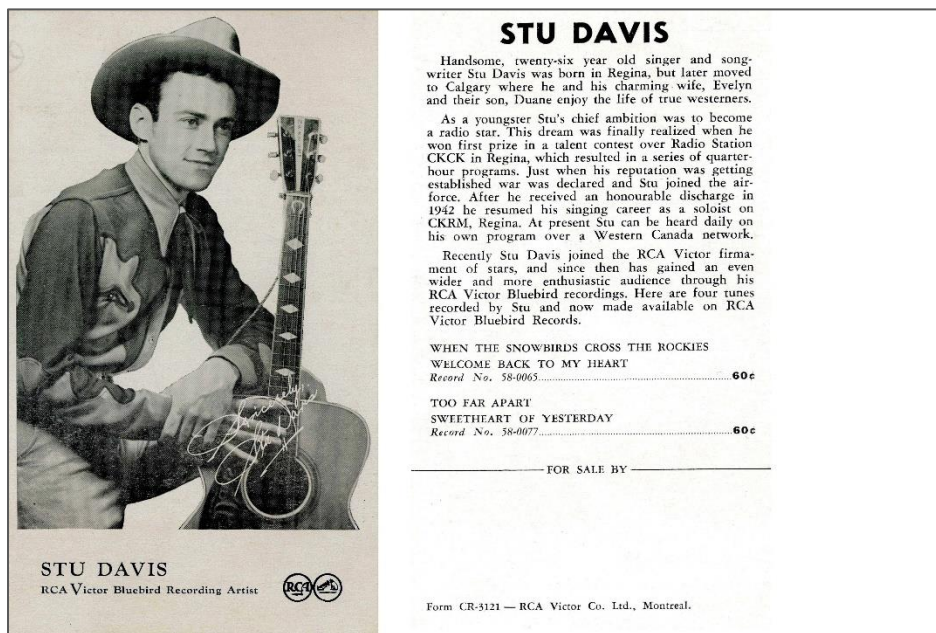


# Stu Davis: Canada's Cowboy Troubadour

by Brock Silversides

Stu Davis was an immense presence on Western Canada's country music scene from the late 1930s to the late 1960s. His is a name no longer well-known, even though he was continually on the radio and television waves regionally and nationally for more than a quarter century. In addition, he released twenty-three singles, twenty albums, and published four folios of songs: a multi-layered creative output unmatched by most of his contemporaries.

Born David Stewart, he was the youngest son of Alex Stewart and Magdalena Fawns. They had emigrated from Scotland to Saskatchewan in 1909, homesteading on Twp. 13, Range 15, west of the 2nd Meridian.<sup>1</sup> This was in the middle of the great Regina Plain, near the town of Francis. The Stewarts



**STU DAVIS**

Handsome, twenty-six year old singer and songwriter Stu Davis was born in Regina, but later moved to Calgary where he and his charming wife, Evelyn and their son, Duane enjoy the life of true westerners.

As a youngster Stu's chief ambition was to become a radio star. This dream was finally realized when he won first prize in a talent contest over Radio Station CKCK in Regina, which resulted in a series of quarter-hour programs. Just when his reputation was getting established war was declared and Stu joined the air-force. After he received an honourable discharge in 1942 he resumed his singing career as a soloist on CKRM, Regina. At present Stu can be heard daily on his own program over a Western Canada network.

Recently Stu Davis joined the RCA Victor firmament of stars, and since then has gained an even wider and more enthusiastic audience through his RCA Victor Bluebird recordings. Here are four tunes recorded by Stu and now made available on RCA Victor Bluebird Records.

WHEN THE SNOWBIRDS CROSS THE ROCKIES  
WELCOME BACK TO MY HEART  
Record No. 58-0065..... 60c

TOO FAR APART  
SWEETHEART OF YESTERDAY  
Record No. 58-0077..... 60c

FOR SALE BY \_\_\_\_\_

Form CR-3121 - RCA Victor Co. Ltd., Montreal.

**STU DAVIS**  
RCA Victor Bluebird Recording Artist

Sales card for Stu Davis (Montreal: RCA Victor Co. Ltd.) 1948  
Library & Archives Canada

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1. *Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta 1916*, Saskatchewan, District 31 Weyburn, Subdistrict 22, Township 13 Range 15, W2M, Schedule No. 1, 3.



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managed to keep the farm going for more than a decade, but only marginally. In 1920 they moved into Regina where Alex found employment as a gardener, then as a teamster for the City of Regina Parks Board. The family moved frequently: city directories show them at 1400 Rae Street (1921), 1367 Lorne North (1923), 929 Edgar Street (1924-1929), 1202 Elliott Street (1933-1936), 1265 Scarth Street for the remainder of the 1930s, and 1178 Cameron Street through the war years.<sup>2</sup>

Through these moves the family kept a hand in farming, with a small farm 12 kilometres northwest of the city near the hamlet of Boggy Creek, a stone's throw from the scenic Qu'Appelle Valley. That is where Stewart was born in 1921. The family lived on the farm all summer, and in Regina during the school year. Raised during the Depression—which was particularly bleak in Saskatchewan due to an extended drought—Stewart's favourite childhood activity was listening to the radio, no doubt inspired by the 257-foot transmitter tower built by Regina radio station CKCK and located right at Boggy Creek.

Stewart became fascinated with country & western music in particular, and as he later explained:

From the time I was knee-high to a grasshopper, I had a hankering for western music. It wasn't until I was twelve years old, though, that I started collecting cowboy songs and ballads. From that time on I collected just about every western ditty that ever was sung.<sup>3</sup>

Upon graduation from high school, he secured a job as a lens grinder with Consol Optical Co. from 1938 to 1940.<sup>4</sup> He also started performing as one half of the Harmony Boys (with his older brother Fred) in his teens.

CKCK was the first commercial radio station in Saskatchewan, established in 1922. Like other broadcasters, it had evolved quickly over its first fifteen years of operation. Programming had started with only a couple of hours of content per day. That included news (usually a reading of stories from *The Leader*), weather, and farm reports, particularly the grain prices. Then they added the occasional church service, talks and lectures, and hockey games. Musical entertainment was slowly added into the mix, with some local performers, but in the mid-1920s, more air time was given over to American transcription discs and commercially available recordings.

In 1925 the Federal Government's Radio Branch brought in a regulation that forbade all broadcasters from airing recordings between 7:30 and midnight. It was based on the assumption that this music just duplicated what people were playing on their gramophones at home, and also that these recordings

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2. *Regina City Directory* (Regina: Henderson Directories), 1921-22, 441; 1922, 430; 1924, 412; 1929, 586; 1933, 502; 1937, 518; 1938, 522; 1939, 525; 1940, 541; 1943, 516; 1944, 462; 1946, 495.

3. Stu Davis, *Stu Davis' Song Corral*, Folio No. 1 (Toronto: Gordon V. Thompson, 1948), inside front cover.

4. *Regina City Directory*, 1938, 523; 1939, 526; 1940, 541.

were overwhelmingly American and had no connection to community life.<sup>5</sup> For evening programming, the stations started hiring (or getting sponsors to pay for) performances by local orchestras and choirs.

The Depression hit the radio stations hard—as it did all businesses—and radio in that period was not a particularly profitable venture to begin with. Prairie broadcasters found they could not afford to pay large ensembles, nor find sponsors, nor acquire and maintain a good record library. As one Canadian radio historian writes, “Many stations were so poor that they could not afford to hire good artists, they filled up the evening hours instead with second-rate performers and “amateur” hours.”<sup>6</sup> On the other hand it was just the encouragement needed to get amateurs out of their living rooms and try expressing themselves to a larger public.

Into this less-than-promising scenario, several instances of real talent stepped up to the CKCK microphone. The first was Eric Edwards, a penniless wanderer with a penchant for yodeling and trick riding. Upon arriving in Regina one day in 1937, he decided to take a break from riding the rails. He heard of an amateur talent show with Wilford “Bill” Schultz, disc jockey, which guaranteed that any performer would get a free breakfast at the Army and Navy store. That was all the incentive he needed, and Edwards yodeled his way through two songs. Schultz liked what he heard, and Edwards—rechristened “Alberta Slim”—became a regular performer on CKCK for the next three years. He went on to host programs at CFQC in Saskatoon and CJRM in Moose Jaw, and had a musical recording career as well.

Another glimpse of obvious talent was found in David Stewart. In 1938 Schultz was looking for yet more local talent to fill out the broadcast schedule. As Stewart modestly remembered:

I decided to try for an audition after I heard some of the western singers of the day and figured I couldn't be much worse. The audition was successful and led to a daily 15-minute series on CKCK.<sup>7</sup>

He entered the contest with an assumed name to avoid embarrassing his family if he was rejected. With the win however, he decided to keep his stage name, Stu Davis. His confidence increased, and Davis became a host/performer on *Studio Party Barn Dance*. Since 1936, CKCK had been run by the management firm of Taylor, Pearson and Carson Ltd. They also managed sister stations CFAC (Calgary), CJCA (Edmonton), and CJOC (Lethbridge), and there were frequent exchanges of both executives and talent among the four. Their choice for general manager of CKCK in 1939 and 1940 was Gerry Gaetz, a name that would recur in Davis's career.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Mary Vipond, *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 127.

6. Vipond, 127.

7. “The CBC's Stu Davis,” *Edmontonian*, April 1964, 4.

8. “CKCK-AM,” History of Canadian Broadcasting, Canadian Communications Foundation, [http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing\\_and\\_histories/radio/ckck-am](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing_and_histories/radio/ckck-am).

It was not a particularly difficult challenge to evoke a “country” feeling at CKCK. As Wilf Collier related in an interview for the book *On Air: Radio in Saskatchewan*:

Our control room...was roughly nine by twelve. Everything was squeezed into that space, including two seventy-eight r.p.m. turntables. The studios were bigger. They occupied the room where the editorial staff and reporters had their ‘office’ space. All the walls were lined with straw pressed into bales about four inches thick with drapes hanging in front of them. This was both for soundproofing and for taking any ‘hollow’ sound from the room. Of course with all that straw the place smelled a bit like a stable and it also made a perfect place for mice to set up housekeeping.<sup>9</sup>

One could only go up from there. Davis started to tentatively write songs that were both naïve and derivative, but still managed to capture a bit of his personality. Both his radio and musical careers were interrupted by World War II. In 1941 he enlisted with the RCAF, and for at least part of his term was stationed at Namao Base in Edmonton. Due to an eye ailment, he was honourably discharged in 1942. That October, he returned to Regina to marry Evelyn Smith, also a singer on CKCK, and found a job as a clerk in the Bank of Commerce through 1943 and 1944.<sup>10</sup> On weekends, he continued as a host/performer on the other station in town, CKRM, owned by the Sifton family.

After almost twenty-two formative years in the Queen City, Davis moved to Calgary in April 1945, and secured a part-time job as disc jockey with CJCJ (later CKXL) hosting a fifteen-minute daily program. He became friends with Jack Dillon, at the time a director of the Calgary Stampede. Recalled Davis:

He wanted to try something new for the Stampede that year – street singing. I agreed to be the entertainer and when visitors started pouring into the city I took my program out on the street and helped create a casual western atmosphere by inviting tourists to join in. The reaction was terrific. It turned out well for all of us and the idea is used today and still is as popular as ever. It’s become a regular feature of the Stampede promotion, along with cooking flapjacks on the street and square dancing.<sup>11</sup>

He also performed regularly at such venues as the Buckhorn Guest Ranch near Pincher Creek, owned by another Stampede director and wealthy oilman Cliff Cross. The Buckhorn gig got him noticed by a movie scout who recommended that he appear as a background entertainer in the feature film *Northwest Stampede*. Directed and produced by Albert Rogell, and starring Joan Leslie, James Craig, and Chill Wills, it was unfortunately a 79-minute exercise in aimlessness. A positive reviewer wrote: “A thin story of a young man and girl outwitting each other in the skill of ranching and riding. Display of good

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9. Wayne Schmalz, *On Air: Radio in Saskatchewan* (Regina, SK: Coteau Books, 1990), 14.

10. *Regina City Directory*, 1943, 516; 1944, 462.

11. “The CBC’s Stu Davis,” *Edmontonian*, April 1964, 4.

horsemanship and fine horses photographed in Cinecolor; pleasant Canadian Rockies background.”<sup>12</sup> On the other hand a not-so-positive reviewer wrote:

Completely meritless Western concerning a top rodeo rider who takes over a ranch....This is one of those films which really is terrible and dull to watch. The story and script are contrived and laboured, with nothing ever really happening.... Film is in colour, which is surprising for a Western released in 1948, although there is some really bad back projection and stock rodeo footage... 'Northwest Stampede' is incredibly tiresome with nothing for the eye or mind to lock on to for more than a couple of minutes. As a low-budget Western...with no names of any note, the film never promised much - despite these low expectations the film fails in every department and has no entertainment value whatsoever.<sup>13</sup>

It did contain plenty of footage of the Calgary Stampede, however, and that was good enough for most viewers.

But it was Davis's live performances at the Stampede where he was observed by the other western Canadian legend Wilf Carter. They became close friends, and it was Carter who convinced his friends at the Chicago-based Sonora Records to sign Davis to a contract in 1946. Sonora Records was a subsidiary of Sonora Radio & Television Corp. The record division started in 1942, at first releasing masters they had purchased from other recording companies. They started their own recording operations in February 1944, negotiating an arrangement with WOR Studios, a subsidiary of the radio station of the same name in New York City. They had as their chief clients fifteen record companies, including Key Note, Classic, Signature, and Feature.

WOR was *the* state-of-the-art recording studio, having opened only two years before. According to *Billboard* in November 1942:

The new WOR recording studios, offering the latest in acoustical properties, lighting installations and recording facilities, were completed last week. Located on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of 1440 Broadway, they are ultramodern in design. Walls were built with obtuse angles to control reverberation, and help eliminate reflections. Two Scully Recording lathes are located in each of the two recording rooms. An audition room is centrally located. Fourteen channels are available at all times, 10 of them located in the reference recording room. Dubbing equipment is installed in a specially designed room isolated from the rest of the studios.<sup>14</sup>

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12. "Northwest Stampede," *Monthly Film Bulletin* 17, no. 193 (January 1, 1950): 30.

13. "Gives Cheap B Westerns of the 40s a Bad Name," IMDb, February 2001, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0040654/reviews>.

14. "New WOR Studios," *Billboard*, November 29, 1942, 6.



This was a far cry from the straw-lined walls of CKCK, and Davis could rightfully feel he was about to enter the big leagues.

The Sonora label was nothing if not eclectic: they issued classical music (Havana Philharmonic Orchestra), children's songs (Uncle Don), polka (Stanislaw Mroczek and his Orchestra), jazz (Coleman Hawkins), rhythm & blues (The Velvetones), opera (Gilbert & Sullivan Light Opera Company), and ethnic (Lani McIntire and his Aloha Islanders). They also started to sell country & western recordings by such acts as Red River Dave & His Orchestra, The Moore Sisters with the Big Buckaroos, and Jesse Rogers and the Pecos Pioneers.

Davis was fast-tracked to a recording session in New York City in September to October of 1946. He was put with a group of studio musicians known as The Northwesters, consisting of Tony Mottola (a well-known banjo player and guitarist already on the Sonora label), Vaughn Horton (steel guitarist and member of The Pinetoppers), Bertram Hirsch (fiddle), Joe Biviano (an accordionist who, with his band The Rhythm Sextet, was also recording for Sonora), and Henry Questa (a clarinetist and saxophonist who would later join the Lawrence Welk Orchestra).

The ensemble cut eight tunes, released as "Rainbow at Midnight" b/w "The Bottom Fell Out of the Sky" in November 1946, then "I Tipped My Hat and Slowly Rode Away" b/w the awkwardly worded "I Can Beat You Doin' (What You're Doin' to Me)" in December of the same year, and several months into 1947 came "Land, Sky and Water" b/w "Darlin', Now I Know the Reason Why."



"Rainbow at Midnight" – Davis's first commercial release (Sonora Records, 78 rpm) 1946



"I Tipped My Hat and Slowly Rode Away" (Sonora Records, 78 rpm) 1946



Advertisement for Stu Davis' first two 78 rpms on Sonora Records  
*Billboard*, December 21, 1946, 18

An advertisement for his first release brought Davis to the attention of the music industry:

A fast-rising star in the ever-profitable field of Western singing is Stu Davis, Sonora's newest record find who appeals to every age group – every record fan. Packed with an easy-going personality, Stu's voice has the restful style so popular with Western fans. Be sure your juke boxes join the Stu Davis band wagon.<sup>15</sup>

Davis's timing was serendipitous. He was on the crest of a wave: the resurgence in the popularity of both western and hillbilly music following World War II. This resurgence was due to many factors, including the romanticized vision of the old west and the cowboy in literature and film. There was also the increasing public presence of "singing cowboys" like Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, as well as film appearances by such acts as Sons of the Pioneers and

Bob Wills. These newer country artists, commonly known as the "Second Generation," were much more comfortable using the media, and radio in particular.

Music writers for *Variety* explained the growth of the wave as "large scale troop movements during the war which aided in popularizing the music of the soil."<sup>16</sup> In other words, a huge number of soldiers in both the American and Canadian armed forces came from the western states and provinces and the rural areas. They spread their knowledge of and love for this music to the rest of the forces.

With the coming of peace, the appreciation for that music continued to spread in both rural and urban areas. In January 1947 *Variety* estimated that:

15% of all major disk pressings today are devoted to folk tunes, mountain ballads and cowboy laments. Even staid New England has begun to unbend and give homegrown down-to-earth music the nod. In 1946 Boston alone bought over 500,000 platters in this category.<sup>17</sup>

15. *Billboard*, December 21, 1946, 18.

16. George Gilbert, "When Hub Goes for Hillbilly Airs Bet They're In!" *Variety*, January 8, 1947, 219.

17. Gilbert, 219.

During his first recording session, Davis completed one of his own compositions, an indisputable classic entitled “What a Fool I Was (To Ever Let You Go)” released as a 78 rpm. Its B-side was “Crossroads” written by Red River Dave McEnery. It did not take off immediately, for Davis was still a relative unknown. However the much more famous “Tennessee Plowboy,” Eddy Arnold, recorded his own version of “What a Fool I Was,” and it became one of *Billboard’s* Top Ten Tunes for 1948.

What A Fool I Was To Ever Let You Go 3

Recorded on Victor by  
EDDIE ARNOLD

Words and Music by  
STU DAVIS

Moderato

*p* con *espressione* *Es* *Es* *Fmi7* *Bb7* *Es* *A6* *Es* *Es7*

1. I'm so lone-ly as I write this note to you, Sweet -  
2. Sweet - heart, I know that I was all to blame, Still I  
3. Oh, - won't you try to give me one more chance? My

*p* *a tempo*

*A6* *Es*

heart, I know that I still love you true, Now that  
won-der if you love me just the same, How un-  
dar! - in, let's re - new our old ro - mance, It will

*A6* *Es*

we are far a - part, There's a long-in' in my heart, And I'm  
worth - y, dear, am I, I re - gret that last good - bye, Can you  
mean the world to me, "If you'll grant this one last plea!" Oh, -

\*Symbol for Ostinato, Ukulele and Banjo.  
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“What a Fool I Was (To Ever Let You Go)” – sheet music  
(New York: Bob Miller Inc., 1946)

While he may not have considered this to be one of his best songs, Davis was nevertheless fully aware that it earned him his reputation, record contracts, and publishing deals. Twenty years later, in a 1968 issue of *Canadian Composer*, he recounted in the column entitled “My Most Successful Work” that the song had legs:

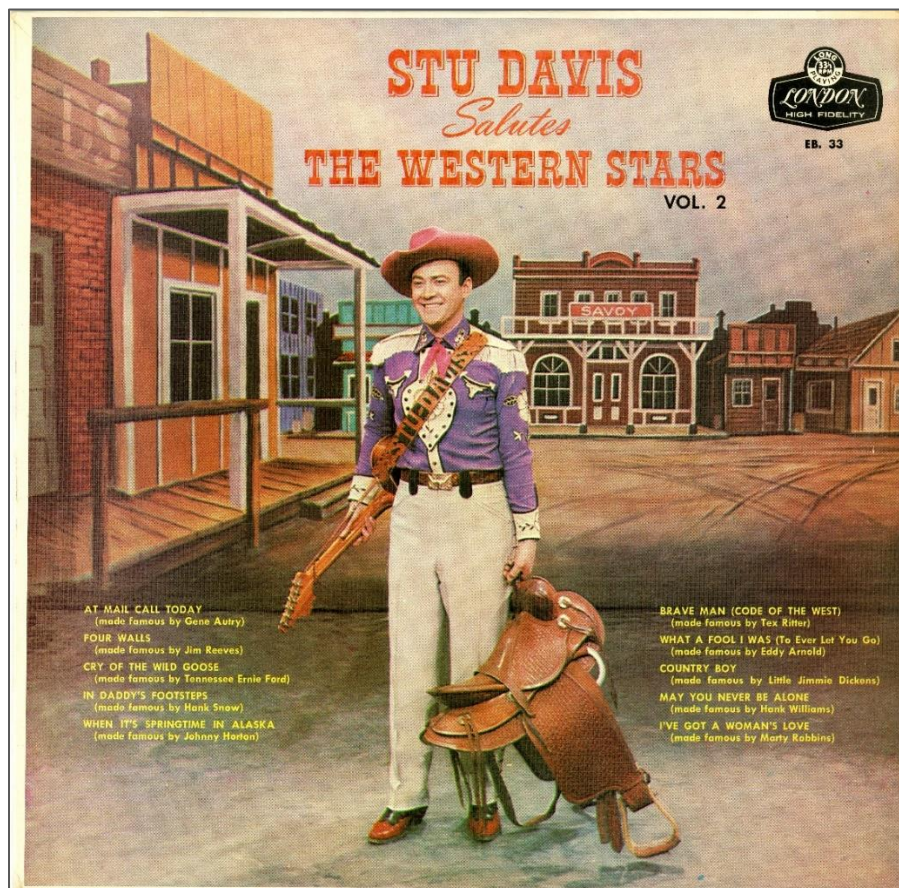
Oddly enough, the song I have selected as my most successful work is the first composition I ever had published. In my opinion, I had written several other songs in the “country-western” vein that were superior, and have since, but this particular song which I entitled *What A Fool I Was (To Ever Let You Go)* happened to fall on the ear of an up-and-coming singer named Eddy Arnold, and from that day on it has been the most successful song in my own personal repertoire.



Among the songs I recorded on my first session was the aforementioned *What A Fool I Was*. Eddy Arnold heard it and decided it was his type of number and contacted Bob Miller Inc. in New York who had accepted the song for publication.

Eddy Arnold recorded the song in 1948 and it was high on the hit charts for several months and was listed in *Billboard* among the top ten folk tunes for that year. The song has been a consistent seller ever since and has been recorded and performed regularly by other prominent artists. Just recently Eddy Arnold recorded the song again with a more up-to-date musical and vocal arrangement for inclusion in a special LP album of his biggest hits entitled *One More Time*.

With well over 1,000,000 sales racked up for the initial recording as a single, this re-issue in an album of Arnold's biggest sellers assures the song of even bigger sales in both the country and western and pop fields. My own recording of *What A Fool I Was* was instrumental in my obtaining a contract with RCA Victor and in recent years I have re-recorded it myself for a London LP entitled *Stu Davis Salutes the Western Stars*.<sup>18</sup>



Cover of *Stu Davis Salutes the Western Stars, Vol. 2*  
(London Records, LP) ca. 1960

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18. Stu Davis, "My Most Successful Work," *Canadian Composer*, no. 34 (November 1968): 30.

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Davis started to write prolifically on topics both personal and universal. Though again partially formulaic, they did appear to genuinely reflect vignettes of everyday life. There were odes to his parents and family life; stories about farmers and farming; accounts of counter-culture heroes such as outlaws, gangsters, convicts and robbers; frequent paeans to the cowboy and his activities (including the rodeo); a number of religious songs (though he saved those all up for one album, *The Touch of God's Hand*); rounded out by the occasional novelty song for kids.

His big topic though was relationships: unrequited love, an unfaithful woman, or carrying a torch that continues to be painful. From the beginning, Davis's original "hurtin'" songs rolled off his pen easily and in large numbers. A country songwriter from this period was expected to write about heartbreak, but Davis was able to mine a large vein of relationship melancholia whenever needed. It was all the more appealing because it ran counter to his smiling and upbeat public image, and implied he had some depth. A number of his cover songs even ran over this ground, such as Jimmy Hodges's "Sweetheart of Yesterday," and Bob Nolan's "I Still Do." Perhaps Davis had had his heart broken by a Regina girl as a young man and never forgot. On the other hand, he ended up marrying his life partner, and they stayed together for more than fifty years.

His melodies were simple yet memorable. His lyrics were also simple, but included some clever rhyming, and frequently a touch of humour. The famous country music publisher Bob Miller was interviewed in 1947 about the kinds of country music that were popular in the post-war period:

"A writer must have an intimate feeling for the people he's aiming his song at," Miller observes. "It's the simple songs that sell. Most pop tunes of today are written for the top bands to play. The music is apt to be hard for the man on Main Street... he only buys the simple melodies. Most songs have too many fancy chords for the average sheet music buyer."<sup>19</sup>

He also added this oddly insightful comment:

Today a lot of people sing because they are afraid. In this atomic age, they seek an escape in church music and plain down to earth melodies such as hillbilly tunes. And the difference between a hillbilly song and cowboy number is only a ten-gallon hat.<sup>20</sup>

People wanted to forget about hard to comprehend worldwide conflict and never-ending casualties. They wanted to go back to an earlier, simpler time. Davis was able to provide this in spades.

In 1946 Davis jumped over to radio station CFCN, self-styled as The Voice of the Prairies Ltd., also in Calgary. He continued with his daily 15-minute show, as well as a three-hour program every Friday night.

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19. Gilbert, "When Hub Goes for Hillbilly," 219.

20. Gilbert, 219.

As he did at CJJ (and for the rest of his radio career), Stu wrote his own scripts, and often acted as producer-director.

Much of Davis's musical and broadcasting activities in the late 1940s and 1950s can be retraced from the reporting of two *Billboard* writers: Johnny Sippel and Bill Sachs. Both oversaw the column "Folk Talent and Tunes" in the trade magazine, and Davis's name came up frequently in company with his "Second Generation" then-peers Faron Young, Roy Acuff, Cowboy Copas, Red Foley, The Blackwood Brothers, Tex Williams, and his old CKCK buddy Alberta Slim.

In 1947 RCA Victor Records saw the positive reaction his Sonora recordings were receiving in the United States, and they offered him a more lucrative contract. As they also had better distribution and marketing than Sonora, Davis felt it was a step up, and of course he was also joining the label that had signed many of his most admired artists, Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Slim Whitman, and Hank Snow. In October 1947, he returned to New York City, this time to RCA Studios at 155 E. 24th Street. This was the famed studio in which Elvis Presley and his original band would record "Hound Dog" and "Don't Be Cruel" several years later.

With his same group of session musicians (with the addition of Jim Day) Davis recorded another eight songs. *Billboard* gave notice of the first product out of the gate on March 20, 1948: "Stu Davis, Canadian cowboy crooner heard over CFAC, Alberta, gets his Victor Record debut with When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies."<sup>21</sup>

It was an odd choice for his debut RCA release. "When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies" was written by Gene Autry (with Richard Howard and Leonard Joy). Autry had released his version in June 1947, so less than a year had elapsed before Davis's version hit the stores. The B-side was "Welcome Back to My Heart" by Milton Leeds and Bob Miller, the famous songwriter and more importantly a music publisher Davis admired.

The next 78 release was "Too Far Apart" (a return nod to Arnold who had written it) b/w "Sweetheart of Yesterday" which was released in June 1948. Following on its heels came "Crying for You" b/w "The Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat" (a slightly sarcastic Davis-penned song about a cowboy poseur from New Jersey) in August, and "Always Keep Your Promise" b/w "I'm Gonna Leave Town" in November 1948. The latter was reviewed in *Billboard*. Of "I'm Gonna Leave Town" it wrote, "rhythmic rendition of novelty ditty, with spirited tenor warbling," while "Always Keep Your Promise" was summed up with "Romantic old-fashioned waltz tune is warmly warbled by Stu."<sup>22</sup>

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21. "Music – As Written," *Billboard*, March 20, 1948, 19.

22. "Record Reviews," *Billboard*, December 18, 1948, 112.

**The Dude In The Ten Gallon Hat** 5

Recorded as Victor by  
STU DAVIS

Medium tempo

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International Copyright

**“Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat” – sheet music  
(Toronto: Gordon V. Thomson, 1947)**

Davis had been wise to jump off the Sonora wagon when he did. The wheels started to come off in 1948, and it was reported in the October 23rd *Billboard* that the company was selling some of its assets: “Rondo Records purchased 80 assorted masters, mostly hillbilly and race, from the old Sonora backlog thru Milt Benjamin. Included are sides by Bob Stanley, Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy, Stu Davis, Snub Mosley, the Velvetones and The Moore Sisters.”<sup>23</sup> Of these, Rondo appears to have only re-released one Davis recording “I Can Beat You Doin’ (What You’re Doin’ to Me)” in 1951.

In the spring of 1948, Davis joined his third Calgary station, CFAC, another private broadcaster (Calgary Broadcasting Co. Ltd.) whose studio was located at 622 – 1<sup>st</sup> Street W. His program *Stu Davis Songs* (sponsored by G.W.G.) aired Monday to Friday from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. It was also picked up by his former Regina station CKRM.

*Billboard* reported on November 27, 1948 that:

Stu Davis, Canada’s Cowboy Troubadour, who airs a daily show on CFAC, Calgary, Alta., and a daily e.t. show on five other Canadian stations, reports that he has assigned six more tunes to Southern Music and one to Bob Miller Inc. Stu’s latest release on Victor is *The Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat* and *Cryin’ For You*.<sup>24</sup>

23. “Music – As Written,” *Billboard*, October 23, 1948, 41.

24. Johnny Sippel, “Folk Talent and Tunes,” *Billboard*, November 27, 1948, 35.



In the Fall of 1949, Davis took a short sabbatical, packed up his wife and young son Duane (born 1944), and embarked on a tour of the United States. He played a number of live concerts, but he also made a point of appearing on a number of well-known country & western radio programs. One of the first was the *Sunset Valley Barn Dance* on KSTP of St. Paul, Minnesota. It was a Saturday evening show produced by David Stone, the original announcer of the Grand Ole Opry. It featured some of the more colorful (though not necessarily top-drawer) artists, like Fiddlin' Russ, Fiddlin' Hank, Cactus Slim, Six-Gun Mel, and Trapper Nash.<sup>25</sup> Then it was on to the *National Barn Dance* on WLS coming out of Chicago. That station had such a clear, strong signal that it covered the entire American Midwest as well as the Canadian Prairies. It was also linked into the ABC Radio Network. Hosted by Jack Holden, it featured top-line talent: Gene Autry, Homer & Jethro, George Gobel, the Hoosier Hot Shots, and Pat Buttram (known later as Mr. Haney on "Green Acres.") *Billboard* announced this date in September 1949:

Stu Davis (Victor), heard on CJCA, Edmonton, Alta. is visiting the U.S., and will work the "National Barn Dance" ABC seg. September 24. Davis has been working Canadian dates with Ameen Ganum, "Canada's King of Western Swing."<sup>26</sup>

Davis arrived next in New York City and was invited onto the *Prairie Pals* program on WOV. This was an immensely popular six evening per week program hosted by singer/songwriter Rosalie Allen, who was also known as "The Queen of Yodeling." Finally Davis ascended the country music summit, and appeared on the venerable *Grand Ole Opry*, without doubt the most prestigious of the weekly stage concert broadcasts. Situated in Nashville, it began on local station WSM, went national on the NBC Network in 1939, and was heard on more than 140 stations. The performances/broadcasts moved to the famous Ryman Auditorium in 1943 and that decade saw ground-breaking concerts by Eddy Arnold, Minnie Pearl, Cowboy Copas, Little Jimmy Dickens, Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff, and Hank Williams. It was an extraordinary achievement for Davis to be accepted on the same stage as these legends.

While he enjoyed connecting with new audiences, he realized he did not want to follow the life of a touring musician; his wife and son were his clear priority. It also became clear he wanted to stay in Canada. Following the tour, there was a huge spike in interest in Davis's songwriting by record companies, artists, and publishers. Somewhat wise now in the ways of business and not wanting to put all his eggs in one basket, Davis decided to place his original compositions with various publishers, not just one. He chose as his first Canadian publisher the well-known company Gordon V. Thompson of Toronto. He gave at least three songs to them: "Driftin' On" (1947), "You're Resting Here at Last" (1947), and "Dusty Saddle" (1947). They also issued his first collected folio of sheet music in 1948, a sixteen-song set entitled *Stu Davis' Song Corral*.

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25. "KSTP Sunset Valley Barn Dance," Hillbilly-Music.com, <http://www.hillbilly-music.com/programs/story/index.php?prog=120>.

26. "Folk Talent and Tunes," *Billboard*, September 24, 1949, 120.



Cover of *Stu Davis' Song Corral* (Folio No. 1)  
(Toronto: Gordon V. Thompson, 1948)

This was his first opportunity to properly introduce himself. Davis's forward—unfortunately rendered by his editors in stereotyped “cowboy” slang, started with “Well, howdy folks!”:

This is Stu Davis talking to you from the old “Song Corral.” I left the gates wide open so’s you could come right in and sit down for a while, because I have a few things to tell you about myself...Now, I never had a chance to “toot my own horn” before, so what say we take it right from the start? – OK...I was born in the “heart of the west” and a cold part of the west – good old Saskatchewan.<sup>27</sup>

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27. Davis, *Stu Davis' Song Corral*, inside front cover.

He explained his youthful enthusiasm for collecting songs, then:

In 1938 I started making some use of these songs. That was when I got my first chance to sing on the radio. In the years that followed I sang on several Canadian radio stations...I did some entertaining at the world-famous "Calgary Stampede" where a lot of the real bronco-bustin' boys gather. I also did a little trail riding and singing at the "Buckhorn Guest Ranch" in Southern Alberta. Around those parts I had the good luck to meet and become very good friends with a fellow named "Wilf Carter." Wilf seemed to like my singing, I guess, because he put in a few good words for me with some of the "big fellows" in New York.... While in New York on my first recording date, I met several of the top-notch recording and radio artists of today. Among those were Elton Britt, Zeke Manners, Texas Jim Robertson, Ray Whitley, Rosalie Allen, The Buchanan Brothers and the Moore Sisters.<sup>28</sup>

He ended his piece with:

That just about brings us up to date, so take a sing through "Song Corral" and tell me how you like it...So long for now and may all the trails you travel lead to happiness and success!<sup>29</sup>

The titles of the songs in this folio are all pure cowboy: "A Ridin' My Old Pinto," "Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat," "Dusty Saddle," "Goodnight Little Cowboy," "Just a Blue Buckaroo," "Memories of My Saddle Pals," "Old Cowpuncher," "Rockin' in My Saddle," and—licensed from Bob Miller Inc., his hit—"What a Fool I Was (To Ever Let You Go)."

Davis continued to parcel out his songs. He gave a large number to Peer International, a BMI affiliate, which was good for sales numbers, as the sheet music was published simultaneously in both New York and Toronto. They took "My San Fer-Nan-Do Rose" (1947), "Down at the End of Romance Road" (1948), "On the Trail to Your Heart" (1948), "There's a Cowboy Goin' Home" (1948), "I'll Be Gone (When You Read this Note from Me) (1948), "Have You Forgotten?," "It Takes a Heap of Dreamin' (To Dream Your Blues Away) (1948), and "I Got Cowboy Music in My Soul" (1948).

Finally he assigned six more to Empire Music Publishers of New Westminster, BC who took "Canadian Waltz" (1949), "Tears of Shame" (1949), "In Daddy's Footsteps" (1952), "Why Should I Send You Flowers" (1950), "Deserted" (1952), and "I Looked for Love" (1952). Empire also issued his second compendium of songs appropriately entitled *Stu Davis' Saddle Bag of Songs* (1949). This collection contained mostly "hurtin'" songs: "Don't Kick My Heart Around," "Just as Long as You're Happy," "Never Darken My Door Again," and "Tears of Shame." However it also included two songs from Davis's roots:

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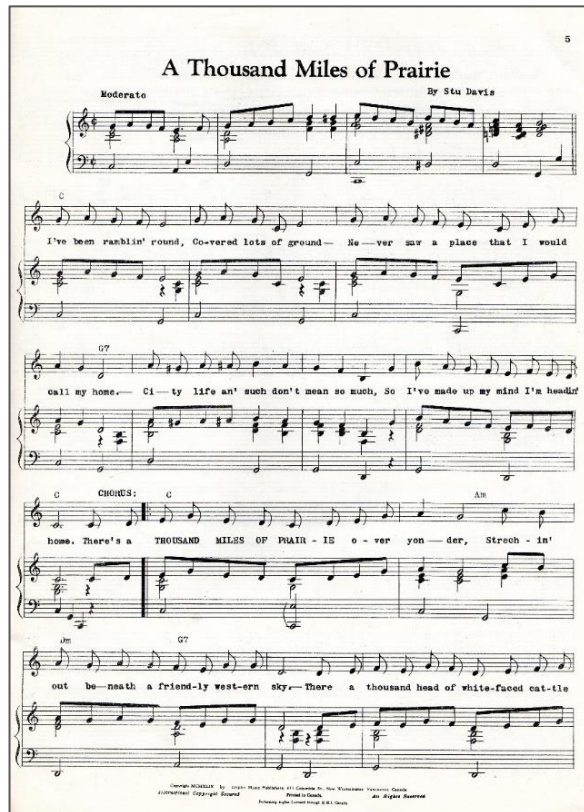
28. Davis, *Stu Davis' Song Corral*, inside front cover.

29. Davis, inside front cover.

“A Thousand Miles of Prairie” and “Canadian Waltz,” “Alberta Cowboy,” a tune intended for the Calgary Stampede, and one existential tune, “Lost on the Trail,” questioning his life choices.



Cover of *Stu Davis' Saddle Bag of Songs (Folio No. 2)* (New Westminster: Empire Music Publishers, 1949)



“A Thousand Miles of Prairie” - sheet music (New Westminster: Empire Music Publishers, 1949)

Davis also continued his connection with Bob Miller Inc. at 1619 Broadway Avenue in New York. Miller was founded in 1933, and the following year published *Bob Miller's Famous Folio of Original Cowboy Songs*. Davis had a copy as a teenager, and had always wanted his songs to be a part of this grouping. After “What a Fool I Was,” he gave them “It’s Just a Wild Rose That I’m Sending,” “Where the Sleepy Rio’s Flowing,” and “Darlin’ Now I Know the Reason Why,” all of which were issued in 1947.

Davis’s sheet music sold well. Therefore it was not surprising when *Billboard’s* Johnny Sippel reported in his February 12, 1949 column, “Folk Talent and Tunes,” that Davis had signed a number of tunes over to a relatively new company with a huge reputation:

Stu Davis, Canada’s Cowboy Troubadour, CFAC, Calgary, Alta. has signed with Hill & Range Songs Inc., which is readying a folio for release soon. Stu is lining up his Melody Wranglers band for a tour.<sup>30</sup>

30. Johnny Sippel, “Folk Talent and Tunes,” *Billboard*, February 12, 1949, 30.



Based out of the Brill Building in New York City, Hill & Range also represented songwriters such as Bob Wills, Spade Cooley, Eddy Arnold, Lefty Frizzel, Web Pierce, and in the 1950s would add Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, Doc Pomus, Elvis Presley, and Phil Spector to their roster.



“When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies” and “Welcome Back to My Heart” (Armed Forces Radio Service, 16 in. transcription disc) 1949

In either the last month of 1948 or more likely early 1949, Davis’s radio “reach” was multiplied many times over, introducing his voice and guitar to Europe for the first time, when two of his songs were included on a transcription disc and broadcast over the Armed Forces Radio Service. This was the radio network of the American Armed Forces, a branch of the Morale Service Division. Founded by Edward M. Kirby, formerly of the National Association of Broadcasters, it began operations in 1942, providing news, PSAs, music, drama, comedy, sports, and variety programming to the US military establishments round the world, to government civilians at overseas bases, to ships at sea, and to hospitals and convalescent facilities.

The stations of the Armed Forces Radio Service started to operate first in the UK, then France, and after the cessation of hostilities, in occupied Germany. By 1945 there were more than 300 stations providing 50 hours of programming per week, 14 produced by the AFRS, and 36 re-broadcast commercially produced network shows. Military personnel were not the only listeners. Civilians on both sides of the Iron Curtain found the broadcasts to be their only reliable and up-to-date source of news and entertainment. The AFRS would continue until 1954 when it merged with the Armed Forces Television Service.

All entertainers wanted to be included in the AFRS offerings. In the field of music, the major artists of the era contributed either live performances or previously recorded tunes. Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Peggy Lee, Al Jolson, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and Duke Ellington were regulars. In country and western, the usual suspects: Roy Rogers, Slim Whitman, Bob Wills, Spade Cooley, and Eddy Arnold led the field. Davis’s two songs were “When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies” and “Welcome Back to My Heart,” both popular RCA Victor recordings. He was coupled with another RCA country crooner, Dave Denney, who also happened to be a radio host on WHN – New York City. Denney’s two songs were “I’m Waltzing with a Broken Heart” and “Part of My Heart is Missing.”

June 1949 saw Davis's third recording session, but this time he chose to stay in Canada. With a new backing group, The Melody Mavericks featuring Pat Gerow (a Hawaiian steel guitar player and part-time circus carney), Jim Day, and Fiddlin' Red Crawford (a fiddler with a solo career of his own), he completed another five tunes at the Aragon Recording Studio in Vancouver. The studio was founded in 1946 by Al Reusch, an ex-Saskatchewanian who had started his career in the entertainment business playing saxophone in a jazz big band at the Trianon Ballroom in Regina in the late 1930s. As a teenager, Davis no doubt saw him in this venue.

Touring brought Reusch to Vancouver in 1940, but tiring of the life of a musician, he moved into the radio field. After stints at CFJC (Kamloops) and CJCA (Edmonton), he returned to Vancouver in 1945 to become a disk jockey with CKNW (*The Al Reusch Show*) and then deejay and production manager at CKMO (*Name It, Play It*). In 1946 he and two partners decided there was a market in Vancouver for a recording studio: "After the war a lot of people wanted to record and send messages home," he explains. "So we rented space in an office building at 615 West Hastings and soundproofed it."<sup>31</sup> A year later Reusch expanded his business to include his own record label, Aragon Records.



Advertisement for Aragon Recordings, Vancouver  
*Coast News*, 5 July 1951, p. 11

Aragon quickly became the most-respected label for country artists in Canada. On its roster were The Rhythm Pals, Keray Regen, Evan Kemp & the Trailriders, Sons of the Saddle, The Peace River Rangers, Buddy Reynolds, The Calgary Range Riders, and the Tumbling Tumbleweeds. With such good company, Davis decided he wanted all of his songs recorded on the west coast to be released on Aragon Records.

*Billboard* reported on August 26, 1950 that "Stu

Davis, the Canadian warbler, has inked with Aragon-London label of Canada. He became father of a son recently."<sup>32</sup> This was his second child – Derry.

The Vancouver songs: "I Looked for Love" b/w "In Daddy's Footsteps," "Deserted" b/w "Black Mountain Rag," "Flying Enterprise" b/w "Phantom Waltz," and "I Went to Your Wedding" b/w "Why Should I Send You Flowers" were issued throughout 1952. Fellow Canadian singer Hank Snow (with The Jordanaires) recorded his own version of "In Daddy's Footsteps" in 1953, further raising Davis's profile.

Davis moved to Edmonton (as a civilian) for the first time in the summer of 1949. He was lured by CJCA to host the program *Country Corral*. CJCA had been broadcasting since 1922. Located in the Birks Building at 10032 Jasper Avenue, its station manager was Gerry Gaetz, who had been at CKCK in Regina when Davis got his start.

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31. John Mackie, "Music Man Has Found Harmony in Life: Al Reusch, a Man of Many Parts in Western Canadian Music, Has Been Performer, Disc Jockey and Producer," *Vancouver Sun*, December 19, 1998, B1.

32. Johnny Sippel, "Folk Talent and Tunes," *Billboard*, August 26, 1950, 32.

The carrot was the opportunity to not just spin disks, but to interview visiting musicians. And indeed he did converse on-air with notables like Gene Autry, Ernest Tubb, Hank Snow, his old friend from New York Elton Britt (who was also the singing partner of Rosalie Allen), Johnny Bond, and Dick Nolan and the Sons of the Pioneers.

*Billboard* dutifully reported on July 29, 1950:

Stu Davis, Canada's Cowboy Troubadour, has a two-hour daily d.j. show on CJCA, Edmonton, Alta., combined with a quarter-hour live show with the Radio Wranglers, also a two-hour, barn-dance on the Alberta network on Saturdays."<sup>33</sup>



A rare picture of Stu Davis working as a disc jockey, CJCA Studio, Edmonton, 1951  
From *Songs by Stu Davis* (Folio No. 3)  
(Toronto: Canadian Music Sales, 1953)

The next set of recordings took place in Vancouver in June 1949 with Jim Day and Pat Gerow. A month later in Edmonton he also recorded two songs with accordionist Doug Goldsmith, fiddler Ted Preston, and bassist Wally McDonald, the ensemble he called the Radio Wranglers. They likely recorded in the studios of CJCA as there was no other facility in the city at the time capable of professional taping. These two songs made up his next Aragon 78 rpm, "Canadian Waltz" b/w "Child of Divorce," which came out in 1950.

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33. Johnny Sippel, "Folk Talent and Tunes," *Billboard*, July 29, 1950, 29.





Stu Davis and the Radio Wranglers (l. to r. Ted Preston, Doug Goldsmith, Duane Davis, Stu Davis, Wally MacDonald) playing at the “Eaton Good Deed Party”, Edmonton, December 1949  
 Photo by Alfred Blyth  
 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Alfred Blyth Collection, BL.1705/2

The Radio Wranglers became a real backup band, and started playing live dates around Alberta. For example they played the Stony Plain Rodeo in August 1950:

An estimated crowd of 6,000 saw Alf Neilson, Halkirk, Alta., take top saddle bronk riding honors at the Kinsmen Club stampede here. Jim Martin, Red Deer, was the winner in bareback; Albert and Alex Laye, Sounding Lake, tied in steer riding, and Alex Laye took first in calf roping. Stu Davis, recording artist, and George Welsh, trick roper, entertained.<sup>34</sup>

*The Irma Times* reported on Kinsella district happenings later in 1950: “Stu Davis and the radio wranglers are playing for a dance on Thursday, Nov. 30 in the Memorial Hall. Come and bring your friends.”<sup>35</sup> Another notice in a September 1951 issue of the *St. Albert Gazette*:

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34. “Stony Plain, Alta., Rodeo Draws an Estimated 6,000,” *Billboard*, August 26, 1950, 50.

35. “News Items from Kinsella & District,” *Irma Times*, December 1, 1950, 1.



A hayride and wiener roast will be held on Sunday....The hay rack will leave from the Bluebird Café at 3:30 p.m. It is being sponsored by the CYO and all are invited to attend. Don't forget Stu Davis and his gang will be in Morinville September 21.<sup>36</sup>

Davis switched his label affiliation to Apex Records at the start of the 1950s. The Apex label was a low-budget, mostly Canadian label with a distinguished history. It was started in 1921 as the house label of the Compo Company, Canada's first independent recording studio and record pressing plant based in Montreal. Established by Herbert Berliner, eldest son of audio disc pioneer Emile Berliner, the Compo Co. had three other labels: Sun (for foreign releases), Ajax ("race" music for the American black market), and the forward-looking Radia-tone (recordings of radio performances, speeches and church services). It was Apex, however, that issued recordings by Canadian artists, both Anglophone and Francophone. Some of the more notable early acts included Willie Eckstein, Wilf Carter, Don Messer, Marg Osborne & Charlie Chamberlain, Gaby Haas and the Barndance Gang, The Calgary Kid (Allen Erwin), Frankie Rodgers, and the Adanac Quartet.

The Compo family of labels became affiliated with the US label Decca in 1935, and in 1951 was purchased outright by the American company. From 1935 to 1942 the Apex label had been dropped altogether, revived only to continue releasing Canadian recordings. Apex's sales and reputation had deteriorated during the fifties, and the label was only kept alive by altering its all-Canadian status and incorporating a number of US artists. Decca was in turn bought out by the conglomerate M.C.A. in 1963.



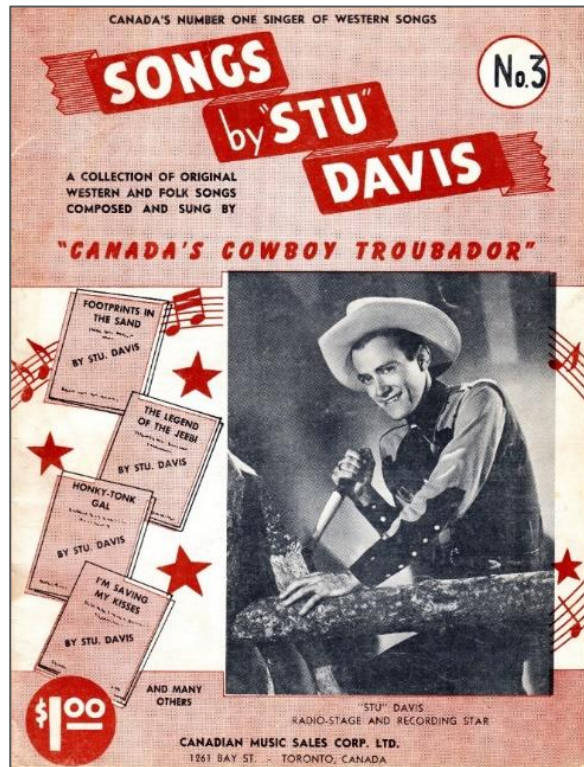
**"I'm Gonna Foreclose the Mortgage"**  
(Apex Records, 45 rpm) 1952

Davis would release five singles on Apex, all recorded in the Compo Studio at 117 Metcalfe Street in Montreal: "Legend of the Jeebi" b/w "Parking Meter Blues" (still on 78 rpm); "I'm Gonna Foreclose the Mortgage" b/w "Three Little Secrets"; "Queen Elizabeth Special" b/w "Foothills Breakdown"; "Oil Capital Shuffle" b/w "Red Crawford's Breakdown"—credited to Red Crawford, Stu Davis & The Cowtowners; and finally "She's Cute as a Bug in a Rug" b/w "Lovelorn Heart."

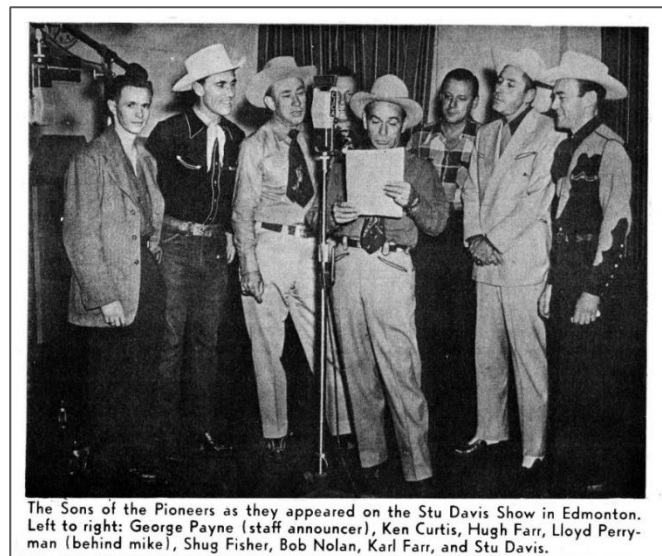
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36. "Morinville News Briefs," *St. Albert Gazette*, September 21, 1951, 1.

After almost four years, Davis returned to Calgary in May 1952. His entry in the Calgary directory simply indicated he was an “artist CKXL,” and lived at 2608-25 Street S.W.<sup>37</sup> This year also saw the publication of his third portfolio of compositions. It was called simply *Songs by Stu Davis*, and was issued by Canadian Music Sales based in Toronto. This book was a special one for Davis. Not only did it contain the sheet music for another sixteen songs, but it also included fourteen photographs of Davis at work as a disc jockey, with radio station personnel, with guests on his CICA program, including the Sons of the Pioneers, Hank Snow, Gene Autry, two shots of Davis at home, and two shots of him and the Radio Wranglers at his farewell live performance at the Strand Theatre in Edmonton.



Cover of *Songs by Stu Davis* (Folio No. 3)  
(Toronto: Canadian Music Sales, 1953)



The Sons of the Pioneers as they appeared on the Stu Davis Show in Edmonton. Left to right: George Payne (staff announcer), Ken Curtis, Hugh Farr, Lloyd Perryman (behind mike), Shug Fisher, Bob Nolan, Karl Farr, and Stu Davis.

Stu Davis with Sons of the Pioneers, in CICA Studios, Edmonton, 1951  
From *Songs by Stu Davis* (Folio No. 3)  
(Toronto: Canadian Music Sales, 1953)

37. *Henderson's Calgary Directory* (Winnipeg: Henderson Directories, 1953), 1121.

His forward again started with the cowboy affectation “Well, Howdy friends”:

I’ve done a heap of travellin’ since I last chatted with you – done a lot of stage shows throughout Alberta, and met with so many swell folks. I hope I’ll be meetin’ up with a lot more of you as time goes on. I’d like to thank all you nice people for buying all my latest records, and I hope you’ll continue to find a spot in your own private record library for my recordings. One tune in particular that I owe thanks for is “THE FATE OF THE FLYING ENTERPRISE”...you really made it a “top” tune by requesting it on all the western radio programs – and by buying the records.

At this time I am back in Calgary the Stampede City – where I lived for four years prior to my stay in Edmonton. It’s sure nice to be back broadcasting here and singing for all my old friends in the Calgary territory...here’s where I hope to stay.<sup>38</sup>

He ended with: “Gotta skidaddle again friends...be seeing you again...thanks to Canadian Music Sales for doing such a swell job on this folio.”<sup>39</sup>

Included in this collection were the heartbreakers “I’ll Be Glad to Forget You,” “You Walked Out of My Heart,” and “Roses in the Snow,” but there were also tributes to his Prairie roots: “Evening on the Prairie” and “Yonder on the Rollin’ Plains,” two morality tales: “You Can’t Buy True Love with Gold” and “Cryin’ over Spilt Milk,” and one religious tune: “God’s Almighty Hand.”

In August 1953 the CBC, in response to a pronounced audience desire for country music, launched six new radio programs “with a distinctly western flavor.”<sup>40</sup> Some aired on weekday afternoons on a three-province, three-station linkup (CBW, CBK, CBX), and some in the evenings on the entire CBC Trans-Canada network. There were two 30-minute programs: from Winnipeg came *The Homesteaders* with Richard Seaborn, and from Calgary, *Western Hit Parade* hosted by Vic Siebert and the Sons of the Saddle. The other four programs, each fifteen minutes, made up what was called *The Western Roundup*. They included Stu Davis from Calgary, Edwin Nylvek & The Ranch Gang from Saskatoon, “Old Dad” Taylor & His Orchestra from Edmonton, and rounding it out were The Rhythm Pals from Vancouver.

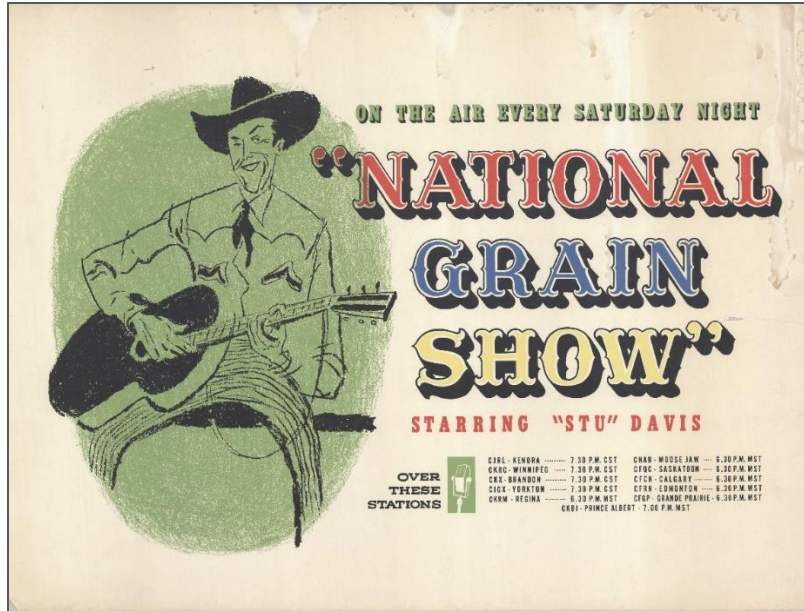
While happy in Calgary, Davis’s stay would not last long. He was tempted in 1954 to relocate to Winnipeg to star in a networked Saturday night CKRC radio program called *The National Grain Show* sponsored, obviously, by The National Grain Co. This was a relatively new corporation, headquartered in Winnipeg, and trying to make a name for itself by associating with a popular radio show. CKRC was an anchor of the first ten-station western network which included CJRL (Kenora), CKX (Brandon), CIGX (Yorkton), CKRM (Regina), CHAB (Moose Jaw), CFQC (Saskatoon), CFCN (Calgary), CFRN (Edmonton), CFGP (Grande Prairie), and CKBI (Prince Albert).

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38. Stu Davis, “A Letter from ‘Stu’,” *Songs by Stu Davis*, Folio No. 3 (Toronto: Canadian Music Sales, 1953), inside front cover.

39. Davis, *Songs by Stu Davis*, inside front cover.

40. *CBC Times* (Prairie Region), August 2-8, 1953, 1.



Poster for *National Grain Show* with Stu Davis, 1954  
 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Stu Davis Fonds, PR1992.0519.0062

It may seem to have been a sideways move for Davis. However, he did have a larger plan in mind. He was fascinated with broadcasting, and wanted to get in on the ground floor of the new medium of television. He wanted to be in the city which was destined to be the first Canadian television production centre west of Toronto, and that was Winnipeg. His positioning was well thought out. One year after moving there he was invited to host the first TV variety show ever produced in Winnipeg, in fact the first in CBC's Prairie Region. The next six years saw Davis work in a dizzying array of both radio and television programs, for three different and competing broadcasters, and usually simultaneously. It was an amazing balancing act.

Television would prove a tremendous boost to his career. The CBC was determined to establish a presence in the Prairie provinces shortly after the dawn of the new medium. As early as 1953 it started construction on a production centre at 541 Portage Avenue in downtown Winnipeg. With the call letters CBWT, it was both a carrier and producer of network programming. It went on the air May 31, 1954 in both official languages.<sup>41</sup>

A press release from the advertising agency Cockfield, Brown & Co. dated September 22 of that year reads:

An Alberta singer has taken another step up the ladder of fame, Calgary's Stu Davis moved this month to Winnipeg, where he will broadcast a daily network program and star in an original television program....The new network program, which will start September 27<sup>th</sup>, will be called the "Stu Davis Show" and will be heard every morning

41. "CBWT-DT," *The TVIV*, <http://tviv.org/CBWT-DT>.



throughout Western Canada. It should be entertaining for those who remember the singer as a good natured Edmonton lad who collaborated with famous Hank Snow in composing a number of popular western songs. Actually Davis is a native of Regina and listeners may remember when he broadcast on a local station ten years ago. The “Stu Davis Show” will be sponsored by another westerner, Blue Ribbon Tea and Coffee Ltd. The combined interest of Stu Davis and Blue Ribbon in the Canadian West should make the “Stu Davis Show” one of the most popular on the air. “Home is where the heart is,” says Davis, “and it’s nice to know I’ll be at home every morning in every town from Fort William to Victoria.”<sup>42</sup>



Stu Davis with Hank Snow, Edmonton, 1954  
Photo source: <http://studavis.blogspot.com>

*Billboard* also announced in its Nov. 27, 1954 issue (not realizing the CKY was no longer the CBC affiliate) that:

Stu Davis, Canada’s Cowboy Troubadour, has moved from Calgary, Alta. to Winnipeg, Man. where he is doing a regular TV stint over CKY. He is also doing a daily radio show over a network of stations, sponsored by Blue Ribbon Tea & Coffee. The Ole Mountaineer, well-known Canadian c&w deejay, has replaced Davis at CKXL, Calgary.<sup>43</sup>

Davis and Winnipeg CBC-TV producer Jack Phillips started up the first incarnation of *The Stu Davis Show* in 1956. It would last for two seasons, and featured Davis telling stories and singing four or five songs per program. Most were covers, but he did occasionally do his own songs. It was not always a smooth transition. To go from sounding good to sounding *and* looking good was a new process for many radio artists, and there were no coaches. Reviews were mixed as both critics and audiences were only slowly understanding production values.

The fare on his next radio endeavour was a little more syrupy, featuring regular vocalist Alice Morrisey, with backing always provided by Monte Levine and his studio orchestra. The *Winnipeg Tribune* announced its inauguration on Dec 4, 1954: “National Barn Dance, starring Canada’s cowboy troubadour Stu Davis and his guitar with the Monty [*sic*] Levine Orchestra, will be heard Saturday at 7:30 over CKRC.”<sup>44</sup>

42. Press release by Cockfield, Brown & Co., September 22, 1954, Stu Davis Fonds, PR2332, Provincial Archives of Alberta.

43. *Billboard*, November 27, 1954, 16.

44. “Radio Highlights,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, December 4, 1954, 4.

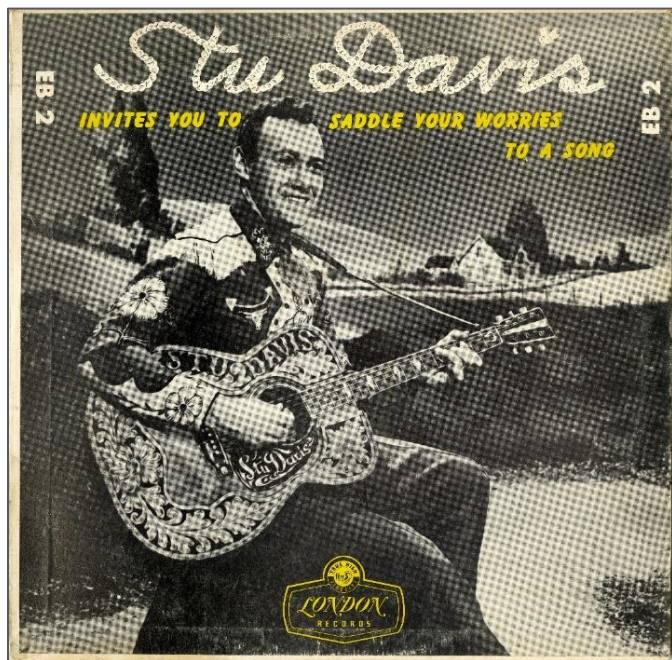
It was an experiment that did not seem to appeal to audiences, and it lasted only five months. *The Tribune* mentioned its last episode in April 1955: "Western singers Stu Davis and Alice Morrissey present the final program in the Barn Dance series at 7:30 Saturday over CKRC."<sup>45</sup>

Davis then connected with his next publisher, likely the biggest of them all for country music. This was Acuff-Rose, another BMI affiliate, which was founded in 1942 by Roy Acuff and Fred Rose. Formed by two songwriters who had been badly treated by their publishers, the company became known for their fairness and honesty. They started gathering a stable of writers including Pee Wee King, Marty Robbins, and their money-maker, Hank Williams. Davis gave them at least three compositions: "She's Cute as a Bug in a Rug," "Three Little Saddles," and "I'm Gonna Foreclose the Mortgage," all of which were published in 1954.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s Davis was happy to release his two-song 78 and 45 rpms, but in 1955 Davis heard the public's call for longer works. As well, he wanted to put out full albums. He signed with London Records of Canada, and stayed with them for more than a decade, recording more than 15 albums. Based in St. Laurent, just outside of Montreal, it had been the Canadian subsidiary of the London Gramophone Corp. since 1948. In 1954 it came under the umbrella of the Decca Record Co. Its general manager for the next two decades was Fraser Jamieson. Either Davis followed the path of most of his Aragon label mates, or they followed his, for most chose to issue their albums on London Records

as well. His first release was *Stu Davis Invites You to Saddle Your Worries to a Song*. It was reviewed in the first, and short-lived, Canadian music industry magazine, *Music World*:

A dozen selections in various moods, served in the exclusive styling of Canada's Cowboy Troubador in tunes that make it a perfect hour's listening enjoyment. Package contains several classics as well as a good representation of Stu's own songwriting talents. Assorted topics make it an all around good buy.<sup>46</sup>



Cover of *Stu Davis Invites You to Saddle Your Worries to a Song* (London Records, LP) 1956

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45. "Program Highlights," *Winnipeg Tribune*, April 23, 1955, 4.

46. Fred Roy, "Reviews and Ratings of the Latest Country & Western Releases," *Music World*, July 15, 1957, 29.

The year 1957 was an exceptionally busy year for Davis, and coincidentally was the year in which he received the most press. Fred Roy's column in *Music World* profiled a number of country and western disc jockeys in the July 15 issue:

Another DJ-artist amongst the top names in Canada's big family of wax whirlers is Stu Davis, who calls CBW, Winnipeg, his "home" at present. Stu has been a country music favorite as long as I can remember. He spins the discs daily over the local outlet and goes all the way. As an artist, he is currently cutting grooves on London wax with his latest offerings being *I'd Be Glad To Forget You* on a single disc, plus a big 12 inch LP package of hits, and he also has a live show from CBW, which is sent across Canada by the CBC hook-up. Stu formerly recorded for the Sonora, RCA Victor and Aragon labels, and as a writer, his pen has produced such well known selections as *What A Fool I Was (To Ever Let You Go)*, *In Daddy's Footsteps*, *Canadian Waltz*, *The Dude in The Ten Gallon Hat* and *Panama* to name a few.<sup>47</sup>



Advertisement for Stu Davis's radio show on CBC Radio  
*Didsbury Pioneer*, October 16, 1958, p. 6

A few months later Davis was asked to simultaneously host another new television program, still in Winnipeg, entitled *Swing Your Partner*. It also lasted two seasons (1957-58) and was the first Canadian program to employ a regular cast of square dancers. For many viewers, *Swing Your Partner* was the first locally produced program of any quality. It was also the first Winnipeg-produced program to be carried on the full network. *Winnipeg Free Press* reporter Marion Lepkin wrote a thoughtful, and frequently sarcastic critique in July 1957. She started, as any good westerner would, with a statement of western (media) alienation:

There are occasions when the most comforting thought I can muster about a local production is to praise the lord that it is for domestic consumption only, not for export

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47. Fred Roy, "Round-Up Time with Fred Roy," *Music World*, July 15, 1957, 32.

to the rest of Canada. Certainly, CBC Winnipeg has produced its share of stinkers, just as other TV centres have. But like the others, it's produced some first rate programs, too. Over the years, the CBC TV network has treated the outlet here as Canada's Cinderella station – tossing most of the plums to Montreal and Toronto, and leaving the pits to Winnipeg. But I still cling to the hope that someday, somebody, will wave a magic wand and give Winnipeg equal status with her two big sisters.

For this reason, it's always with some apprehension that I tune in on a program I know the rest of Canada is going to see. I'm afraid CBWT may let us down. Wednesday afternoon, CBC Winnipeg gave *Swing Your Partner* to the network. And it didn't let us down.<sup>48</sup>

She continued:

It's a good show. Not that it's perfect. It isn't. But for imagination, liveliness and competence, it has it all over most of the Woolly West shows CBC has turned out. In fact, I can think of only one to match it, and that is the long-defunct *Burns Chuckwagon Show* from Vancouver.

The success of *Swing Your Partner* surprised me. Stu Davis, "the cowboy troubadour" was billed as the singing storytelling host and this fact stirred up no enthusiasm on my part. His earlier series – *The Stu Davis Show* – was a tedious, long-winded, monotonous effort. Fifteen minutes was just too much for him to handle alone. But on *Swing Your Partner*, Mr. Davis has found his niche. He doesn't have to go it alone. He has other performers with whom to share his obvious enjoyment of western songs and he performs better working with others. The viewer is better off too. There's more variety and there isn't time to be bored.

But the outstanding thing about the new program is its staging – fluid yet patterned: smooth but not stiff: lively yet under control. Producer Len Weinstein has managed to find a perfect group of square dancers, not too polished, but agile and handsome. And their performances beg for some overhead camera shots so that we can see the pattern of the dances. Mr. Weinstein has not only provided fine performances, he's also introduced a little historical material as well – anecdotes based on research by Hart Bowsfield [then the Provincial Archivist of Manitoba]. By using the stories, paintings, still photographs and some delightful sketches by Bruce Head [then CBC graphic designer and later nationally known painter]...the producer has introduced a brightness and breadth not usually found in a program of this kind.<sup>49</sup>

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48. Marion Lepkin, "Lively Partners, No Rumpus," *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 6, 1957, 31.

49. Lepkin, 31.



She saves her main criticism for the end:

The only really sour notes are the colloquialisms Mr. Davis insists on throwing in to prove this is an honest-to-goodness “western” show – the I-hope-you-have-a-heap-of-fun” and the “I’d kinda-like-tah-tell-yahs.” These stand out like a sore thumb in a show which has finally managed to capture a prairie flavor without making us all out to be a bunch of dim-witted, bow-legged morons. It would be pleasant if Mr. Davis talked as if he belonged here.<sup>50</sup>

It is hard to fault Lepkin for pointing this out. Davis’s recorded work shows that he never sang with a twang, and never talked like a Texan in his real life.

All the while Davis continued with his Saturday radio program, and if that was not enough, he started to guest star in other CBC television programs. One in particular was Cliff McKay’s *Holiday Ranch* variety show which was broadcast from Toronto from 1953 to 1958. Its set was a faux ranch house, and although country music was its main offering, it also featured comedians and folk artists. It appeared on Saturday evenings and received high viewership ratings, likely because it preceded *Hockey Night in Canada*. Davis appeared three times: November 24, 1956 (singing “Wild Weed”), June 1, 1957, and September 20, 1958.<sup>51</sup>

Fred Roy, writer for *Music World*, likely had the most comprehensive overview of the state of Canada’s country music community and its place in the wider world. He attended the Sixth Annual Country DiscJockey Convention (and the 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the “Grand Ole Opry”) in Nashville in November of 1957. This was the impetus for a lengthy and wide-ranging article later that month. He synthesized a history of Nashville, its artists, publishers, and recording studios, the radio show/cultural event, and then profiled a number of people who had brought it all into being.

He then wrote about the other country music radio and television programs both in the US and Canada:

Canada also has a crop of similar shows, such as Hamilton’s “Main Street Jamboree” at CHCH-TV; Toronto’s “Country Hoedown” and “Holiday Ranch” shows out of CBLT-TV and the CBC Network; and “Alberta Ranch House” coming out from Edmonton, Alberta. All try to model their programs on “Grand Ole Opry”, but there is only one “Opry” ...<sup>52</sup>

He then turned to the artists:

Canada, too, has her leaders among the country music performers, and like their former Canadian colleague Hank Snow, their lifelong ambition also is to someday become a “Grand Ole Opry” star. Canada has produced many great artists in the country field,

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50. Lepkin, “Lively Partners, No Rumpus,” 31.

51. “Episode Guide - Holiday Ranch,” TVarchive.ca, [http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/17268/holiday\\_ranch/episode\\_guide/](http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/17268/holiday_ranch/episode_guide/).

52. Fred Roy, “Canada Salutes Nashville – Music World Special,” *Music World*, November 1957, 23.

some of them having received national recognition for their efforts. Canada can point with pride to such artists as Stu Davis, Jack Kingston, Wilf Carter, Myrna Lorrie, Earl Heywood and Bob King, etc. Others who have not yet reached such high standards but show every promise of doing so include such performers as Tommy Hunter, Ron Scott, Buddy Reynolds, Terry Parker, Red Monroe, and Keray Regan as individuals and such outstanding groups as Chuck Fortune's "Chuck Wagon Ramblers", Even Kemp's "Trail Riders", Slim Boucher's "Golden Prairie Cowboys" and Vic Siebert's "Sons of the West."<sup>53</sup>

The fourth published compilation of Davis's songs came out in 1957. To drive home his connection to the broadcast media, it was entitled *Stu Davis Radio and T.V. Song Book*, and its 16 tunes were published by Gordon V. Thompson. It is probably his most interesting collection of songs. There are the expected melancholic country songs, "Unfaithful Woman," and "You've Worn Out Your Welcome," but there is also one obviously designed for airplay, "Dear Mr. Disc Jockey," and one "Honky Tonk Serenade," whose tempo instructions read "Medium Rock and Roll Rhythm." There are also further indications of Davis's quiet religious foundation, "Listen to the Voice of the Lord" and "Shepherd of Mine," and finally his first co-write, "Little Crushed Roses" with Bob Bruce.

In the forward to the *Song Book*, Davis brings his followers up to date (with the least "twang" of all his introductions):

This is your ol' Cowboy Troubadour back again with another brand new folio of songs. These songs are some of my biggest request numbers on my CBC radio program and my TV shows. I thought I would select the best of them for this book, and I hope you enjoy singing them as much as I do. Some of the songs are on the London label. If you are a record collector, perhaps you will add them to your collection.

Well since my last visit with you via the pages of a song book, I have done quite a lot of travelling. At the present time I am located in Winnipeg, where I do my radio and TV shows for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I have my wife, Evelyn, and my two boys, Duane and Derry, with me, and we are making this our home for a while.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all you nice fans who have been so loyal to me during these past years. Your letters and comments on my efforts are greatly appreciated, believe me. I hope you will always find time to tune in to my broadcasts and to find room on your record shelves for a few of my records.<sup>54</sup>

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53. Roy, "Canada Salutes Nashville," 23.

54. Stu Davis, *Stu Davis Radio and T.V. Song Book* (Toronto, ON: Gordon V. Thompson, 1957), 2.

He mentions a fan club:

A new STU DAVIS FAN CLUB has been organized, and I would like you all to join. For full particulars, just write to the club president, Lorraine Belford, 476 Home Street, Winnipeg 10, Manitoba. The dues are only \$1.00 a year, for which you receive four journals containing all the latest information and news on “Yours Truly” – write-ups on other radio, TV, and record artists – words of various song favorites – and all other club privileges.<sup>55</sup>

He ended with his by now famous line: “May all the trails you travel lead to happiness.”

Davis’s next television program was a summer 1958 replacement. As described in the *Winnipeg Tribune’s* “Worth Dialing” column:

Winnipeg troubadour Stu Davis will start working before CBWT cameras again when he swings into a summer series July 1<sup>st</sup>. *Tabbed Out West*, the program is set to run for 13 weeks. Kerry Wood, who hosts the *Outdoor* series for radio (Saturday – CBW) will be the writer of the teleseries.<sup>56</sup>

That was followed by *Rope Around the Sun* (1958-59), a CBC afternoon show combining storytelling and songs for children. Ann Henry’s column “Report on TV” in the *Winnipeg Tribune* of July 11, 1958 commented:



CBC display window on Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, promoting the television program *Rope Around the Sun*, 1958  
University of Winnipeg, Western Canadian Pictorial Index – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (contact sheet #A1493, image #45164)

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55. Davis, *Stu Davis Radio and T.V. Song Book*, 2.

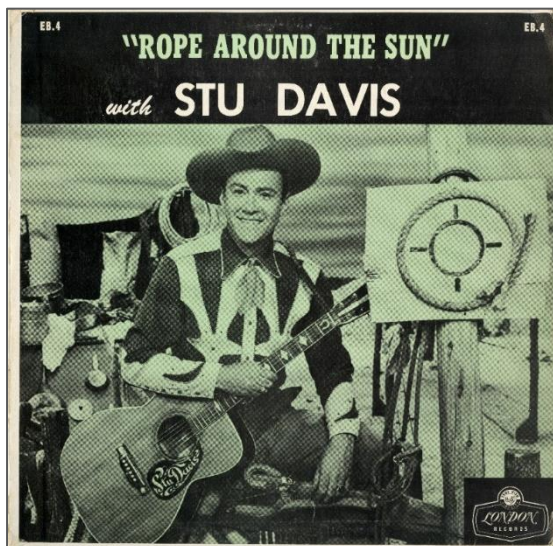
56. Carole Kowalson, “Worth Dialing,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, May 14, 1958, 32.

It'll be cowboy week in television this week. Not only will there be a new series for children, *Rope Around the Sun* with Stu Davis, which will tell cowboy stories while Stu sings; there'll be the Calgary Stampede and of course the usual roster of western programs making it look as if the whole network has gone western. From CBC Winnipeg, and on the network, Stu Davis tells how the Stampede began back in 1912. He will sing songs about The Stampede and Pete Knight's Last Ride. Subsequent programs will tell about Cowboy Cooks, Wild Horses and The Mad Trapper.<sup>57</sup>

Davis dipped a tentative toe in the genre of rockabilly at the end of the 1950s. *The Tribune* mentioned in January 1959:

Broken Love, a ballad written, arranged and vocalized by local talents, may hold new horizons for the group if its recording by a New York firm clicks. CBC stage hand Don Tomiuk penned the song in collaboration with Elmer Sexsmith and pianist George Reznik a year ago. Now put to the beat of rock n' roll, the new version will be premiered by Stu Davis on next week's *Saddle Songs*. Davis and a vocal group made the recording for London Records of Montreal a month ago and from there it went to New York. The boys, who are working on other songs, report this may be the door-opener for them.<sup>58</sup>

It was issued as a single, but despite all the local excitement, it does not appear to have opened any doors, or even charted. Davis made one last attempt at sort-of rock music with his recording of "New Broom Boogie" written by Al Dexter and Cindy Walker, and originally performed by Al Dexter & His Troopers. It was a standout number with the guitar work showing the clear influence of Scotty Moore. However it was never released as a single, and got buried on the *Rope Around the Sun* album.



Cover of *Rope Around the Sun*  
(London Records, LP) 1959

Bill Sachs of *Billboard* thought Davis's next album was worth a mention in his column of June 29, 1959:

London Records of Canada has just released a new long play package by Stu Davis, of Winnipeg, Man. Named after his TV show "Rope Around the Sun", which resumes on the CBC-TV network July 8, the album contains 10 selections, including "Ripple River", "The Rose Upon the Bible" and the title song. Some of the tunes were penned by Stu himself. Davis has been a country music favorite in Canada for many years.<sup>59</sup>

57. Ann Henry, "Report on TV," *Winnipeg Tribune*, July 11, 1958, 3.

58. Carole Kowalson, "Worth Dialing," *Winnipeg Tribune*, January 16, 1959, 8.

59. Bill Sachs, "Folk Talent and Tunes," *Billboard*, June 29, 1959, 7.



In November 1959, CBC briefly brought back *The Stu Davis Show*:

Stu Davis show replaces Football Huddle when that show closes for the season. Davis will have more people on the show, including a vocalist Berni Garrison (she's a girl) and a trio called the Tumbleweed Trio; they are Jimmie Pirie, Irwin Wall and Carl Asplund.<sup>60</sup>

One of Davis's true radio highlights for 1959 was the appearance of the country humour duo Homer & Jethro on his radio show in December. As *The Tribune* reported:

Stu Davis, foreman of the CKY Ranch House has Homer and Jethro, who have been appearing at the Rancho all week, as guests on the Western Hit Parade at 9 p.m. Stu Davis can also be heard from 4 to 5:30 p.m. each afternoon on CKY, when he features some of his own songs.<sup>61</sup>

For all his success up to this point, his huge breakthrough came when he started hosting yet another new Winnipeg program called *Red River Jamboree* in 1960. It was another summer replacement show, and was such a hit that it was subsequently inserted into the Fall/Winter season. For five years, it would be the most popular show on CBC coming out of the Prairies. Produced by Ernie Mutimer, it was, according to one source, slightly unorthodox for the time: "More than a studio-bound program of country and western music, the program framed music with stories of Canada's Old West, and included film sequences shot at a ranch established at the turn of the century to lend the show authenticity."<sup>62</sup>

*The Winnipeg Tribune* introduced him again to the viewing public on July 1st:

Stu Davis, Winnipeg's cowboy-troubadour, has come a long way from collecting ballads and songs as a youngster in Regina. He's host of Red River Jamboree which replaces Country Hoedown on the network for the summer months, starting Friday July 8<sup>th</sup>. Stu has had two other successful shows which concluded after 39 programs instead of the originally scheduled 13 week run. They were Swing Your Partner and Rope Around the Sun.....<sup>63</sup>

Davis was the singing host, and alternated with vocalist Peggy Neville, a four-man group called the Altones, and a troupe of eight dancers known as the Valley Beaux and Belles. Backing up everybody was an ensemble of Winnipeg musicians called The Selkirk Settlers, who would go on to become notable session players. The leader, Ted Komar, was joined by Mitch Parks (piano), Paul Olynyk (bass), Clelio Retaghatti (fiddle), Wally Diduck (fiddle), Irvine Wahl (guitar), Monte Levine (guitar), and Reg Kelln (drums). The Settlers also featured a young whiz-kid on guitar named Jimmie Pirie. Davis was inspired by his fretwork and wanted to work with him beyond the confines of the program. Pirie was asked to guest

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60. Ann Henry, "People," *Winnipeg Tribune*, November 24, 1959, 22.

61. "Featured this Evening," *Winnipeg Tribune*, December 14, 1959, 24.

62. "Red River Jamboree," TVarchive.ca,  
[http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/18280/red\\_river\\_jamboree/details/](http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/18280/red_river_jamboree/details/).

63. *Winnipeg Tribune*, July 1, 1960, 8.

on several of Davis's albums, and Davis even "sponsored" him on the London Records LP called *Stu Davis Presents Jimmie Pirie's Guitar-ama*.

An almost complete episode guide to *Red River Jamboree* exists, and gives rare insight into a Prairie variety show. Guests included a teenaged Lenny Breau, early rocker Ray St. Germain, Reg Gibson, George LaFleche, Wally Koster, the Mercy Brothers, Stu Phillips, Jack Paget, Donna Aubert, and Marian Breitman. Many of the episodes were thematic, and some of these include the story of beef cattle and brands, the western movie, Prairie summer, pioneer trails, the fur traders, gentlemen cowboys, the boom town, wagon trails, the Red River Exhibition, and a special presentation at the November 1960 Grey Cup in Vancouver.<sup>64</sup>

Jerry Lee in the *Winnipeg Free Press* column "Speaking of Television" gave it a mixed review in May 1960:

Red River Jamboree is like a wedding of Rope Around the Sun, and Saddle Songs. Its lack of originality, however, has not prevented it from being the best musical produced at CBWT this year. That's not saying much, I know. But the show has, in a lively simple way, achieved some measure of success which can be largely attributed to Stu Davis. Stu has learned the secret of being an attractive TV personality – be yourself. Be yourself, because the TV camera is like a magnifying glass which shows up the phoney. The sincerity and easiness with which Stu presents himself has rubbed off on others in the Jamboree cast. There isn't nearly as much of the eager-beaver, forced atmosphere which has plagued other locally-produced musicals.

Musical background supplied by the Tumbleweed Trio is pleasant enough. The switch to western pace has been good for the Altones who seem relaxed and sound mellow. When it comes to singing, the vocalist must be so proficient in the technicalities that the audience is not aware of them. Peggy Neville needs to work on breath control. Her deficiency in this worries the viewer.<sup>65</sup>

She summed up with: "It's all right for Close-Up and Kruschev [*sic*] to worry us, but not Red River Jamboree."<sup>66</sup>

Yet again Davis kept up his radio activities in addition to television. The *Winnipeg Tribune* featured a half-page advertisement for CKY, "The Most Listened to Station on the Prairies," on Feb. 2, 1960. It highlighted all the personalities and programs, including *The CKY Ranchhouse*:

Stu Davis, Canada's cowboy troubadour and well known radio and TV recording personality, serves as the Ranchhouse foreman from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., on CKY with all

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64. "Episode Guide - Red River Jamboree," TVarchive.ca, [http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/18280/red\\_river\\_jamboree/episode\\_guide/](http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/18280/red_river_jamboree/episode_guide/).

65. Jerry Lee, "Speaking of Television," *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 28, 1960, 31.

66. Lee, 31.

your favorite country and western music. Stu is also heard on the Western Hit Parade every night at 9.<sup>67</sup>

Davis did numerous remotes during his time in Winnipeg, some more interesting than others. For example, during the week of February 8-13, 1960, the Hudson's Bay Company saluted the Canadian electrical industry. The event was called "The Electrifying 60's," and the attractions say much about the era:

- See an electronic range cook an egg in 20 seconds, bacon in 90 seconds
- See what happens electrically when you dial and speak on the phone
- See "Electra" – a living eel light up a bank of 24 lights
- See how Miss Canada can relax at ease and put her ironing board away<sup>68</sup>

The CKY announcers and stars broadcast, on both radio and television, all day from The Bay store on Portage Avenue. Davis went from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with *CKY Ranchhouse*. Davis also broadcast from the Winnipeg Arena throughout The Red River Exhibition in June 1960.<sup>69</sup>

For his next album, Davis compiled a number of his favourite performances from his television program. As *Billboard* reported in August 1960; "Stu Davis, whose newest on the Canadian London label is "Rope Around the Sun," is the feature of a new Friday night CBC network show beamed at 8:30 p.m. CST."<sup>70</sup>

By this time, Davis had accumulated modest savings from his radio and television salaries, his fees for live performances, sales of his published sheet music and recordings, and royalties from recordings by others of his songs. While not rich by any means, he purchased a ranch in Alberta, and in the world of CBC, the timing could not have been better to move to Edmonton.

By 1960 the corporation realized that each of the Prairie provinces needed its own production centre, that Winnipeg did not represent nor could it fulfil the needs of the entire region. President Alphonse Ouimet felt Edmonton was a logical choice for the Alberta-based centre as it was the provincial capital, was undergoing an economic boom fueled by a developing petrochemical industry, and was the fastest growing part of western Canada. CBXT (Channel 5) began broadcasting on October 1, 1961 from its new building on 75<sup>th</sup> Street. Of the 94 hours per week of content, they decided to devote 16 ¾ hours to live local programming and 19 hours to local recorded programming.<sup>71</sup> And they wanted Stu Davis.

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67. *Winnipeg Tribune*, February 2, 1960, 4.

68. "The Bay Salutes the Phenomenal Progress of the Canadian Electrical Industry," *Winnipeg Tribune*, February 6, 1960, 20.

69. "See You at the Ex," *Winnipeg Tribune*, July 1, 1960, 8.

70. Bill Sachs, "Folk Talent & Tunes," *Billboard*, August 15, 1960, 33.

71. "CBXT-DT," History of Canadian Broadcasting, Canadian Communications Foundation, [http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing\\_and\\_histories/television/cbxt-dt](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/listing_and_histories/television/cbxt-dt).

Ann Henry, the columnist who covered radio and television for the *Winnipeg Tribune*, entitled her June 7, 1961 column "Friendly Stu Davis Moving to Edmonton":

Stu Davis is withdrawing from the Red River Jamboree show, and will move west to Edmonton to do the first network show from the new CBC studio when it opens in the fall. The move fits in with his plans to move closer to some of his business interests in Alberta, one of which is the cattle business. Stu feels that when he is "all washed up as an entertainer" – his own words – Alberta is the place he and his family would like to retire to...Stu's last show, video-taped, will be seen here June 24<sup>th</sup>. Then a cowboy singer named Stu Phillips, from Calgary, comes to Winnipeg to take over...<sup>72</sup>

She continues:

Stu Davis, an unassuming, friendly, very nice person, is, in my opinion easily the best of the cowboy singer-entertainers, and that includes them all, even old Ern. He was free of all those asinine little moonings that characterize most western balladeers. He has a good voice and he never took himself too seriously, one of the secrets of his success. He'll be missed on Red River Jamboree.<sup>73</sup>

Davis recalled: "In 1961 I decided it was time to get that ranch I'd been hoping and working towards and returned to Edmonton where I joined the CBC when it opened its television studios."<sup>74</sup> The 960-acre ranch, called the Lazy S-D, was located near Hoadly, approximately eighty miles southwest of Edmonton. Davis started to raise Hereford and Angus cattle. As when he was young, he and his family spent the summers on the ranch, and during the school year they lived in the Ottewell subdivision at 9259-74 Street.

Davis re-booted his Winnipeg-era program *Rope Around the Sun* for several more seasons, and in 1963 also brought back his Saturday evening *The Stu Davis Show*. Like the original Winnipeg show, this also featured Davis telling one long story per episode ("The Tornado," "Tail of the Dog," "My First Bronc Ride," "The Indian Horse Race," "Old Wheezer Earned His Biscuits," "The Pigeon Who Saved the Day," "The Bacon Loving Bear") interspersed with a combination of cover songs and originals.<sup>75</sup>

Davis also had to recruit a new backup band. First he reunited with bassist Wally McDonald who had been in the Radio Wranglers twelve years earlier. McDonald had followed a somewhat similar path to Davis. He was an alumnus of The Sons of the West, which featured fiddler "King" Ganum and singer Omar Blondahl. The Sons were the house band of CBC Radio's *Alberta Ranch House* throughout the 1950s. McDonald had also played with Jimmy Wakely, American country singer and radio host, who had a minor hit song "Skip Along." The other musician was fiddler Alfie Myhre. Myhre had established his

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72. Ann Henry, "Friendly Stu Davis Moving to Edmonton," *Winnipeg Tribune*, June 7, 1961, 12.

73. Henry, 12

74. "The CBC's Stu Davis," *Edmontonian*, April 1964, 5.

75. "Episode Guide - The Stu Davis Show," TVarchive.ca,

[http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/18624/stu\\_davis\\_show\\_the\\_episode\\_guide/](http://www.tvarchive.ca/database/18624/stu_davis_show_the_episode_guide/).



credentials as a member of Jimmy Arthur Ordge & The Silver Valley Boys, then as part of Wilf Carter's backup band during his 1957 tour of Canada, and most recently as a member of Gaby Haas's Barn Dance Show. The three of them, plus Duane Davis, were to become The Pathfinders, a versatile and professional studio band.

Together they recorded the album *Stu Davis Salutes the Western Stars*, which came out in March 1961 on London Records in Canada and on Richmond Records in the US. *Billboard* did not stop the presses with excitement; their reviewer put it in the "Moderate Sales Potential" column and wrote: "Stu Davis pays tribute to a group of famous country and western artists by singing the tunes they made famous....Interesting set that could interest some fans."<sup>76</sup>

Although he was not a spotlight hog, Davis knew the ongoing value of publicity. And he worried that he was not getting much from CBC in Edmonton. On January 13, 1964 he penned a letter to Dennis O'Neill at CBC in Winnipeg:

How is everything back in Winnipeg? Hope all is well with you and yours as we start this brand New Year. Denis, I've been after my various producers here every [*sic*] since coming to Edmonton to keep you posted on my various activities – just to get a "mention" now and then in the "Times" and other papers you submit information to...but to no avail. I haven't had a single write-up or a mention since I left Winnipeg and many of my fans are still in doubt as to my whereabouts.<sup>77</sup>

He continues:

So, I decided to take the bull by the tail – so to speak – and drop you a note to see if you would remedy the situation. First of all, I would like something mentioned that was never mentioned before and that is the fact that I resigned as host of Red River Jamboree to move to Edmonton for two reasons. First to do my "Stu Davis Show" from the new CBC station – and second – to be closer to my ranching activities. I have a 960 acre cattle ranch – situated in central Alberta on the Blindman River. Presently I have 60 head of Hereford cattle – and two quarter-horses named "SUNDANCE" and "KENO." Most of my spare time is spent there – but I still find time to keep up with my songwriting, making records, and writing material for my weekly CBC Television show. I have just had my tenth long-play album released by London Records – and the 11<sup>th</sup> is in the making. These are top sellers in Canada according to Mr. Fraser Jamieson – manager of London Records and they are also selling very well in the States too. One of my LP albums was accepted by Her Majesty – Queen Elizabeth and she acknowledged receipt of it with an official letter. Will Hoskins – an English song-writer composed one of the

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76. "C&W LP's", *Billboard*, March 20, 1961, 31.

77. Stu Davis to Dennis O'Neill, January 13, 1964, p. 1, "Biography Files – Davis, Stu," U-15-2-18 file 89, CBC Manitoba Communications Department General Records, Archives of Manitoba.

songs included in the album and he sent the record to the Queen. Another was accepted by the Queen Mother....<sup>78</sup>

He finished with:

These are just a few points that you may make use of Denis...I certainly hope you can...because I know from the letters I receive, a lot of my fans have lost track of me...and this will never do.<sup>79</sup>

He added a P.S.: "I think you'll admit that three years without any publicity is a "mighty long time"!! It worked: a profile and portrait of Davis was included in the next issue (Feb. 8-14, 1964) of *CBC Times*.<sup>80</sup> It started: "Where's Stu Davis?"

Davis received another big nod of recognition when he guest-starred on the CBC television special *The Hank Snow TV Spectacular* in November 1965. This was supposed to be Snow's "re-introduction" to his Canadian homeland, and the network put considerable planning and funds into making it a special night. The production earned favourable reviews. One by critic Brian Chalker in *RPM*:

CBC's Show of the Week presentation...must surely have been the finest country music television production to be seen in many a year. The harsh criticism aimed at current CBC country music policies, in a recent issue of *RPM*, must therefore be partially relinquished...it would appear that deep down in the dungeons of CBC, there are writers and producers who are capable of creating a fast moving intelligent country and western show.

Nova Scotia born Hank Snow, together with The Rainbow Ranch Boys, Stu Davis, Cousin Clem (Gordie Tapp), Charlie Chamberlain and Johnny Mooring presented country music fans with fifty minutes of sparkling down to earth entertainment.<sup>81</sup>

Chalker ran through the offerings of each. Snow sang his greatest hits: "I'm Movin' On," "I've Been Everywhere," "The Golden Rocket," and "Music Makin' Mama." Then:

Stu Davis gave viewers a taste of the 'western' side of country music with his versions of 'Cimmaron' and 'What a Fool I Was', whilst Charlie Chamberlain and Cousin Clem presented their tongue-in-cheek 'Freight Train Blues' and a brief dance, shuffle routine.<sup>82</sup>

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78. Stu Davis to Dennis O'Neill, 1-2.

79. Stu Davis to Dennis O'Neill, 2.

80. "Around CBC." *CBC Times*, February 8-14, 1964.

81. Brian Chalker, "The Hank Snow TV Spectacular 'Show of the Week'," *RPM*, November 22, 1965, 7.

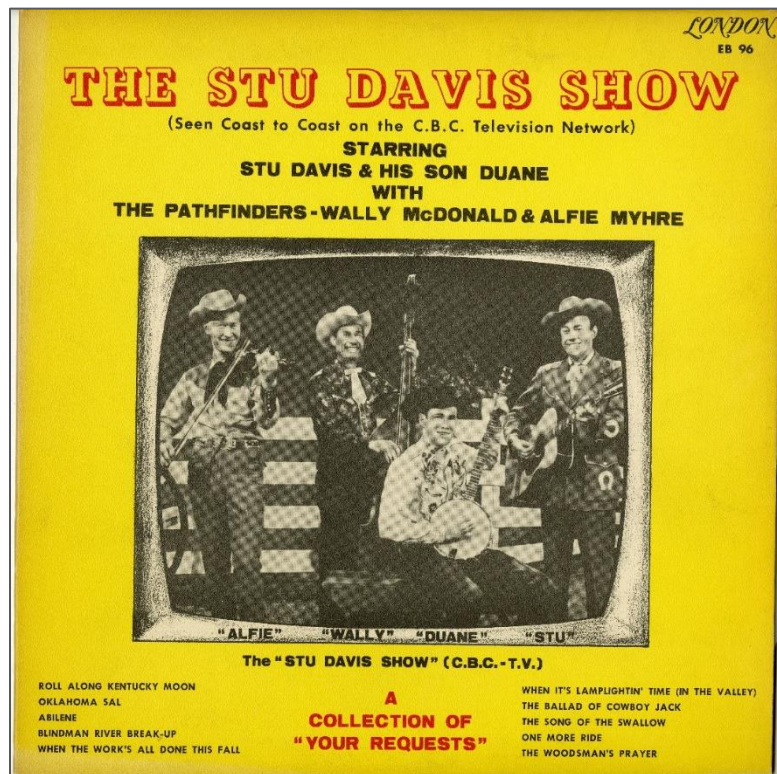
82. Chalker, 7.

The review finished with:

After the recent Tommy Hunter A-Go-Go Show it was a welcome relief to see the dancers well in the background. You see, it can be done, can't it? The emphasis was on country music – and country music we sure did get – congratulations CBC, for a splendid show.<sup>83</sup>

Davis returned the following year with another program. On April 2, 1966 the *Winnipeg Tribune*, feeling they still owned a piece of him, featured an article “Our Stu Returns”:

Canada’s popular cowboy Troubadour, Stu Davis of Winnipeg, is the singing host of a new 15-minute program of western cowboy ballads and traditional folk music, to be seen on Channel 6 Saturday evenings at 6:30 beginning April 2. Featured on each show with Stu is his son Duane, a 20 year old singer-guitarist, and an instrumental group called The Pathfinders. On the first Stu David [sic] Show, he sings Streets of Laredo, then teams up with Duane on Homesteaders Lament and I’m Going to Change Everything. Duane sings a French folk song, Sleep My Love.<sup>84</sup>



Cover of *The Stu Davis Show: A Collection of Your Requests* (The Pathfinders: l. to r. Alfie Myre, Wally MacDonald, Duane Davis, Stu Davis) (London Records, LP) 1966

In late 1966 Davis, following his earlier example with *Rope Around the Sun*, compiled 10 of the most popular, most requested performances from the television show, and put out another album simply called *The Stu Davis Show*.

Davis decided to take greater control of his activities, and put them on a more business-like footing. Accordingly he incorporated himself as Stu Davis Enterprises Ltd. on December 16, 1965. The directors and original shareholders were Davis and his wife Evelyn. Then sons Duane and Derry were assigned shares. The company started with authorized capital of \$200,000. According to the Memorandum of Association, the objectives of the corporation were:

83. Chalker, “The Hank Snow TV Spectacular,” 7.

84. “Our Stu Returns,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, April 2, 1966, 48.

- a) To carry on the business of producers of radio and television programs
- b) To act as principal or agent in the furnishing of all types of musical and variety programs, and in all methods of reproducing voice or music for the entertainment of the public at large; without restricting the generality of the foregoing, to assemble and supply for entertainment an orchestra, singers, dancers, for the furnishing of programs devoted to classical music, western music and songs, folk music and songs, and all types of dancing and music
- c) To act as publishers and recording specialists for the publication and distribution of music and song; to acquire by purchase, lease, royalty agreement or in any other manner the sole right to songs and music
- d) To acquire by purchase, lease, option or otherwise all such lands and premises and all types of machinery, equipment and installations required in the production of music, songs, television or radio productions
- h) To enter into contracts with publishers, agents, owners of radio and television networks, and all other persons or bodies corporate in the business of supplying all types of music and songs for the entertainment of the public at large.<sup>85</sup>

He then brought into the company his other interests:

To carry on the business of farming and ranching; without restricting the generality of the foregoing to purchase and operate land, buildings and livestock required to carry on farming operations, and to act as principal or agent in the marketing and sale of all types of farm produce, and animals raised for market purpose<sup>86</sup>

All of Davis's interests and talents, music, storytelling, broadcasting, and love for Canadian history, came together in Canada's Centennial year. His first project was a new album, *The Stu Davis Centennial Album*. He was backed by Wally McDonald, Alfie Myhre, and by both his sons, Duane and Derry. George Payne, announcer friend from the CJCA days, did a brief spoken word introduction.

As per the jacket notes:

In this special LONDON CENTENNIAL ALBUM – one of Canada's favourite sons – STU DAVIS – offers a salute in song to each and every province from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with eleven original Canadian folk songs. STU DAVIS is a "Genuine" Canadian in every sense of the word, having been born on DOMINION DAY – July 1<sup>st</sup>. Though plagued by numerous offers to move to the U.S. Stu elected to pursue his career in his Native

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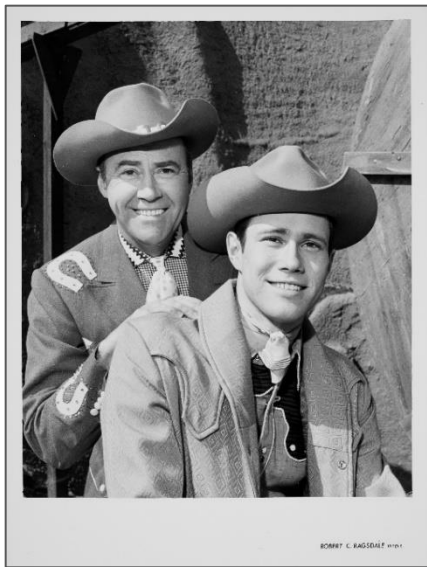
85. "Memorandum of Association of Stu Davis Enterprises Ltd.," Stu Davis Enterprises Corporate File #40394, 1-2.

86. "Memorandum of Association," 2.



land and in so doing, has contributed greatly to the entertainment of his fellow Canadians for over 25 years. ...Join STU DAVIS and his musical tribute to Canada's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. We are certain you will enjoy it.<sup>87</sup>

His second project was hosting a 13-week mini-series aired on CBC during November and December 1967. Helping him achieve his vision was producer and director Jack Emack as well as a camera crew and sound engineer. It was an expensive undertaking, as the group travelled more than sixty-four thousand kilometers, from April to June, visiting various historic sites in each of the Prairie provinces. The *Edmonton Journal* introduced the program on October 27:



Stu and Duane Davis, promo shot for television series *Trail Riding Troubadour*, 1967

Photo by Robert Ragsdale  
CBC Still Photo Collection

Trail-Riding Troubadour, a special centennial series produced by CBC Edmonton, uses both documentary and variety techniques in re-telling the saga of the Canadian West...Canada's "cowboy troubadour", Stu Davis, and his balladeer son, Duane, narrate the history of the early West, with the added dimension of the songs and ballads that grew out of it. They tell of the Indian and the buffalo and their losing battle against the influx of settlers, miners and early businessmen who fought successfully to tame the wilderness.<sup>88</sup>

The article goes into some detail:

The series of half hour color programs was shot entirely on location at historical sites across the three prairie provinces. In Alberta, the program visits locations such as Elk Island Park, where some of the few remaining herds of the original millions of prairie buffalo still survive, the Crowsnest coal-mining towns Hillcrest and Frank, where men fought disease and disaster only to have the discovery of oil make their industry obsolete, and the Gattey Ranch where the combination of cowhand and cutting horse survives amid modern agricultural conveniences.

In Saskatchewan Trail Riding Troubadour visits Fort Battleford and Batoche – hot spots of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, and joins an authentic wagon train for a three-day trip between Gravelbourg and Wood Mountain. Manitoba's rich historical heritage forms an important part of the series. Included in the Manitoba segments are the original Selkirk Settlement in the Red River Valley north of Winnipeg, Lower Fort Gary [sic], the point of embarkation for settlers, traders and explorers travelling across the vast expanses of

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87. *The Stu Davis Centennial Album*, London Records EB. 107, 1967, jacket notes.

88. "Saga of Canadian West Retold – With Its Songs," *Edmonton Journal*, October 27, 1967, 12.

prairie and parkland to the mountains; and the Icelandic settlements around Gimli, where hardy immigrants of Viking extraction came to fish, farm, and add their particular color to the Canadian ethnic mosaic.<sup>89</sup>

The series, recut as a single production, was entered in film festivals in Europe and shopped to US broadcasters.

*The Stu Davis Show* experienced a second life in 1968. A New York-based distributor by the name of TapeNet, a subsidiary of Krantz Films Inc., licensed a range of Canadian television programs to place into the American and international broadcasting schedules. Krantz negotiated with CBC, CTV, and CFTO for the syndication rights to first-run shows for a maximum of twenty hours per week.<sup>90</sup> Some of the programs included *Festival* (twelve 90-minute drama and comedy specials); *Wayne & Shuster* (four 1-hour specials), *Sports Hot Seat* (fifty-two 1-hour interview shows), *Perry's Probe* (260 30-minute shows with Norm Perry), *Wojeck* (the coroner drama starring John Vernon), *The Tommy Hunter Show* (thirty-nine 30-minute programs), and *The Stu Davis Show* (thirty-nine 30-minute programs). They were showcased at the National Association of Broadcasters conference in Chicago in April of that year.

In April 1968, with youngest son Derry out of school and out on his own, Davis bought another smaller ranch on R.R. #1 near Ardrossen, thirty kilometres east of Edmonton on Highway 16. He and his wife moved there, and it became the new head office of Stu Davis Enterprises Inc.

It appears that Davis's passion for music and his natural musical skills were imparted to his two sons. An article from 1969 stressed the family tradition:

Both Stu's sons, Duane and Derry, are involved in the music world - both are featured regularly on TV on "The Stu Davis Show" - and at the moment the boys are heard each week on the CBC radio network on "The Duane Davis Show". Duane sings a mixture of country-western, folk and folk-rock, and also plays classical guitar and five-string banjo. Derry started in the rock and roll field, but has broadened into blues, jazz and country-western. His trio are the accompanists for brother Duane on his program...Derry is just 18 but is fast gaining recognition as one of the country's top guitarists.<sup>91</sup>

Duane seemed to be constantly at his father's side throughout much of the 1960s, and was featured prominently on *The Stu Davis Show* and on *Trail Riding Troubadour*. Upon going out on his own, he showed his folk connections immediately. In 1969, he put out *Reflections*, his first solo album, which was replete with covers of Jimmy Webb, Bob Dylan, and Buffy Sainte-Marie tunes. It was recorded with producer Tommy Banks in Century II Studios and issued jointly by CBC and Capitol Records Canada.

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89. "Saga of Canadian West Retold," 12.

90. "Distributor Plan to Sell Canadian Programs in U.S.," *Edmonton Journal*, March 8, 1968, 30.

91. Brian Wills, "...Meanwhile, Back at the Lazy SD...", *Canadian Composer*, no. 42 (September 1969): 8.

Derry followed a different path. As an integral member of the 1960s Edmonton bands King Beez and Warp Factor, and then the Saskatoon-based Witness Inc., he moved squarely into the field of electric rock. He also developed as a talented songwriter and was courted by Brian Chater's Summerlea/Winterlea Music in Toronto in 1969.

Toward the end of that year, the respected journal *Canadian Composer* featured a lengthy, thoughtful article on Davis. Written by Brian Wills, it was not the shallow promo piece Davis had been used to for most of his career. It ran through his history, but portrayed him as a three-dimensional person. It took him seriously as a composer, a singer, and an on-air personality. It discussed his life outside of music, his quiet but firm belief in family values, mentioned his other creative pursuits such as painting, and his business interests pertaining to the ranch and real estate. But it also hinted that Davis was aware his approach was losing its currency:

In 1969 Davis is a contented man. Still writing a song a week, involved with television specials and recording... he recognizes that the "old west" is gone forever....A lot of the songs he has written have certainly been about a "real way of life" and still are: but of course just like the vanishing way of life of the cowboy, the songs and ballads of the true cowboy of old are vanishing too.<sup>92</sup>

Davis was perceptive enough to realize that the worlds of both musical performance and broadcasting had also moved on, had undergone a fundamental change in attitude, and that he was not about to change. While his fans would remain loyal to him, he knew that radio and television wanted younger, more hip music and on-air personalities. As he was also feeling more comfortable on the ranch, and less so in front of the camera, he decided to call it a day.

In 1970 he gathered together another selection of songs from his television series, along with a few old and new tunes, and released an album entitled *The Songs and Music of Stu Davis, Trail Riding Troubadour* on Dominion Records, the label of the Toronto-based Canadian Music Sales. It was reviewed in *RPM*:

Impressive country lineup of backup musicians: Stu Davis, rhythm guitar; Derry Davis, electric lead and drums; Duane Davis, lead acoustic and banjo; Alf Myhre, violin and mandolin; and Wally McDonald, string bass – should attract the "earthy" listener.<sup>93</sup>

Davis put out his final album in 1971. It was entitled *Songs from the Heart of Johnny Canuck*. Though the music was still country-ish (it included several re-recordings of earlier songs such as "In Daddy's Footsteps"), Davis left his cowboy hat, shirt and boots in the closet. On the album's cover he was photographed wearing a tweed hat and his normal "civilian" clothes. It likely puzzled his fans, and his final label, Birchmount Records, declined to issue a follow-up album.

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92. Wills, "...Meanwhile, Back at the Lazy SD...", 8.

93. "Songs and Music of Stu Davis – Trail Ridin' Troubadour," *RPM*, July 24, 1971, 18.

By 1975, Davis had moved from his Ardrossen home to Calgary. With neither a recording nor a media career nor a ranch, Stu Davis Enterprises became superfluous. In May 1978, it was struck from the Alberta Corporate Registry.<sup>94</sup>

Somewhat unexpectedly Davis had established a small but dedicated fan base in Germany, no doubt due to his being broadcast over the Armed Forces Radio Service in the post-war period. There was one label in particular that wanted to preserve and make available again the “real” country and western music of the 1940s and 50s. This was Cattle Records, run by Reimer Binge in Sulzheim. Starting in 1971, Cattle re-issued early (and long out of print) material by such artists as Rosalie Allen, Bob Wills, Patsy Montana, Cowboy Sam Nichols and his Rangesters, Tex Banes & The Hayseeds, Sons of the Pioneers, Carl Story & His Rambling Mountaineers, and from Canada, Smilin’ Johnnie and His Prairie Pals.<sup>95</sup> Each one was carefully curated, and included voluminous and well-researched jacket notes. In 1987 Cattle Records put out a compilation LP *Let’s Go Back to the Country with Canada’s Cowboy Troubadour*. The eighteen songs included Davis’s 78s releases from his Sonora, RCA, and Aragon periods, none of which were then available.

The second major written profile was a cover story written by historian Dan Foster for *Country Music News* in January 1990. It also took a run through Davis’s life and career in some detail, touching on all his songwriting and recording successes. Foster subtly incorporated a quiet request for a reevaluation of Davis’s impact on Canadian country music when he wrote, “...yet he remains one of the real pioneers of the industry, who awaits recognition from that same industry.”<sup>96</sup> The hint was received loud and clear, and in October 1993, Davis was finally inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame alongside Stu Phillips, Ward Allen, Dick Damron, Carroll Baker, and Stompin’ Tom Connors.<sup>97</sup>

Davis passed away in 2007 at the age of eighty-six. Over the span of his three decades in the limelight, Davis helped to bring country & western music from the twangy, backward, rural and simplistic, to the smooth, family-friendly and even semi-urban. His ease before both live audiences and the television camera, and his warm, relaxed delivery, earned Davis the nickname of “The Sagebrush Como,” but it also belied his incredible work ethic. He did not just sing the hurtin’ songs from the worlds of cattle and heartache, he brought back the storytelling aspect to much of his work, a touch of good-natured humour, and the view that despite all its problems, maybe the world (especially Western Canada) was a good place to be. He brought a touch of class, even respectability, to country music. He made it acceptable to listen to c&w without being considered a “hick.” As if that were not enough, he also did more to bring country & western music into the mainstream world of Canadian broadcasting—both radio and television—than any other Canadian artist of his time.

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94. H. Thomas (Registrar of Companies), “Companies Struck Off the Registry,” May 31, 1978, Stu Davis Enterprises Corporate File #40394.

95. “Cattle Records,” Discogs, <https://www.discogs.com/label/121607-Cattle-Records>.

96. Dan Foster, “The Stu Davis Story...Pioneer of Canadian Country Radio and TV,” *Country Music News*, January 1990, 23.

97. “Inductees Named for Country’s Hall of Fame,” *RPM*, October 16, 1993, 15.



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## Discography

### SINGLES

78 rpm – Sonora Records (H 7021)

“Rainbow at Midnight”/“The Bottom Fell Out of the Sky”

Released: November 1946

78 rpm – Sonora Records (H 7024)

“I Tipped My Hat and Slowly Rode Away”/“I Can Beat You Doin’ (What You’re Doin’ to Me)”

Released: December 1946

78 rpm – Sonora Records (H 7027)

“Land, Sky and Water”/“Darlin’, Now I Know the Reason Why”

Released: 1947

78 rpm – Sonora Records (H 7029)

“What a Fool I Was”/“Crossroads”

Released: March 1947

78 rpm – RCA Victor Records (20-2750)

“When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies”/“Welcome Back to My Heart”

Released: March 1948

78 rpm – RCA Victor Records (20-2909)

“Too Far Apart”/“Sweetheart of Yesterday”

Released: June 1948

78 rpm – RCA Victor Records (20-3054)

“Crying for You”/“The Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat”

Released: August 1948

78 rpm – RCA Victor Records (20-3212)

“Always Keep Your Promise”/“I’m Gonna Leave Town”

Released: November 1948

78 rpm – Aragon Records (AR-177)

“Canadian Waltz”/“Child of Divorce”

Released: 1950

78 rpm – Rondo Records (R-252)

“I Can Beat You Doin’ (What You’re Doin to Me)”/“Land, Sky and Water”

Released: 1951

78 rpm – Aragon Records (AR-203)

“I Looked for Love”/“In Daddy’s Footsteps”

Released: 1952

78 rpm – Aragon Records (AR-207)

“Deserted”/“Black Mountain Rag”

Released: 1952

Note: credited to Fiddlin’ Red Crawford with Stu Davis and his Melody Mavericks

78 rpm – Aragon Records (AR-210)

“Fate of the Flying Enterprise”/“Phantom Waltz”

Released: 1952



78 rpm – Aragon Records (AR-224)  
“I Went to Your Wedding”/“Why Should I Send You Flowers?”  
Released: 1952

78 rpm & 45 rpm – Apex Records (26381)  
“The Legend of the Jeebi”/“Parking Meter Blues”  
Released: 1952

45 rpm – Apex Records (26386)  
“I’m Gonna Foreclose the Mortgage”/“Three Little Secrets”  
Released: 1952

45 rpm – Apex Records (26393)  
“Queen Elizabeth Special”/“Foothills Breakdown”  
Released: 1952

45 rpm – Apex Records (26396)  
“Oil Capital Shuffle”/“Red Crawford’s Breakdown”  
Released: 1952  
Note: credited to Red Crawford, Stu Davis & The Cowtowners

45 rpm – Apex Records (26399)  
“She’s Cute as a Bug in a Rug”/“Lovelorn Heart”  
Released: [1953]

45 rpm – London Records (306)  
“Wild Weeds”/“Honky Tonk Serenade”  
Released: [1957]

45 rpm – London Records (307)  
“Dear Mr. Disc Jockey”/“I’d Be Glad to Forget You”  
Released: 1957

45 rpm – London Records (M.17080)  
“Broken Love”/“Queen of Twilight”  
Released: [1959]

45 rpm – London Records (M.17320)  
“Get Away Old Man, Get Away”/“Girl That I Marry”  
Released: [1960]

## ALBUMS

### **Stu Davis Invites You to Saddle Your Worries to a Song** – London Records (EB. 2)

“They’re Burnin’ Down the House I Was Brung Up In”; “The Cowboy’s Prayer”; “The Little Shirt My Mother Made for Me”; “Shepherd of Mine”; “Diggin’ with a Hoe”; “I Still Do”; “Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle”; “I Took It”; “Carrier Pigeon”; “The Piggy Back Song”

Released: 1956

### **Rope Around the Sun with Stu Davis** – London Records (EB. 4)

“Honey, Baby Mine”; “The Hangin’ Tree”; “Fort Worth Jail”; “What a Fool Was I”; “The Gangster’s Warning”; “The Rose Upon the Bible”; “Swaller-Tailed Coat”; “Ripple Rock”; “Dark as a Dungeon”; “New Broom Boogie”

Released: June 1959

### **Stu Davis Salutes the Western Stars** – London Records (EB. 6 - also on Richmond 20090)

“Let’s Say Goodbye (Like We Said Hello)”; “Lilli Marlene”; “I’m Going Back to Whur I Come from”; “Wedding Bells”; “There’s a Star-Spangled Banner (Waving Somewhere)”; “Mother, the Queen of My Heart”; “You Are My Sunshine”; “Cool Water”; “You’re the Only Star in My Blue Heaven”; “Mommy, Please Stay Home with Me”

Released: February-March 1961

### **The Touch of God’s Hand with Stu Davis** – London Records (EB. 9)

“Country Church”; “He’s the Lily of the Valley”; “Gentle Hands; From the Manger to the Cross”; “The Touch of God’s Hand”; “A House Built on a Rock”; “Singing an Old Hymn”; “Walls of White”; “Just Like Me”; “Hold Fast to the Right”

Released: April 1, 1960

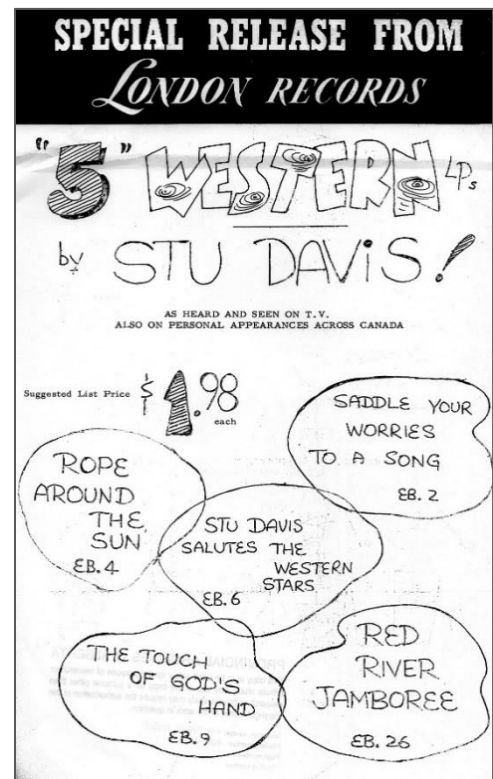
Note: credited to Stu and Fred The Harmony Boys

### **A Collection of Country-Western Classics** - London Records (EB. 26)

“Driftwood on the River”; “Paddle Your Own Canoe”; “Blue Guitar”; “Né-Hah-Nee”; “Dust”; “It Takes a Heap of Dreamin’ (To Dream Your Blues Away)”; “The Kentuckian Song”; “Rockin’ Alone (In an Old Rockin’ Chair)”; “Waltz of the Roses”; “Legend of the White Buffalo”

Released: [1960]

Note: “featuring Stu and Fred The Harmony Boys, Jimmie Pirie on the electric, Spanish & steel guitar”



“Special Release from London Records”  
mimeographed advertising handbill, ca. 1960  
Provincial Archives of Alberta, Stu Davis Fonds,  
PR1992.0519.0043

**Red River Jamboree** – London Records (EB. 26 – above LP re-issued with new title)

“Driftwood on the River”; “Paddle Your Own Canoe”; “Blue Guitar”; “Né-Hah-Nee”; “Dust”; “It Takes a Heap of Dreamin’ (To Dream Your Blues Away)”; “The Kentuckian Song”; “Rockin’ Alone (In an Old Rockin’ Chair)”; “Waltz of the Roses”; “Legend of the White Buffalo”

Released: [1961]

Note: “featuring Jimmie Pirie on the electric, Spanish & steel guitar”

**Stu Davis Salutes the Western Stars Volume 2** – London Records (EB. 33)

“At Mail Call Today”; “Four Walls”; “Cry of the Wild Goose”; “In Daddy’s Footsteps”; “When It’s Springtime in Alaska”; “Brave Man”; “What a Fool I Was”; “Country Boy”; “May You Never Be Alone”; “I’ve Got a Woman’s Love”

Released: 1960

**Stu Davis Presents Jimmie Pirie’s Guitar-Ama** – London Records (EB. 35)

“I Love You”; “Aurora”; “Black Is the Color”; “Schon Rosmarin”; “I Wish You Love”; “Wheels”; “Estrellita”; “Beyond the Reef”; “Adelita”; “Red Sails in the Sunset”

Released: [1961]

**Boothill Ballads and Songs of the Cowboy Troubadour** – London Records (EB. 39)

“Six Notches”; “Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie (The Song of the Dying Cowboy)”; “The Ballad of Curly Joe”; “He’s Gone Up the Trail”; “Ride Clear of This Town”; “The Streets of Laredo”; “No More I Want to Roam Again”; “Rusty Spurs”; “The Chase”; “Five Bullets in My Old Six-Shooter”

Released: 1961

**Just Plain Folks** – London Records (EB. 49)

“Gold Diggers”; “When I’m Gone You’ll Soon Forget”; “Little Crushed Rose”; “Small Town Girl”; “I See the Moon”; “My Nellie’s Blue Eyes”; “(God Gave Us) these Wonderful Things”; “There’s No Colour Bar in Heaven”; “The Ballad of the Minstrel Boy”; “Just Plain Folks”

Released: 1962

**Stu Davis Souvenirs** – London Records (EB. 58)

“Dear Mr. Disc Jockey”; “Wild Weed”; “Parking Meter Blues”; “I’d Be Glad to Forget You”; “Old and in the Way”; “Broken Love”; “The Legend of the Jeebi”; “Honky Tonk Serenade”; “Queen of the Twilight”; “A Wedding for Mary”

Released: 1963

***Stu Davis meets The Pathfinders and The Colonials in a Nashville Hootenanny*** – London Records (EB. 69)

“In the Stilly Night”; “The Song of the Violet”; “Green Grow the Lilacs” (w. The Colonials); “Get Away Old Man Get Away”; “Between Two Trees”; “The Spinning Wheel”; “In the Pines” (w. The Colonials); “Smoky Mountain Bill”; “The Ballad of a Black Sheep”; “The Girl That I Marry”

Released: 1964

***Have another Helping of Stu*** – London Records (EB. 91)

“Have You Forgotten”; “Old Ship”; “I’m Gonna Change Everything”; “Bow River Valley”; “Names Unknown”; “Down in the Diving Bell”; “Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat”; “Fly Trouble”; “Coupon Song”; “You’re a Real Good Friend”

Released: 1965

***The Stu Davis Show*** – London Records (EB. 96)

“Roll Along Kentucky Moon”; “Oklahoma Sal”; “Abilene”; “Blindman River Break-Up”; “When the Work’s All Done This Fall”; “When It’s Lamplightin’ Time (In the Valley)”; “The Ballad of Cowboy Jack”; “The Song of the Swallow”; “One More Ride”; “The Woodsman’s Prayer”

Released: 1966

Note: credited to Stu Davis and his son Duane with the Pathfinders, Wally McDonald & Alfie Myhre

***The Sound of Country Music*** – London Records (EB. 103)

“Anita, You’re Dreamin’”; “Devoted to You”; “Silent Trails”; “Stepping Stone”; “Have I Told You Lately (That I Love You)”; “You’ll Come Walkin’ Back”; “The Everlasting Hills”; “Cryin’ Time”; “Teardrops in My Heart”; “Maple Sugar Sweetheart”

Note: credited to Stu Davis and Duane Davis

Released: 1966

***The Stu Davis Centennial Album*** – London Records (EB. 107)

“A Place Called Newfoundland”; “This Is My Land”; “On an Old Covered Bridge”; “My Home in Nova Scotia”; “The Legend of the Lonesome Tree”; “The Legend of the Jeebi”; “That Old Red River Run”; “In the Valley of Qu’Appelle”; “Yonder on the Rollin’ Plain”; “The Mountains of Home”; “The Homesteader’s Lament”

Released: 1967

***The Songs and Music of Stu Davis, Trail Ridin’ Troubadour*** – Dominion Records (LSP 48510)

“All My Life”; “I Don’t Think She Even Misses Me”; “You’ve Worn Out Your Welcome”; “My Special Book of Memories” (featuring Duane Davis, Banjo); “Homestead Fever”; “Outcast”; “A Garden Spot on the Moon”; “The Ballad of Banjo Bill”; “The Mountains of Home”; “Travelin’ On”; “I Wonder When My Baby’s Comin’ Home”; “The Legend of the Lonesome Tree”

Released: 1970



***Songs from the Heart of Johnny Canuck*** – Birchmount Records (BM 575)

“I’m Gonna Change Everything”; “May You Never Be Alone”; “I’ve Got a Woman’s Love”; “The Old Country Church”; “At Mail Call Today”; “Paddle Your Own Canoe”; “Love Song of the Winds”; “The Touch of God’s Hand”; “Have You Forgotten”; “In Daddy’s Footsteps”

Released: 1971

***Let's Go Back to the Country with Canada's Cowboy Troubadour Stu Davis*** – Cattle Records (LP-112), Germany

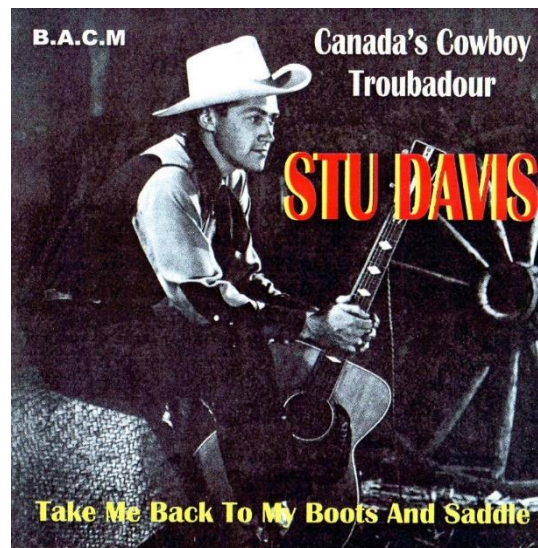
“Deserted”; “Child of Divorce”; “I Looked for Love”; “In Daddy’s Footsteps”; “Canadian Waltz”; “I Went to Your Wedding”; “Why Should I Send You Flowers?”; “The Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat”; “When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies”; “Fate of the Flying Enterprise”; “Crossroads”; “What a Fool I Was” (#1); “Land, Sky and Water”; “Welcome Back to My Heart”; “Crying for You”; “Sweetheart of Yesterday”; “Too Far Apart”; “Darlin’”, “Now I Know the Reason Why”

Released: 1987

***Canada's Cowboy Troubadour / Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle*** – British Archive of Country Music (CD D 237), UK

“Old and in the Way”; “They’re Burning Down the House I Was Brung Up In”; “Always Keep Your Promise”; “Diggin’ with a Hoe”; “Welcome Back to My Heart”; “Fort Worth Jail”; “The Gangster’s Warning”; “I Took It”; “I’m Gonna Leave Town”; “The Little Shirt My Mother Made for Me”; “New Broom Boogie”; “Swaller Tail Coat”; “Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle”; “When the Snowbirds Cross the Rockies”; “The Cowboy’s Prayer”; “The Dude in the Ten Gallon Hat”; “A Wedding for Mary”; “Crying for You”; “Shepherd of Mine”; “I Still Do”; “Sweetheart of Yesterday”; “Carrier Pigeon”; “What a Fool I Was”; “The Piggy Bank Song”; “Dark as a Dungeon”

Released: 2008



Cover of *Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle*  
(British Archive of Country Music, CD) 2008