

For three decades, Cape Breton, N.S. native Natalie MacMaster (42) has been making music for a living and living her non-stop life — on stage. “It has been incredibly constant... one minute of life tumbling over the next,” reflected MacMaster. “It’s been insane and it’s been absolutely wonderful.”

We caught up with the multi-award winner on tour. Not an easy feat: her hectic schedule includes more than 100 world-wide dates per year with her famous fiddle-playing husband Donnell Leahy and their six children. Four girls and two boys who, in true East Coast fashion, are invited to perform as soon as they’re able — playing, dancing, following in their parents’ talented footsteps and learning the value of the opportunity.

“I tell my kids all the time — life is about work and if you get some fun moments thrown in there and some play time — you just be thankful because that’s awesome.”

A fierce work ethic and stellar talent have translated into hundreds of thousands of albums sold, but for Natalie, real success was found in balancing it all with family.

“It really stretches your heart. You have kids and you learn to be a better lover. And when I say love — the true meaning of the word ‘love’ is really you give up yourself for someone else — you love your kids and you grow with them, and you just learn as you go. And yes, it’s frustrating as all get out, but guess what? It fills you with peace. It fills you with a real honest purpose in life.”

A life that continues to flourish with the just-released CD *One*. Produced by Bob Ezrin (Pink Floyd) at Lakewind Sound Studios in Cape Breton, it’s the first collaborative project with her husband of 12 years and contains her first lead vocal track (the Gaelic lament *Cagaran Gaolach*). Touring continues through November with time slated to record a Christmas CD in June and a trip ‘home’ in July.

“I love Cape Breton. I love it more as the years go on. I think there’s more of a real human connection there, especially in this day and age. People genuinely have a caring for their neighbour and then you couple that with the music and the spirit that that brings.”

Cape Breton music and spirit: Natalie has harnessed them both, delighting audiences and living life to the fullest. “I’m incredibly grateful — I would not want any other dream. This is my dream and it’s beyond what I thought about.”

A numbers game...

ONE best piece of life advice? “Pray, hope and don’t worry.” That’s a quote from Padre Pio. It’s my motto.

TWO for the road: cross country car trip — who’s your co-pilot? Well, hands-down my husband. We never get to sit in a car by ourselves. It’d be a blast!

THREE for the show: your choice triple bill — what’s playing? *E.T.* (1982), *Legends of the Fall* (1994) and *Anne of Green Gables* (1985). And remember the box of Kleenex.

FOUR seasons: which one is your favourite? Probably spring ... everyone gets excited for the weather change. You’re done with the snow, things are just starting. I’m a person who really likes the prep of Christmas, the wrapping of the gifts as opposed to opening the gifts. You know, when the surprise is there.

FIVE-alarm fire: things you would take? My fiddle and my purse (with my passport in it) — that’s it! My purse and my fiddle, that’s all I need.

For more on Natalie MacMaster, visit www.nataliemacmaster.com
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