

WIDE WORLD OF BOB

BY SUSAN JARVIS

When he began performing music back in the 1970s, **BOB HOWE** had no idea it would be his ticket to see the world.

Over the years, he's performed extensively in both the United States and England. But that's nothing compared with his recent travels.

These days, Bob's frequently found aboard a luxury ocean liner in some far-flung corner of the world, entertaining the passengers with a combination of his impressive musical talents and his engaging persona.

"I've been performing on cruises for about 12 years now," Bob said.

"At first I did two or three a year, but last year I did about 20 trips."

Bob performs as a feature entertainer with some of the world's biggest cruise lines, including Holland America and Royal Caribbean.

"It's a wonderful way to make a living – you usually do a couple of feature shows on one night of the cruise, then maybe one or two spots," he said.

"They're big production shows with a full band, so there's a lot of time spent preparing and rehearsing.

"One of the best things about it is that you get to perform for people from around the world. I love the fact that my albums are going home to the four corners of the globe."

That's exactly what will happen to Bob's latest album, *Colour My World*, which is a solo recording

in every sense of the word – not only did Bob produce and star on the album, but he also played every single instrument on it.

"As a multi-instrumentalist, I can control what goes on the album, which gives me a chance to include all the songs I love, and make them sound exactly how I hear them in my head," he said.

Colour My World is an eclectic mix of the kinds of music Bob loves, from the psychedelic title track, originally made famous by **PETULA CLARK** to Bob's bluegrass take on his favourite Western TV themes and his gorgeous version of the Irish classic *Purple Heather*.

"The album does have a bit of a colour

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theme – with songs like *The Bluebell Polka*, *Green Onions* and *Purple Heather*," Bob said.

There are a couple of white-tinged tracks as well – *The White Rabbit*, originally recorded by **PETER POSA**, and *A Whiter Shade of Bach*, a mix of **PROCOL HAREM**'s *A Whiter Shade of Pale* and Bach's *Air On The G String*.

The album is Bob's third solo recording – he and **NIKKI GILLIS** also released a duets album, *Collaboration*, in 2009. Over the years, he's notched up numerous awards on the country and club scenes, including three MO Awards for live performance – in 2006, 2010 and 2011 – and the Musician of the Year award at the 2007 Country Music People's Choice Awards.

Bob is also the motivating force behind the hugely successful Canterbury Country Shows at the Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club in Sydney. The shows have been presented for the past 12 years, and attract large crowds.

This month's Canterbury Country show will feature **TRACY KILLEEN** and **DWAYNE ELIX** in the Hank and Patsy Birthday Bash, with October scheduled as a Request Night show, November reserved for the annual Tompkins Guitar Showcase and December for the big Canterbury Country Christmas Show.

Bob also performs in the shows, together with his band **HILLBILLY HEAVEN**.

But there are far more strings to Bob Howe's bow – almost as many as the instruments he plays.

For 12 years, he featured on ABC National's high-rating *Saturday Night Country* program, presenting the weekly gig guide. He was also a regular contributor to Capital News for a quarter of a century until 2010.

In fact, his 'Cowboys in Cyberspace' column for Cap

News was at the forefront of a new trend back in 1997 when it began.

"I was trying to tell people what this new internet thing was all about. As the internet grew, so did the column," Bob said. 'Cowboys in Cyberspace' was also one of the earliest online music websites.

These days, Bob is focused on his many musical endeavours. He's currently producing a new album for country music legend **WAYNE HORSBURGH**, and is gathering material for a new album of original songs that he hopes to release some time next year.

Meanwhile, the response to *Colour My World* has been overwhelmingly positive, which is something Bob takes very personally.

"These tunes are the soundtrack of my life – I've been playing them for almost 40 years, in one context or another. To have been able to put my own stamp on them here is a wonderful thing," he said.

Bob's brand new instrumental single *Celtic Bushman* is available now from iTunes.