar and viola.

Personally, I would have liked to hear a few more instrumentals, but that's just me! The 2007 CD contains three instrumentals out of 18 cuts; the 2008

CD the same; and just two of 18 cuts on the 2009 edition. All the instrumentals are good ones, and I especially liked "The Dry Nurse". That was recorded by the Central Canadian All-Stars, a band consisting of the winners of the "Performer of the Year Awards" on the various instruments at the 2006 Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards.

Most of the songs are originals and not previously recorded before this series came into existence. There is some good songwriting talent and performance skills exhibited on these recordings. It was great to hear The Good Brothers doing superb bluegrass on two songs, one each from the 2007 and 2008 CDs. They've been performing for over 30 years, and they do know how to do what they're doing. The 2009 CD won the "Recording of the Year" Award at the 31st annual Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards presentation.

Which CD should you get? Why not shoot for all of them!! Or pick a number from a hat....you won't be disappointed if you're a bluegrass fan.

Laurie Mills, Calgary, Alberta

A Peak in Darien

Some of the following items will be reviewed in upcoming issues; some are outside our purview, but are included as a courtesy to the people who sent them to us, and to inform our readers.

DVDs

Wendell Ferguson. *Wendell Ferguson's Cranky Christmas*. 41 Tamarack Circle, Etobicoke, Ont. M9P 3T9; wendell@wendellferguson.com; www.wendellferguson.com

Recordings

After the Storm. ATS001. rodwalshmusic@hotmail.com (no other addresses on packaging)

Ron Casat. www.roncasat.ca (no other addresses on packaging)

Cort Delano. *Fools Moon*. 20 Laxtron Pl. SW, Calgary, Alta. T3E 5E8; cort@cortmusic.com; www.cortmusic.com

Cort Delano. *Sad Sorry-Ass Folk Singer*. CB002CD (addresses above)

Wendell Ferguson. *Wendell Ferguson's Cranky Christmas* (addresses above)

James Gordon. *My Stars Your Eyes*. BCD200. Borealis Records, 290 Shuter St., Toronto, Ont. M6R 2B2;

www.borealisrecords.com; info@borealisrecords.com

Kate Reid. *Comin' Alive*. 410 -- 2416 Main St., Vancouver, B.C. V5T 3E2 (no address on packaging); kate@katereid.net; www.katereid.net

Kate Reid. *I'm Just Warming Up*. KR002 (addresses above)

Oliver Schroer & The Stewed Tomatoes. *Freedom Row*. BCD201. Borealis Records (addresses above)

Wild Rose Xpress. *Wild Rose*. 485 Rainbow Falls Way, Chestermere, Alta. T1X 1S5; wildrose-xpress@shaw.ca; www.wildrose-xpress.com.



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