



Help a child paddle their own canoe.
Donate to the Kids to Camp Fund.

[Click here to make a donation.](#)



GuelphMercury.com

<http://news.guelphmercury.com/article/457268>

[\[Close\]](#)

Scottish guy plays reggae

Jason Wilson's eclectic reggae-plus jazz and Celtic musical act attracts acclaim with Juno nomination

JOEL RUBINOFF

Mercury News Services

GUELPH

He's a "skinny white guy" who plays reggae music, a high-school dropout working toward his PhD, a born-and-bred city kid who lives on a rural property outside Stouffville.

He's Jason Wilson, and as the 38-year-old University of Guelph history student continues the cultural tap-dance that has garnered him national acclaim and made him impossible to pigeonhole, Canada's music industry has awarded him his second Juno nomination in seven years.

"It's terrific," enthused the personable Toronto native of his nomination for Reggae Recording of the Year. "I know it sounds pretty convenient for me to say being nominated is the real prize, but I really do believe that -- and this time, I'm going to enjoy it."

The last time he was nominated -- in 2002, with his band Tabarruk -- the proud purveyor of "reggae-plus" (reggae plus jazz and Celtic) admits he was only too happy to walk away empty-handed on awards night.

"I was terrified of public speaking and sat in horrific anticipation, hoping I wouldn't have to make an acceptance speech," he laughs.

Seven years later, the rigours of higher education have toughened him up, he says, and he's thrilled to be heading off to Vancouver for Sunday's event despite high-profile complaints the Canadian music awards show is a farce that rewards commercial success over artistic integrity.

"When it's actually a television broadcast that celebrates actual Canadian music, rather than who's doing well internationally and has been in car and iPod commercials . . . I'll go," complained past Juno winner Matthew Good, citing the sales-based requirement of most major categories.

"When it actually promotes Canadian music at root levels and isn't this weekend when the Canadian music industry pretends it's independent and not just marketing warehouses for the United States, then sure, I'll be a part of it."

Wilson understands the concerns -- based on the fact populist artists like Nickelback, Sam Roberts, Celine Dion and Hedley once again lead the nominee pack -- but argues that for indie musicians like himself, Juno recognition is a gift from the Gods.

"I get where he's coming from," says the 15-year music vet, who has played with famous cross-genre performers like Alanis Morissette, Amanda Marshall and Ron Sexsmith.

"It's a very finite number of record label executives and managers -- a small handful of people, really. But what the Juno succeeds in doing is allowing us fringe guys a national platform once a year. You're not going to hear us on Mix 99 (Virgin Radio)."

Given the bland state of popular radio, it's no surprise that despite being hailed as a "reggae visionary," a Scottish guy combining reggae with an academic love of history would be a hard sell as mass entertainment.

"The two really inform each other," says Wilson of songs on The Peacemaker's Chauffeur, which encompasses the dual themes of war and peace and is up against albums by reggae rivals Blessed, Dubmatix, Humble and Souljah Fyah.

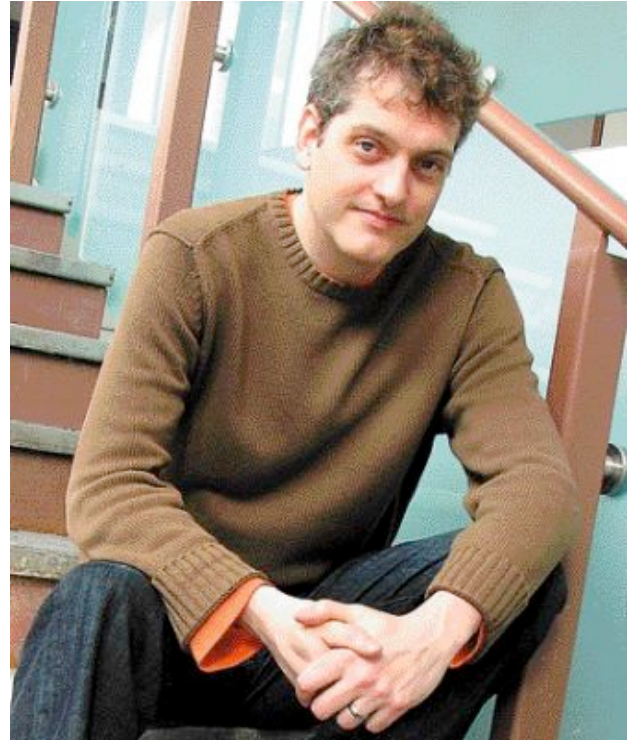
"I'm able to draw on my research and background in themes I write lyrically . . . it's 90 per cent based on historical storytelling."

It may sound like an odd mix, but Wilson's egghead subtext never overwhelms the music -- or his stereotype-busting image.

"Last weekend, we played in Kingston, Jamaica," he notes casually. "And, y'know, it certainly got their attention when the Scottish guy walked onstage, but 10 minutes later they were buying my album."

The Juno nomination didn't hurt either.

"People will come up to the merchandise table," he laughs. "And I know that 'Juno-nominated' sticker really attracts them."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Wilson will play at Guelph's ebar April 9. Details are published on his website at www.jasonwilsonmusic.com

GuelphMercury.com

<http://news.guelphmercury.com/article/457268>



© Copyright 2007 Metroland Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.thespec.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

