

features Scottish music – albeit “somewhat Americanised” Scottish music!

However, Pipe Bands and Highland Games still prove to be extremely popular – and indeed some Canadian Pipe Bands have competed in and won the World Championships. However, in America it's a completely different story. A Scottish Country Dance Band there could consist of a piano, a few fiddles, flute, cello, bodhran, guitar and even a banjo, but rarely an accordion. Bobby assures me that while many American musicians may be very good players, they don't have the grounding in traditional pipe music that we have here in Scotland and they tend to over embellish. Their “Scottish” music doesn't have the lift or “The Dunt” that we are used to hearing. As a close friend and fellow musician once said, “You need the Hee-Drum Ho-Drums”.

How does Bobby feel Scottish music evolved over the years? Well, nowadays the youngsters coming through can play just about any tune to perfection no matter how many notes there are in one bar of music. Bobby believes this is because they are being taught “properly”. It was possibly easier to be self-taught in the 1940s or 50s than it would be in this new Millennium, because many tunes being played then were not as technically demanding as the tunes being written today. However, although this technical prowess is vital – particularly for the more contemporary tunes – the music must have “soul”...“It needs to come from the heart.”

Maybe that's why Bobby doesn't agree with the competition scene. He feels music should be shared and enjoyed, without the fear of failure.

During his lifetime Bobby has only ever played in two bands – twenty great years with Stan Hamilton's Flying Scotsmen and then his own Scottish Accent Band. The current line up in The Scottish Accent is Bobby on lead accordion, Bobby's son Laird

on second accordion, Kathy Fraser-Collins on piano, Fred Collins on drums and bass duties are shared between Rob Wolanski and Don Wood. The band just celebrated its 30th anniversary by releasing a double CD set, *Celtic Fire in the Music*.

Gigs for the band can be anywhere from Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa or Toronto to Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Halifax and Cape Breton to play for an RSCDS Dance. In July they play in North Carolina at Thistle School – which involves a sixteen-hour drive there and a sixteen-hour drive back. (Of course, “if it's Laird that's driving, then it only takes about four hours – and it's easier on the tyres that way, 'cos they don't hit the road that often!”).

Bobby was involved with a television show for six years called The John Allan Cameron Show – where he formed the Cape Breton Symphony Fiddlers as a regular part of the show.

Bobby and the Cape Breton Symphony Fiddlers with The Scottish Accent Band toured Scotland three times, including Orkney and Shetland, Aberdeen, Inverness, The Kings in Edinburgh, The Mitchell Theatre in Glasgow and even The Gaiety Theatre in Ayr with their “Variety Show”.

Other countries that Bobby has visited include Germany, Ireland, England and even the Bahamas. (It's a hard job, but somebody's got to do it!)

Andy Stewart, Moira Anderson, Dennis Clancy, Calum Kennedy, Alasdair Gillies and Will Starr were just a few of the famous Scottish names Bobby has shared the stage with over the years. Away from the Scottish scene, he has also worked with Anne Murray, Porter Wagner and Dolly Parton in Nashville.

Stuart Thomson (of The Wardlaw SDB) and his wife Audrey were looking after Bobby (and Lisa) during the first part of their holiday – and

Stuart had planned various things for them to do, one of which was to visit an Accordion Club – and Bobby thoroughly enjoyed it. Just being able to sit and listen to Scottish music was great – after all, he can't do that in Canada, since there are no Accordion Clubs over there. However, we shall leave the aforementioned Club nameless, to save any embarrassment! After they arrived and got themselves a seat and settled down to listen to the music, the boys were approached and asked if either of them were players. Bobby swiftly replied “Nope!” so that he could relax on vacation and listen.

Bobby enjoys most kinds of music – especially if it's “harmonic”. Anything from traditional SDB, fiddle music, pipes and drums (his first love) to Frank Sinatra, from Gospel music to big bands – and he even likes to listen to Rod Stewart! Jack Emblow and Art Van Damme are amongst his favourite jazz accordionists, although there are many others.

When he's not playing or listening to music, you'll probably find Bobby somewhere on a golf course relaxing, although he seems to think he's the worst golfer in the world. (He hasn't seen me yet obviously!)

Although he has no specific plans for the future, Bobby Brown intends to continue playing (complete with his Hohner Morino IV) for as long as he possibly can – although he will probably eventually give more of the band's responsibility to Laird, his son. He considers himself to be very fortunate to be able to do what he does in Canada for a living. It's been a roller-coaster ride and he's loved every minute of it – but he wouldn't advise anyone else to do it!

Words of advice to future dance band-leaders: Be true to the music and keep it simple!

In November 2006, Bobby Brown and the Scottish Accent Band were one of four nominees for “Scottish Dance Band of the Year” in the Scots Trad Music Awards.

