

Island representation at the ECMA's

BY TODD MACLEAN

PEI was represented well at this year's ECMAs, with a strong list of performers, including Lennie Gallant, Tara MacLean, Paper Soul, Slide, Nancy White, and Richard Wood.

Nominees and award winners included Tara MacLean, nominated for Female Artist of the Year, Lennie Gallant, nominated for Male Artist, Album, and SOCAN Songwriter of the year, and winner of 2 awards, along with Richard Wood, who also took home 2 awards.

Island artists performed at such places as the 72 hour Jam Session, Music World in the Halifax Shopping Centre, numerous showcase events, and at the Gala itself.

Tara MacLean, who tours mostly throughout the States now, said that the East Coast Music Awards experience is still very special to her because it makes her realize that she's still appreciated here at home.

"It always makes me feel like I'm still part of the East Coast music scene," she said. "It always grounds me, and brings me back to my roots. And I go off knowing that people from my home are still proud of me."

Her CD, *Silence*, has been out for a couple of years now. She plans to release a new album this summer, in addition to touring, and beginning a career in acting.

Paper Soul, who were attending their third ECMAs, showcased on Saturday evening, and said that the events were quite well organized, particularly in the area of staging, and sound production.

"It felt pretty rockin' rollin', man," said one member of the group. "All the sound was so professional, and everything sounded so good. You just had to close your eyes, and play your instrument, and they did everything else."

The band said that attending the ECMA's gives them a lot of options as a

group, and it lets them have the opportunity to share knowledge amongst other artists in the East Coast Music scene.

The five member ensemble just finished recording an album in Ontario, and plans to have a CD release party here on March 13 and 14, followed by touring throughout Canada to promote the album.

Christian Gavard of Slide says that Halifax's ECMAs were the best ones he's ever been to.

"There's more hype this year, and everybody's really into it," he said. "More stuff happened to us too, as we played for a really great audience, and I got to MC the Jam Session for about four hours. We were also approached by an agent today."

This was Slide's third attendance at the awards, and Gavard said that even though they only played once, it was enough to get them noticed. The rest of the time was spent meeting people, and promoting themselves and their album, which they hope to finish recording sometime soon.

After winning his award for Male Artist of the Year, Lennie Gallant said that he didn't expect to win anything, because of the very recent release of his new album.

"I didn't really think people would have a chance to become familiar enough with it that I would be voted for any of these categories," mentioned Gallant. "But this is fabulous. It feels great."

Gallant and his band plan to do some touring in Ireland, Memphis, Ontario, and throughout the Atlantic region in the near future.

And amongst all the publicity, Gallant even had some time to send a message with a tinge of sarcasm to students from his alma mater: "Don't work too hard, cause I know that's all you wanna do over there is work and not play. You know, try to have a little fun."

New Brunswick has it all

BY PETER GILLIS

From light-hearted acoustic riffs to down and dirty blues, the New Brunswick music scene has it all.

At least half a dozen groups were showcased at the ECMA's, and even more were nominated for awards. The big winners were Julian Austin, for Country Artist of the Year, and The Glamour Puss Blues Band, taking the award in the Blues/Gospel category.

"I think it's a coming of age for us," said Paul Boudreau, bassist for Glamour Puss. "Yesterday our truck broke down and today we've won an award."

"For the last while we've been telling ourselves that we won't get our hopes up, we're just going to keep cool and lose very graciously," he said. "By the expressions on our face, I don't know if we won very graciously."

Julian Austin, a native of Saint John, released his debut album *What My Heart Already Knows* in May, 1997. The first single, "Little Ol' Kisses" reached number one on RPM charts and the video was number one on Country Music Television.

Other nominees included Julie Doiron, for Alternative Artist, Roch Voisine, for Male Artist and Pop/Rock, and Modabo, for Group of the Year.

"The nomination is incredible," said Mike Doyle, lead singer from Modabo. "Aside from being good exposure in terms of developing a very young career musically, it's very cool. Three guys from New Brunswick. Who knew?"

Spotlight - Modabo

They've been called the Barenaked Ladies of the East Coast, blending energetic, live performances with humorous lyrics. Compare them to who you want. In the end, Modabo will stand out from the rest.

Modabo (their name taken from a CODCO skit) evolved from a series of acoustic trios that grew out of jam sessions in Fredericton about five years ago. Their first big gig was opening for Garnet Rogers at the Fredericton Playhouse. Rogers was so impressed with their set that he offered to help produce their first CD. That self-titled album garnered two 1996 ECMA nominations.

Though they walked away empty-handed, the recording did get them invited to the Winnipeg Folk Festival, The Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival and other prestigious events. They have even played in front of 80,000 in Finkenburg, Austria. Some of their television appearances include ATV's *Up and Coming*, CBC's *Up on the Roof*. They've also been featured on CBC-Radio's *Morningside* and *Atlantic Airwaves*.

Last weekend, they were nominated for Group of the Year, and performed live on the nationally broadcasted gala Sunday night. I caught up with Mike Doyle Friday night after the showcase to get his thoughts on the ECMAs.

"The ECMA's are alive and well and 'wow'," said Mike. "The atmosphere is electric, magic purple lightning, everyone is having a good time and getting what they deserve. It is a wonderful time to be from the East Coast. Everybody feels like a community. It is like the last frontier, it's wonderful that we have this gem on this planet, that hasn't been polished yet."

The true importance of the weekend, though, is the opportunity young artists get to take the next step in their careers.

"I think they've been invaluable to create an awareness and to celebrate the music and the culture, the art and the history." However, it couldn't have been done without the city.

"Halifax is amazing. It has proved itself with the G7 in terms of being on the world class stage. They've certainly, again, out done themselves. The people from Halifax, the Haligonians being proud to be a part of something greater than all of us.

Their latest CD, *The Many and the One*, has just hit the music stores.

