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## HER ROOTS ARE SHOWING: NATALIE MACMASTER COMES TO SHRYOCK.

BY BRENT STEWART, THE SOUTHERN

**Natalie MacMaster** – Celtic, roots. 7:30 p.m. Tonight. Shryock Auditorium on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Tickets are \$35, \$25, and \$15 and are available through Ticketmaster or at the SIU Ticket Office at the SIU Arena. For more information, call 453-2787 or go to [www.siu.edu/shryock](http://www.siu.edu/shryock).

In the past few years, roots music has seen an upsurge in interest.



From bluegrass to blues to traditional county and jug band music; more and more musicians have been breaking out the fiddles, mandolins and dobros on more than just the front porch.

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However, for Natalie MacMaster, it's not a trend or a renewed interest; it's in her blood, literally. The niece of legendary Canadian fiddler, Buddy MacMaster, she grew up in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, an area famous for its fiddle music, which is Scottish in its origins.

By the time she picked up the fiddle at nine years old, she had been dancing for four years and already had an extensive knowledge of songs.

"It's just as natural as talking," MacMaster said of her music.

"I was surrounded by music in my family and my extended family and my community. Both my father and mother come from very musical families."

For her first seven years of playing, she was completely engrossed in the traditional music of her homeland. The more she performed, other influences began to creep in.

"As I grew older, I traveled more and I got to hear other people," MacMaster said. "I became a huge fan of Mark O'Conner. I broadened my overall musical tastes into other areas."

She recorded her first album, "Four on the Floor" at 16, but it wasn't until her 1999 release, "In My Hands" that she began to stretch her musical wings, combining a lot of different sounds with her own particular style, including flamenco guitars.

"When I listen to my first recording, it's extremely traditional," she said. "Fiddle, piano, guitar and bass."

MacMaster's most recent recording, "Yours Truly," which was released last fall is a fully realized combination of her commitment to her roots as well as the influences she has picked up along the way.

"There are a lot of original pieces on it, but there are still traditional pieces on it," she said. "That's very

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reflective of what I do live. I play a lot of music that dabbles in other styles and I play music that's very traditional."

It's a fine balancing line, but MacMaster pulls it off with ease, similar to her contemporary and label-mate, Alison Krauss. The album prior to yours truly was recorded with her uncle, Buddy, and is a tribute to his music and the music of Cape Breton.

"In that regard, I've definitely kept up the tradition," MacMaster said. "I don't mean to make it seem like I've abandoned that, but certainly I've embraced other traditions and other types of music, which I think is generally a trend these days for musicians."

The recipient of numerous awards in Canada, MacMaster's popularity has easily translated to the United States.

"I do 90 percent of my touring in the States," she said. "The crowds are awesome. They're very exuberant. They don't mind telling you how they feel."

MacMaster's live performances are renowned for their energy and intensity. She has shared the stage with Santana, The Chieftains, Paul Simon, Faith Hill, Don Henley, Michael McDonald and dozens of distinguished symphony orchestras.

She has appeared on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," and "Good Morning America."

Recently, MacMaster became a mom for the second time. How has being a mother affected her career as a musician?

"I often get asked that question," she said. "I think people expect some big new well of creativity to have sprung up within me or some great story, but I really don't have one.

"My music, I realized is even more important than it ever was. I've realized how much a part of me it is and how important it is to keep that part of me alive.

"I feel that music just makes the world a better place. I hope to instill in them a complete love for it."

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