

BRAD REID'S NEW SCOTLAND

Seán Laffey talks to Nova Scotian multi-instrumentalist Brad Reid.



Seán: “Your roots are on the west coast of Cape Breton?”

Brad: “Yes, it has always been the Scottish tradition that provided the musical roots for my family. My number one mentor was my grandfather Henry Lefort, a fiddler from Cheticamp. He was a major influence on me and my connection to the music. He took me to the local radio station one day, where there was a record shop, and bought me what would become two very influential albums, Buddy MacMaster’s *Judique On the Floor* and Natalie MacMaster’s *Fit As A Fiddle*. Then after that, it was fiddlers like Ashley MacIsaac, Brenda Stubbert, and Jerry Holland.”

“Everyone has their own story...which they can choose to infuse their music with”

Seán: “Yet you didn’t begin as a fiddler?”

Brad: “My first instrument was the saxophone, which I took up in school at age 11. This got me into playing jazz, which I went on to study in university. I try to learn from specialists on each instrument, which often meant studying classical music and technique. Then when I first picked up the fiddle a couple years after the saxophone, I also got into playing guitar, piano, and later bass. I have been fortunate enough to get work playing all of these instruments and more, at some time or another, including a lot of cruise ship contracts, and musical theatre contracts.”

Seán: “You spent a long time with Cirque Du Soleil.”

Brad: “Life with Cirque was exciting. I really felt that the job was to bring our artistry to the forefront, and showcase the beauty of all the

disciplines. The cast and crew was a great group of people from all over the world so it was really special getting to know them.”

Seán: “Has returning to your Celtic roots given you more musical freedom?”

Brad: “I do feel like I am giving myself more freedom to allow many influences to come through in my own music. The truth is that everyone has their own story and background, which they can choose to infuse their music with, or choose not to. For many years I was trying to be too traditional, and by that I mean living in the past. I think by embracing our own story, we are allowing everyone else to do the same, and the result is that we have great music, or art being created that is as unique as each person that creates it. I heard Martin Hayes say that “while this music comes from an old tradition, it’s continually growing, and so we are just a part of that”. This is a nice way of thinking about it.”

Seán: “How did you assemble the core band for New Scotland?”

Brad: “I knew I wanted to work with Jamie Gatti on double bass and Tom Roach on percussion. These guys are both heavy jazz players, and we’ve done some jazz gigs together. So I knew we had that common background. Plus Tom’s from Cape Breton, and had played quite a bit with Natalie MacMaster, and Jamie plays with one of the biggest Cape Breton bands going, The Barra MacNeils. I also knew that Tom had experience on more than the drum kit, so I wanted to take full advantage of his Cuban conga background, and everything else that he could bring to the table. James MacLean, who has been playing guitar for our live shows, was unavailable for recording, so I took it upon myself to dust off my guitar chops and dig in, which was fun. I did bring

in Dave MacIsaac to play guitar on the straight up traditional selections, because he’s always somewhat of a marvel. So that was a real treat.

“I’d like to thank my sound engineer and the band, who were absolutely heroic in their contributions in creating this album. Also a big thank you to the folks at the Halifax Celtic Festival who gave us our first gig in this new band format, back in February, which sort of lit the fuse for the album. And last but not least, all my family (including my “cousins by the dozens”) and friends who continue to be very supportive.”

Seán: “Has the pandemic impinged on your plans?”

Brad: “I’m looking ahead to the spring to plan the next live shows, if all goes well. But you know, we have to be flexible.”

Find out more about Brad’s *NEW Scotland* at: www.bradreid.ca

