

Breaking into the P.E.I. music scene

More Island acts breaking into the scene, causing P.E.I. to become noticed nationally

By Jaclyn Crawford

Prince Edward Island's music scene is filled with talent and support. That is easy to see no matter where you go to get your fill of music.

Local bars are filled with singing along to a classmate or co-worker's band.

But how do you go from being in the audience to being on stage?

Learning an instrument on the Island is no differ-

ent than anywhere else, said Mike Carver, a local drummer for a number of bands, including String Theory, the Milks and Rectangles and The North Lakes.

Whether you play in a kitchen for your friends or for a living, all you need is a love of music.

Nikkie Gallant, a singer/songwriter from Summerside, said P.E.I. is rich with music because so many people are playing out of a love for music, and out of sheer

"It is more about cultivating the scene than competing for shows and attention."

boredom.

"We have nothing else to do."

It's like hibernation in the winter. If you don't have an instrument, you go stir crazy, she said.

However, making the leap from playing in your kitchen to playing for an audience in a bar is not always an easy task.

Go to open mics, Gallant and Carver said.

The people there are really supportive. It is a good place to showcase and grow your talents, said Gallant.

Be willing to do what you have to do to progress from playing open mics to getting scheduled gigs, said Carver.

When the Milks and Rectangles started playing, they played for free. This may seem like a bad idea, but they were the band that was called to fill in if something bad happened. They became known quite quickly, said Carver.

Once you start playing shows, you become known around the music scene. Island musicians are such a family. Everyone knows everyone else, and everyone helps each other. Your contacts and friends soon grow, said Carver.

Island bands also tend to share musicians with one another, which creates more opportunities to play.

Musicians here seem to realise the better local musicians do on a national level, the better it is for all Island musicians.

There is less competition on P.E.I., which is one of the reasons Gallant returned

here from Calgary to pursue her passion for music.

Bands like Two Hours Traffic and Paper Lions help the local music scene. Once bands break the provincial barrier, bloggers tend to focus on the area they came from for more talent, said Carver.

Breaking the barrier is all about marketing yourself.

If you are pop, market yourself as pop. If you are metal, market yourself as metal. Don't try to be anything you are not, said Carver.

You have to make a name for yourself in a small town, then break out. That way you still have a following where you began.

Island musicians don't go without support from their communities either. Owners of available venues want to help local musicians and are willing to let them play quite often, said Carver.

And Islanders love listening to music and going to shows to support their friends and neighbours, said Gallant.

"It is more about cultivating the scene than competing for shows and attention."

Crawford is a journalism student at Holland College

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