

GONE WEST

BY SUSAN JARVIS

Going west for BOB HOWE means walking out of his home overlooking Bondi Beach (which he shares with wife Karen) and heading up Oxford St to Bondi Junction.

Over the years, Bob's become a bit of a local identity in the Bondi area, largely due to his alter ego, Big Bob from Bondi, who presents a gig guide and makes other regular appearances on ABC Radio's *Saturday Night Country*.

But Bob reckons "west" is a state of mind — one he's tried to capture on his brand new album, *Go West*.

Amazingly — given that he's a country music veteran who's been well known and respected in the industry for the past 30 years — this is Bob's first real album.

A talented guitarist, harmonica player and experienced musical director (amongst other things), Bob says he's always been too busy performing to record properly.

"I've recorded the odd single and EP, and contributed tracks to compilations before, but I've never tackled a full-length album," Bob said.

"When I decided to do this, I wanted a country album which reflected what I do live in my club and variety shows.

"I looked at my repertoire and realised I had a lot of cowboy tunes, and it all fell into place from there."

Go West is a very different kind of country album. It's effectively a collection of Western-inspired show tunes, including *The Lone Ranger*, *High Noon*, *Bonanza*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *(Ghost) Riders In The Sky* and *Apache/Geronimo* — all performed with great style and passion by this talented musician.

Bob's included a couple of originals on *Go West*, *Last Cowboy Waltz* and *Diamondtina Yodel*.

The Last Cowboy Waltz is an expanded version of a theme Bob wrote for TERRY GORDON's album *The Last Of The Murrickville*

Cowboys, while he describes *Diamondtina Yodel* as an instrumental version of "blue yodelling".

Another highlight is DONNA BOYD's exquisite vocal (as well as Bob's emotional guitar solo) on the old PEGGY LEE song *Johnny Guitar*.

And Bob himself makes a special vocal appearance on the hidden track *Go West, Young Man*.

It's been a huge year for Bob, who took out the 2006 MO Award for Variety Vocal/Instrumental Performer of the Year in April.

But his own performances are only part of his involvement in the music industry. He's represented the successful Canterbury Country show monthly at Sydney's Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL for the last six years, and was also at the forefront of the internet boom when he began his *Cowboys in Cyberspace* column in Capital News.

"When I started, I thought I'd struggle to find enough websites to talk about. Things have really changed!" he said.

He's also just finished producing an album for EMMA HANNAH — her first for more than a decade.

And the *Go West* concept is going one step further next month, when the Bondi connection kicks in once more. Bob's helping to stage a huge *Go West*

promotion at Bondi Junction on 15 July, which will re-launch the Oxford St West shopping precinct. He'll present a country concert, which will be accompanied by buskers, line dancers and (inevitably, he says) hay bales.

The *Go West* album is available from Bob's websites, www.bobhowe.com, or from his *Cowboys in Cyberspace* site, www.shownet.com.au/cowboys.

