

The Godfather of Celtic Music.

by ryan o'connor A & E EDITOR

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN ALLAN CAMERON

Ryan O'Connor: You're known as the "Godfather of Celtic Music in Canada." Who gave you that title?

John Allan Cameron: That particular title was given to me at the... there's a funny story behind that. It was at the East Coast Music Awards a few years ago at St. John's Newfoundland. We had a Cape Breton suite up there at a hotel, and at that time the big buzz around was Ashley MacIsaac. Everybody was looking to see Ashley perform, and all the record executives were running around to see what the buzz was all about. One o'clock in the morning I happened to be playing my guitar with my son Stuart, and there was a guy named Max MacDonald. Max MacDonald was on of the hosts for people coming in, and this big executive from Toronto came in and he said "the Cape Breton suite — is Ashley MacIsaac going to come in here tonight?" He said "yeah, probably he will come in. Do you like Cape Breton music?" "Well, I'm hearing a bit about it," and

Max said "look at that guy over there playing the guitar, he plays pipe tunes on the guitar. His name is John Allan Cameron; he's playing there with his son. He's the godfather of this Celtic music." And the guy looked over and said "Oh my God! Is that Ashley's godfather?" And that's where it started. And I don't mind the title, the thing is that I've been passionate about Celtic music all my life, and you have to do what you believe in from the heart, and I think we accomplished that over the years.

RO: When you started playing Celtic music some people were embarrassed that you were doing Gaelic tunes in public.

JC: Yeah.

RO: Now it's popular all over the world. How do you view the Celtic music scene in the East Coast?

JC: Well, I always support young people who bring a new and fresh approach, and there's room for everybody. I think it's important for

always believed in music, and when I started it was a heck of a lot more difficult to make money. I make an analogy here. Look, I play



every performer to find their own particular niche and to develop their own style and express it the way that they feel it, otherwise it would be rather boring if everybody sounded the same. I've

hockey with the NHL Oldtimers, it's the same as the NHL Oldtimers thirty years ago. How much money were they paid to play? Not very much. There's some young per-

formers who make more in one year than I in thirty-two years. That's alright. See, times have changed, and I certainly don't decry anybody making good bucks at this. They're adding something to the culture and they're selling Cape Breton to the world, or selling Atlantic Canada to the world. I'm really happy to see Natalie, who's a cousin of mine by the way, and Ashley, who's also related to me, and Wendy MacIsaac and Mary Jane Lamond and John McDermott, all these guys. I like to see everybody successful.

RO: To see your influence on music, especially in Cape Breton, you just have to look at your last album, "Glencoe Station," with all the people playing on it, from J.P. Cormier to Ashley, Natalie MacMaster... I think that's a great CD — do you have plans for a new one?

JC: Yes, actually Gordie Sampson, who's a great artist, and I had a meeting the other night. My next CD is going to be a Celtic guitar one, and we hope to start it in October. The public's been crying out for it for 25 years, so we're finally going to do it.

RO: Your touring plans, are they indefinite? Are you planning to keep going well into the next millennium?

JC: Oh absolutely! I'm involved in "Needfire," a