



JENNIFER ROBERTS/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

FAVOURITE ROOM

Home for the holidays

Singer Eleanor McCain happily lets Christmas decor take over her living room, which also doubles as her band's rehearsal space

For singer Eleanor McCain, Canada's sesquicentennial year was spent performing pop and folk standards – from Leonard Cohen's classic *Hallelujah* to Allister MacGillivray's iconic *Song for the Mira* – with orchestras across the country in support of her sixth studio album, *True North: The Canadian Songbook*.

The tour (and accompanying coffee-table book) took her to Ontario's Algonquin Park, Saskatchewan's wheat fields, Iqaluit and her home turf on the East Coast (McCain hails from New Brunswick). But at day's – or year's – end, the artist is happy to retire to her Lawrence Park home in North Toronto to seek comfort and restoration. "I love home,"

McCain says. "That's how I regain energy, really, is to have quiet time at home."

Things don't stay silent there for long, as McCain's favourite room is a space of creation as much as it is a respite. "We have band rehearsals here. The drummer brings in his drum kit and the bass player and guitarist. So, it gets converted."

The baby grand piano, a Heintzman & Co. from the late 1930s, is a workhorse heirloom, well-used by multiple generations of musicians. "It was my grandmother's, from Truro, Nova Scotia," McCain says, "and my uncle Roddy [Rod Norrie] was part of a well-known band called the Lincolns, and that was the piano they rehearsed on for years."

McCain's mother, also a pianist, tickled

those same ivories. "It was the piano I had growing up. It has a lot of history with my family," she says.

The piano's natural wood finish complements the overall neutral palette, which McCain sets off with different textures and forms, such as Nova Scotian artist Dawn MacNutt's wire sculptures, which grace the built-in shelves, or the chevron cowhide rug below.

The sofa and leather club chair, soft beige and tan, are from Palazzetti in Toronto and the darkly reflective coffee table is from Italinteriors.

The big payoff comes when McCain introduces colour amidst all those fawns, creams and off-whites: it resounds. A seascape by Canadian artist James Lahey has impact in this setting, as do a series of red lacquer frames, found at Crate and Barrel, with photos of McCain's daughter, Laura, at different ages, posing with Santa Claus. "I just haul them out every season and we have a little chuckle," McCain says. "And because everything else is really neutral, that red pops out, which I like."

A gaggle of Christmas carolers, figurines collected by McCain's mother, perch atop the piano, completing the festive scene. "We had them in our house growing up and I always loved them."

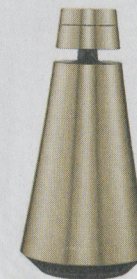
– KRISTINA LJUBANOVIC

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Athena chair, \$3,800 at Palazzetti (palazzetti.ca).

Metallic Cowhide Fino rug, \$3,295 at RH Modern (rhmodern.com).



Beosound 1 portable wireless speaker, \$2,180 at Bang & Olufsen Toronto (beotoronto.com).



Brushed Brass 12x12 album cover frame, \$74.95 at Crate and Barrel (crateandbarrel.com).

Made in Canada inv. 5406, edition 1-7 of 15 by James Lahey, \$7,900 at Galerie de Bellefeuille (debellefeuille.com).

