

Going where music takes her

Meaghan Blanchard is racking up ECMA nominations along the way

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SUMMERSIDE – Singer-songwriter Meaghan Blanchard likes to hear her voice echo when she sings, like in the Charlottetown Basilica or in the bathroom. “Somewhere with great acoustics,” she added.

And her constant song is now paying off.

The 19-year-old Hunter River native is nominated for two awards for the 2009 East Coast Music Awards, being held in Cornerbrook, N.L.

Blanchard started her music career early, thanks to her mother, who often volunteered her and her siblings to sing in the church children’s choir and perform in community benefits.

Blanchard began playing the acoustic guitar and writing songs when she was 14, as a way of coping with teenage life.

“For anyone, junior high sucks. I started writing in my journal, and I was learning the guitar at the same time. The songs were godawful. Just heartbreaking... and really funny.

“People made fun of my hair, and so I’d sing about it,” she said, and mimed strumming a guitar.

She’s since moved on to more sophisticated lyrics.



Meaghan Blanchard always carries her journal (under her arm) for writing down lyrics. “I find things circle in my head so much sometimes and almost drives me insane. I can’t go on with my day until I get it out of my head and on paper.”

Her five-song EP, “Changing Things”, was recorded in Charlottetown this year, and had its release party in September.

The ECMA nominations for the disc, the CBC Galaxie Rising Star Recording of the Year and Folk Recording of the Year are “kind of

surreal,” she said.

“It seems like a big step for me. It’s like, whoa, people outside my immediate family and people on the Island recognize my music... I’m really thankful.”

She’s also thankful for the close-knit East Coast music scene.

“I’m glad I live here,” she said. “I know a lot of musicians in Toronto — the scene is so big there that it’s almost hard to develop your own character or personality as a musician.”

In addition to her music, Blanchard is also a third-year English student at UPEI. Balance between school and music can be difficult at times, she said, and she’s planning on taking fewer classes in the winter semester, in preparation for the ECMAs and for her first off-Island tour.

When she takes the ECMA stages in Cornerbrook in late February, it won’t be her first time. She was a youth performer at the 2006 awards in Charlottetown, and played in two showcases last year in Fredericton.

This year she’ll be performing in a songwriter’s showcase, along with Lennie Gallant and two other musicians.

When asked about whether there might be any added pressure because of the nominations this year, Blanchard thought for a moment, and shook her head.

“I’m still so young — I’m just dipping my toes in to see what it’s like before I worry,” she said. “I’m just in for the ride. I want to see where music will take me.”