

— Record Review —

by Derek Hamilton

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS I had a letter from Canada and several LPs in a package, all from ex-Stan Hamilton Band accordionist Bobby Brown.

Bobby had seen a review in the "Box and Fiddle" of his first LP "The Island Fling" and had been so delighted that he had sent all the albums he's been involved with over the last two or three years.

The other night the phone rang and Bobby Brown was on the other end! This time though he was in Scotland for a short trip when he hoped to tie up a deal for the release of his records in the UK.

Bobby visited with Gibson Ross of Turriff who runs Ross Records (recently signed deals with Bryce Laing for some big name artistes). I understand from Bobby that Gibson Ross will be testing the market fairly soon with some of the Canadian produced goodies.

And goodies they are! Bobby Brown and the Scottish Accent have three current albums—all with full-length dances—which Ross Records now have the rights to reproduce.

Added to that are at least two records by "Cape Breton Symphony" which is one of the best fiddle groups in the world. Bobby arranges all the music and plays piano and accordion with them.

Hopefully all five albums will be released here through Ross Records, but, unfortunately, at time of writing Gibson Ross has gone off on holiday, so I've been unable to confirm his plans.

However, to whet your appetite let me tell you something about "The Scottish Accent" and the "Cape Breton Symphony" and their records.

The Scottish Accent was formed following the breaking-up of Stan Hamilton's Band by leader Bobby Brown. Bobby left the Falkirk area of Scotland and emigrated to Canada back in 1956. He's a super box player with a lightness and enthusiasm

which immediately hits you between the eyes.

There's only two Scots in the band—Bobby himself and the drummer Matt Watson. The others are Canadian, but all with Scottish connections and certainly with a love and feeling for the music which manifests itself in total commitment.

Catchy tunes

The band play some very catchy tunes which have been taken up by some of the best of the Scottish bands. Andrew Rankine has recorded and broadcast the "Lemonville Jig" which first appeared on the Bobby Brown LP "The Island Fling." "The Murray River" is another tune played here and taken from Bobby's record. Alex MacArthur too has broadcast some of the new tunes.

Although the Country Dancers may not know it—they too have taken to Bobby's tunes. They are played at many of the dances up and down the country, both North and South of the border.

George Fleming's very popular Scottish Dance Band has been playing the popular Canadian tunes at dances now for more than two years and the dancers lap them up.

So a combination of good, catchy tunes and superlative playing makes Bobby Brown and The Scottish Accent one of the best Scottish Dance Bands I have heard anywhere.

Well recorded

The records are very well recorded in a very good studio and Bobby himself has complete control of the production. The end result of each record is as good as the last. The sound balance is virtually the same on each.

"The Island Fling" was first released in 1979/1980 and has a selection of nine dances on it.

The jigs are all 8 x 32 bars and include "The Happy Meeting," "Haste to the Wedding" and "The Island Fling."

"The Birks of Abergeldie" is an 8 x 48 bar reel from Book 9 of the RSCDS. "The Baldowan Reel" is a very popular 4 x 32 bar reel and also on this album is one of the best sets of singalong tunes you could wish for included in "The Irish Rover"—Jimmy Cosh's very popular dance. The original tune is followed by "The Minstrel Boy," "The Halls of Montezuma," "Dublin on the Green," "Yankee Doodle Boy," "Wild Colonial Boy," and the "Caissons go Rolling Along"—a real Irish/American singalong!

There's also three strathspeys including Dalkeith's "The Northern Meeting" and "Mary Hamilton" created by John Drewry. The tune for this is of course "Mary Hamilton of Auchencruive" which was composed by Stan Hamilton's father and titled in honour of Stan's mother.

Bobby's second record—"The Maid of the Mill" is in similar vein.

There's a couple of jigs, three strathspeys and three reels, one of which is titled "The Twa Meenit Reel" and utilises the tune "Whistlin' Rufus."

Bobby's latest with The Scottish Accent is "Tarry a While"

and again the format is exactly the same with full-length dances.

He does pick good tunes for the programme on each record and the whole thing is very enjoyable whether you dance or just listen.

Swinging music

If Gibson Ross decides to publish the records here as they are in Canada then the sleeves are also a treat with a good colour photograph on each and copious sleeve notes and dance origins on each too.

The other two records in the series are by the Cape Breton Symphony.

This is a group of four fiddlers who play the most swinging music

in the Scottish/Irish tradition you ever heard. I have to say it—but record one, which was recorded back in 1978, is the better of the two. The fiddles blend beautifully and the backings are immaculate. The choice of tunes too is absolutely first-class. A good mixture of Scottish/Irish and Cape Breton.

Yes, indeed—a feast of good music on five different LP records which hopefully will be available here before too long.