

Get in the spirit with the East Coast Music Awards

It began in 1989, at the Flamingo Lounge in Halifax, Nova Scotia and since then, the ECMAs have grown exponentially, leaving a host of home-grown artists with national distribution and recognition in its wake.

Russian Standard is a favourite vodka of folk musician David Myles, while Jameson Irish Whiskey is the drink of choice for Chris Colepaugh.

Names like Julian Austin, Natalie McMaster, Great Big Sea, Lennie Gallant and Sarah MacLachlan (just to name a few) demonstrate the effect that these awards can have on a musician's career.

In 1994, the ECMAs took their show on the road for the first time and held it in St. John's, Newfoundland where it was televised live. Since then, the event has been held in Sydney, Charlottetown, Moncton, Saint John, Fredericton, and Corner Brook, Newfoundland. This year, from April 13-17, Charlottetown will host the ECMAs for the fourth time.

There will be no shortage of New Brunswick talent nominated for awards this time around. I've managed to track down a few of them and find out what their favourite beverages are.

Chris Colepaugh (Chris Colepaugh and the Crew) hails from Moncton. The band has been nominated for Fan's Choice Entertainer of the Year and Rock Recording of the Year for their latest album "Missed a Page." Chris and the Crew have a loud, southern rock sound with a heavy blues influence that is best appreciated live.

Some upcoming performance dates: Thursday at the Murphy Community Centre in Charlottetown; April 29 at the Capital Bar in Fredericton and April 30 at Peppers Pub in Saint John.

Chris's favourite spirit is Jameson's Irish Whiskey, (750ml \$30.99) the drink of choice for Don Draper, the character from Mad Men which Chris is a huge fan of. I agree with Chris on his choice of whiskey; Jameson's has a sweet nose that comes across a little "cereal," has a clean palate with notes of spice, nut vanilla and a warm finish. Try Jameson's on the rocks, neat or with a splash of ginger ale.

Matt Andersen is a native of Perth-Andover and since the onset of his career in 2002, has made some big waves in the blues world.

He's performed all over the world and has shared the stage with some names you might recognize, like Bo Diddley, Randy Bachman, Little Feat, America, has performed on Stuart McLean's Vinyl Cafe across Canada over the past couple of years, and that's just scratching the surface.

That's a lot of talent and distinction from New Brunswick's potato patch.

Matt will be performing in Charlottetown on Wednesday at the Canadian Music, East Coast Style Export Buyers Showcase, next Saturday at the Industry Awards, Delta Ballroom and on Sunday, April 17 at the Awards Gala.

Matt's album "Piggyback" has been nominated for Blues Recording of the Year, he has been nominated for Entertainer of the Year and his manager Jeff Liberty has been nominated for Manager of the Year and Media Person of the Year.

Matt is a scotch drinker and his favourite single malt is Lagavulin 16. On the nose you may find a little sherry, peat, dried fruit, citrus and a bit of a medicinal smell - very complex.

The palate has flavours of sea salt, honey, olive oil, herbs and smoke. Lagavulin should be enjoyed neat or with just a drop of water to open it up. However you enjoy it, just enjoy it.

Alas, Lagavulin 16 is not always available and is in short supply in the province right now so at the moment you may find it in your friend's scotch collection or maybe a local pub that carries good scotches.

You'll be most likely to find it at NB Liquor stores around the time of or at the N.B. Spirits Festival on November 18-19 this year so mark it on your calendar.

David Myles is a born Frederictonian (as am I). David picked up the trumpet at 10 years old which, by my rough calculation, would have been in 1991. Ten years later he was an exchange student in China where he picked up his first guitar. He graduated from Mount Allison in 2003, recorded his first album "Together and Alone" in 2005, and now he tours and collects awards. If only I'd known it was that simple!

David's album "Turn Time Off" is nominated for Folk Recording of the Year, Factor Recording of the Year and the single "Need a Break" is up for Vibe Creative Group Single of the Year. David will be playing in Charlottetown on the Wednesday at Canadian Music, East Coast Style Export Buyers Showcase and on Sunday, April 17 at the Awards Gala.

David gave me a few drinks to choose from saying that he enjoys whiskies and scotch but to avoid overlapping the choices of Matt and Chris his suggestion of Russian Standard vodka (750 ml \$25.99) which is, as he puts it, "great for the price."

Russian Standard really is an excellent value; it's four times distilled which makes it smooth but retains flavour and a "bready" characteristic which is a sign of quality in a Russian vodka. It will do just fine in a drink the way David likes it: "on the rocks with a slice of lime" and is exceptional vodka for mixing cocktails.

Thanks to Chris Colepaugh, Matt Anderson and David Myles for making time in their busy schedules to contribute to this article. I encourage you to always support local musicians by attending their shows and spending a few of your hard-earned dollars on their wares.

Enjoy the ECMAs this year and good luck to all Atlantic Canadian musicians!

Written by Aaron Greenman, a product advisor at N.B. Liquor's York Street store in Fredericton.