

Valley Lifestyles



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Singer Eleanor McCain returns to her roots

'Green Hills of Home' is nominated for the 2011 ECMA Roots/Traditional Solo Recording of the Year

By Allison Adair

Florenceville native and 2011 East Coast Music Association award nominee Eleanor McCain realized at a young age that music was her passion. McCain's mother, who had minored in piano at Mount Allison University in Sackville, instilled a love of music in her daughter while she was growing up.

"Music was always in the house," McCain said. "My mom guided me, she recognized that I love singing."

McCain is nominated for her latest CD *Green Hills of Home* in the Roots/Traditional Solo Recording of the Year category.

"I have so much respect for the ECMA's and for Maritime musicians," she said. "It's a huge honour."

After seeing a performance of the musical *Annie* in New York with her parents at the age of nine, McCain realized that there was so much more that could be done with music than she had previously thought.

"It ignited something in me, I went from there," she explained.

McCain and her mother would travel from their home in Florenceville to Fredericton for singing lessons with Mary Lee McKenna every week and McCain followed in her mother's footsteps, studying classical music at Mount Allison University in Sackville.

"Then I moved to Toronto with the idea of continuing to study classical music and voice," she said. "I realized something was missing, I couldn't dedicate my life just to that genre. The classical style is very controlled, I

wanted to move away from that. It took me awhile to find my sound."

She concentrated on expanding her vocal style from pure classical to classical crossover with a fusion of pop and folk. Eventually McCain connected with producer/songwriter Tim Thorney and Erica Ehm, who was one of the first VJ's on MuchMusic. The two had been writing music together for various artists when McCain came into contact with them. They ended up writing several songs for her including *Green Hills of Home*, which Thorney and Ehm wrote for McCain after she told them about how hard it was for her family to leave their home in Florenceville to move to Toronto after the Wallace McCain branch split from the rest of the family.

McCain first recorded *Green Hills of Home* for her debut CD, *Intimate*. She knew she had to record it again for her 2010 Celtic CD of the same name, which was produced and arranged by Brigham Phillips.

"It is a roots CD and the song is very much tied in to my roots," she explained. "Celtic music is very much a part of my roots, not just because I am a Maritimer, it is also suited to me and my voice. There is a beautiful lilting quality to Celtic music, it's something I am really drawn to. The songs usually tell a beautiful story."

"Everything was like coming home for me, it was a great process," she admitted.

The Celtic CD is a collection of traditional folk and Maritime songs that

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Eleanor McCain is nominated for a 2011 ECMA for her latest recording, *Green Hills of Home*.

represent her East Coast roots. *Green Hills of Home* includes three songs written by well-known Cape Breton songwriter Allister MacGillivray.

"I feel the Maritimes when I listen to his music," she explained. "His *Song for the Mira* has a line that says 'Out on the Mira, the people are kind, they'll

treat you to homebrew and help you unwind; and if you come broken they'll see that you mend, I wish I was with them again."

It speaks to what I associate with being a Maritimer."

The disc also features some old classics and traditional tunes such as *The Ash Grove* and *Down By the Salley Gardens*.

"Some I used to sing a lot with my mom when I was a kid," McCain said.

"They are steeped in memories from when I was growing up. I am drawn to music that is very intimate, warm and personal."

McCain went on hiatus after *Intimate* was released in 2001 when she learned she was pregnant with her daughter Laura, who is now eight. Although family is her priority, McCain wanted to continue her music career.

When her daughter was three years old, she started thinking about recording a CD of lullabies. *Bundle of Joy*, which received a 2009 ECMA nomination for Children's Recording of the Year, was recorded in Nashville with producer Terry Sawchuk.

McCain said she would like to record a CD of Christmas songs as her next project.

The singer will be showcasing her talent at the ECMAs in Charlottetown in April and said she would also like to return to Florenceville for a concert in the next few months.

McCain's CDs are currently available through her website, www.eleanormccain.ca.