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Natalie on Natalie

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

At the age of 24, Cape Breton fiddler Natalie MacMaster has already made herself very well known in the Celtic music scene. MacMaster has been dazzling audiences in the Maritimes and the rest of Canada for years. In the past two years, she has performed across Britain, Europe, and New Zealand, as well as touring the U.S. with the Chieftains.

MacMaster is currently touring Atlantic Canada, promoting her latest CD release "No Boundaries". I spoke to her Tuesday morning before she headed down to Lunenburg for a concert that evening.

Gaz: How does *No Boundaries* compare to your past work?

NM: It's a little different. There's certainly a lot of music similar to what I've previously recorded — traditional medleys. I also took some traditional medleys and arranged them a bit more to get more of a polished sound, so they'd appeal to all kinds of music lovers, not just fiddle music fans. There are also a couple of songs which are different: one with Bruce Guthro and one with Cookie Rankin.

Gaz: You're currently doing an Atlantic tour, playing mostly in

concert halls. How different is that environment from playing around home in dance halls?

NM: You have the undivided attention of the audience, hopefully. The people have come there to see you, as opposed to a dance hall, which is always packed anyway, no matter who is playing. In a concert setting they're not there to dance, they are there to listen. And if it's your tour, they are there to listen to you. That alone means a lot when you walk on to a stage in a theatre that is completely sold out.

As far as playing goes, playing at a dance you're restricted to playing jigs and reels, but in a concert you are open to a wider variety of tunes. You can design a show so that the listener goes through many emotional highs and lows with the music.

Gaz: If you had been asked in high school where you thought you'd be at 24 years of age, do you think you'd have predicted this?

NM: I'd always known that I'd be performing. I've known since I was about 10 that I'd be performing the fiddle somehow, somewhere. I never thought though that I would have achieved what I have or be as busy as I am. Especially because I'm a fiddler, and 10 years ago a fiddler was popu-

lar only among fiddle fans, in Cape Breton or different pocket communities on the East Coast. But now fiddle music has opened up to people who just enjoy music, or enjoy Maritime music.

Gaz: How has your success affected your personal life, being such a recognizable person in the Maritimes?

NM: I do notice I get stared at. Walking down the street I'll see someone catch my eye and smile, or stop and ask for an autograph. I go through the drive-through at Subway and I'm getting my change and he's asking for an autograph — but that all comes with the territory.

I do it myself, though! We were at the Economy Shoe Shop last night and I can't remember the actor's name, but this guy who's been up for an Oscar was there. I was catching myself staring over at him thinking, "Hey, cool!" and nudging the guy beside me saying, "Look, that's so and so!". And then I thought, "He must mind that — going places and having people recognize him." But maybe he doesn't, I don't know.

You can catch Natalie in concert this weekend in Glace Bay at the Savoy Theatre Thursday night, or Saturday night at the St. F.X. Auditorium. Both shows start at 8 p.m.

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