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Band Guide

If you're a promoter looking to hire a band for a festival, an act looking at your rivals, or just an aspiring musician wanting to know the lay of the land, this is for you. Pictured above: Nomad Jones



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Boot Records

The Stompin' Tom Connors label played a significant role in the history of Canadian bluegrass music

By Tom McCreight



Tom, the Old Coot, McCreight has been involved in Bluegrass since 1970, when the band "Bluegrass Revival" was formed in Toronto. He has been the bass player in several bands, a festival volunteer, a merchant, a newsletter publisher, a promoter, an emcee, an author, an active member of the Toronto Area Bluegrass Committee (TABC), winner of Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards for Bass Player and also Entertainer of the Year, and a song writer. He has an extensive collection of CDs and old vinyl records, and remembers when there were only a handful of Canadian bluegrass bands, and no Canadian festivals.

"Boot distributed a large number of recordings by a variety of Canadian folk, country and bluegrass artists"

What do the following LPs have in common? *They Said It Couldn't be Done: The Humber River Valley Boys; Light – Medium – Heavy: The Dixie Flyers; Just Pickin': The Dixie Flyers; For Our Friends: The Dixie Flyers First Choice: The Ladies Choice Bluegrass Band; Denis LePage and Station Road: Denis LePage and Station Road; Larger Than Life: Denis LePage and Station Road; and At The Cowboy Arms Hotel: Denis LePage and Station Road?*

1. They are all Canadian bluegrass bands
2. They were all released in the 1970s or 1980s
3. They were all released on the Boot label
4. I have them in my hand as I write this piece

Boot Records was formed in 1971 by Stompin' Tom Connors, and his manager Jury Krytiuk, as a label for Tom's recordings. They soon branched out and released cassettes and LPs by a wide variety of Canadian artists.

Bands would choose a studio, cut a record, prepare the artwork and cover notes, and then take it to Boot, who would take care of the cost of manufacturing and distribution. Boot owned the copyright to the recording and a share of the publishing rights to any original material, which was standard procedure in the industry at that time for labels recording bluegrass bands. Most of the original material on the above records is published by either Skinners Pond Music, owned by Connors and Krytiuk, or Morning Music Limited, originally owned by Connors, Krytiuk,

and Mark Altman. In 1988 Altman became the sole owner. Skinners Pond, PEI, is where Stomin' Tom was raised, although he was born in Saint John, New Brunswick.

When bands wanted copies to sell at their gigs, they purchased them from Boot. Was this a good deal for the bands? Having distribution, before the age of the Internet and all its advantages, was a big deal! Sharing the publishing rights (50/50) is another question. If by some chance a big name artist records your song and sells a million copies, the holder of the publishing rights stands to make good money, and the composer would likely be kicking him or herself for not keeping them. For example: Elvis wanted to record Dolly Parton's song "I Will Always Love You" and his handlers insisted that Dolly share the publishing. She refused, even though she would have loved to have him sing it. When Whitney Houston recorded this song and made it a huge hit all over the world Dolly's stand proved to be a shrewd business decision.

Boot distributed a large number of recordings by a variety of Canadian folk, country and bluegrass artists. In addition to the above bluegrass artists they also released recordings by: Richard Gully, The Bluegrass Four, Cross Country Grass, Cody, Bruce County, Whiskey Jack, Blackstrap, Humphrey and The Dumptrucks, and Fred J. Eaglesmith.

By the end of the '80s the Boot label was pretty much inactive. Jury moved on to other fields... he is a travel expert in Toronto, specializing in Cuba. There is no doubt that Boot played a very significant role in the development of Canadian, particularly Ontario, bluegrass. Without their affiliation with Boot these bands would have had no distribution, other

than selling at their gigs, and both the musicians and the fans would have been poorer for it.

Thank you Boot Records for your part in making bluegrass grow in Canada.

