



Pop quiz, hot shots! What was Joel Plaskett up to last weekend? Was he:

- A. Sharing a spaghetti dinner with his girlfriend to celebrate his 28th birthday.
- B. Preparing his income tax return and fretting about the money he spent on guitar strings last year.
- C. Grouting tiles and doing repairs at his new house in Dartmouth with his dad.
- D. All of the above.

The correct answer is D. So if you haven't heard a peep out of Plaskett lately it's because he's been busy. Despite his industrious schedule Plaskett isn't the type to play fast and loose when it comes time for a little fan appreciation. And he's got more than just a few faithful admirers.

"I'm really outside the cult of celebrity," Plaskett says modestly. "Here in Halifax everyone does their own thing and we're not as affected by what's popular. ...Things are pretty mellow out here, but I get recognized now when I'm in Toronto."

Famous icon or not, Plaskett does pay attention to the broader shifts in the music world he orbits. As rock music swings back into vogue across the nation, he says he's also noticed how the demographics of his own audience have changed. Naturally, his listeners come in all shapes and sizes, but has he noticed any distinguishing characteristics shared by his fans?

"Oh, geez," Plaskett says. "It's a hard call, trying to pinpoint who your fans are... You have a huge swarm of people who know only one song. And then you've got your die-hard audiences that know the entire record."

"I've never had enough of a hit to have experienced that first situation. So the fans that I do have tend to know most of my catalogue. I would say my fan base is small and specific."

Long-time fans of Plaskett's tend to feel particularly fond of him because, in many cases, they grew up alongside him. When he began spreading that infectious East Coast indierock sound in the '90s with his band,

Thrush Hermit, Plaskett was still a darling teenager, as were many of his devotees at the time.

These days, along with his new band, The Joel Plaskett Emergency, he's playing the part of a responsible grown-up and taking it all in stride. His boisterous adolescent pace has slowed to a comfortable canter over the years and a new sound has emerged.

Plaskett feels his last album, *Down at the Khyber*, is reflective of this more mature style adding that these songs resonate with a range of fans, whether they prefer rock, soul, folk or country melodies.

"I hope people will be able to spot the influences in my music. I might feel that it's obvious, but most people won't notice that stuff."

"I don't really write songs for people to buy my record. I would rather strike a chord with a simple emotion. Then you have other cases where the song that reaches people is the one you think is the most bone-headed," he laughs.

As a fan of both old and new artists, Plaskett admits to being a bit of a fussy listener himself. Even though he's a firm believer in the idea that music is universal, he would rather enjoy his tunes in his own little world, hearing the voice inside of his headphones.

"When I get into something, I obsess over it," he says. "Then I burn out on it, but I'll come back to it again later... You have to grab these moments while you can."

In the end, it may be all about the music, but this singer-songwriter agrees that the continued support and loyalty of his fans means he won't have to perform his final swan song anytime soon. The Niagara show will feature fan favourites, as well as a taste of new songs to "get them in shape" for a new record due out in the fall.

"I think I'm playing in St. Catharines on a Monday night," Plaskett muses. "That's a pretty serious night to be playing rock 'n' roll. My advice for the fans coming to the show would be, 'Prepare yourselves for a blown mind.' Yeah, I like the sound of that."

BY KATYA DIAKOW

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