

DOUG GALLANT: Brad Reid's unique musical journey results in New Scotland

Premium content

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Fiddler Brad Reid brings together traditional Cape Breton music, Latin influences, jazz, hip-hop and other urban sounds to his just-released album, *New Scotland*. – Contributed



Brad Reid was not much more than a kid when his grandfather took him to a Cape Breton fiddling festival.

The traditional Celtic music he heard being played by fiddlers who in some instances were no older than he was captured his interest – so much so that he acquired a fiddle himself and learned to play some tunes.

Sounds like the start of a hundred other stories you may have heard about young players who, after being introduced to Cape Breton fiddle music, chose to go down the same road travelled by Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac and a host of others.

But Reid's musical journey didn't initially take him down that road.

He developed an interest in jazz, and the sax became his first instrument.

Over time he also learned to play the clarinet and the flute.

Reid ended up pursuing jazz studies at university and at some point dipped his toes into classical music.

But he never lost interest in fiddle music.

During his travels with Cirque De Soleil, for example, he would make a point of looking for fiddle sessions after shows where he could jam.

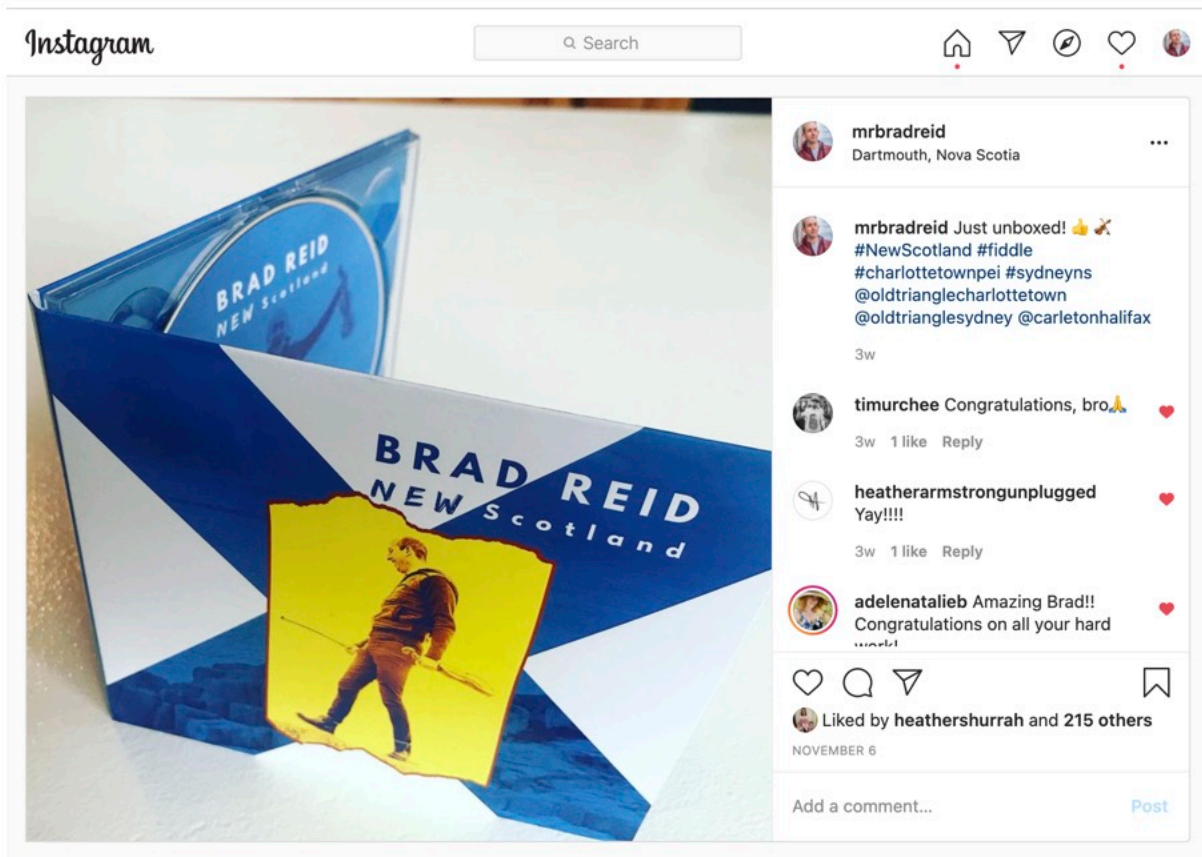
Fast facts

- Brad Reid toured North America, Mexico, Russia and Latvia with Cirque De Soleil in the company's production of Crystal, its first-ever show on ice.
- For that production, he played clarinet, sax, and guitar — while skating.

Reid says that despite language, cultural and stylistic differences, he always found a sense of "home" when playing the fiddle — connecting deeply with other musicians, audiences and his own creativity in ways other instruments didn't allow.

So when he returned to Nova Scotia a while back Reid decided to tell his own musical stories, built on a foundation of Cape Breton fiddle music and a host of other musical influences from across the world.

The end result is New Scotland, a spirited, full-bodied record that brings together traditional fiddle music, Latin influences, jazz, hip-hop and other urban sounds.



A post shared by Brad Reid (@mrbradreid)

"There's definitely foot-stompin' Cape Breton excitement," Reid says of the record. "There are also ambient, goosebump moments and some 'fiddle meets Dr. Dre' tunes where you might wanna get the subwoofer goin' in the Toyota Corolla, rollin' downtown, shootin' the drag."

The record's 15 tracks are predominantly instrumental in nature but there are a couple of tracks with vocals, one of which, Lucy Campbell & Sandy Cameron, sees him sing the notation.

Reid wrote nine of those tracks, augmenting his originals with traditional pieces like King George, Hills of Glenorchy and Maggie Brown's Favourite.

There are some lovely tracks among his originals; my personal favourites being Northumberland Shores, a beautiful slow air, and the track that follows, Haley Small's Reel. I'm also very partial to The Hector and Fonn Air Mo Mhairi Laghaich.



Reid, a very fine fiddler, has surrounded himself with some of the region's best jazz and traditional players for this record. On deck with him are bass player Jamie Gatti, guitarist Dave MacIsaac and percussionist Tom Roach.

Gatti and Roach perform with him on a regular basis as members of the Brad Reid Quartet along with James MacLean.

In addition to playing fiddle on the record, Reid plays guitar, double bass and bodhran.

If there's anyone on your Christmas list with a soft spot for fiddle music, this might help you cross them off your list.

(Rating: 3 1/2 out of 5 stars)

Doug Gallant is a freelance writer and well-known connoisseur of a wide variety of music. His On Track column will appear in The Guardian every second Thursday. To comment on what he has to say or to offer suggestions for future reviews, email him at dpagallant@gmail.com.

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