

Neil McDaniel was born in Margaree Forks, Cape Breton, in June of 1975. He was introduced to music by his oldest sister, Leslie, who sang and played an antique pump organ in the old homestead. Leslie sang as much as she talked, in English and in Gaelic, and it was completely inspiring. The organ that was played on had seen better days 50 odd years prior but nonetheless still had a lot of magic to it. Aside from divine tones it started the foundation for McDaniel's understanding of music and theory. His self-taught methods of understanding harmony, ear training, improvisation and composition all developed from this.

Several styles of music including Irish, Country, and Folk were influential, but Neil was more just caught up in music's pure soul, regardless of genre. A strong connection was formed early, about the age of eight, and he was self-driven, and fuelled by imagination. The Cape Breton scenery does a great job inspiring one's mind and artistic flavour and throughout high school, Neil continued to progress with music on his own terms and developed an interest in additional instruments including guitar, banjo, mandolin, and tin whistle.

After high school, McDaniel attended St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. This transition opened up his awareness of music as he was exposed to a new spectrum of recordings and performances and for the first time creating music with other people, groups, and choirs had occurred. Another pivotal element was the experience of playing on pianos, a true upgrade from a busted up antique organ.

Neil worked and toured Canada, coast to coast, after university. With numerous bands, he learned to appreciate a variety of approaches to music, band dynamics and performing in all kinds of settings.

In 2008, he released his first solo CD, "10 Years Too Late" which highlighted songs and instrumentals which were on the back burner for some time. These well received recordings earned him a nomination (Best Roots Album) for the 2009 East Coast Music Awards. In the same year he also recorded with Paul Mills and The Sarah Burnell Band earning a nomination at the Canadian Folk Music Awards. To perpetuate things even further in a positive direction, a trip to

Ireland made the best of sense. In doing so, some profound connections were made and a whole slew of new venues and festivals opened up for him in the West Coast of Ireland.

In 2012, a new recording was in the fixings as Neil joined up with a great fiddler from the Ottawa Valley, Kyle Felhaver. Together, they arranged some well flavoured traditional Irish and Scottish songs and instrumentals and created their own studio (Purgatory Studios). They engineered the project releasing the new album entitled Salt, Rock, and Roots on St. Patrick's Day. In the mix of radio, live TV, recording, and performance a fair amount of shows in Parliament also occurred as well as a private concert for the Prime Minister. Several years in Ottawa culminated and cultivated a wide array of musical experiences covering pretty much the full extent of Ottawa's musical side.

In 2013, Neil decided to head East, the "Far East". Yes, Japan became his new home and for four years it expanded his life experiences and musical horizon. Never quite mastering the Japanese language, music became a good communicator. Aside from teaching, numerous venues were played within the communities of the locals and ex-pats. And in the final year of living in Kyushu an album was recorded and released in Japan.

The next chapter involved coming back to Cape Breton as well as a half year in Ireland focusing on music.

In 2018, McDaniel worked on his first documentary in Ireland funded by the Clare Arts Council entitled "Rebirthing The Hawthorn".

A project dedicated to the medicinal properties of the hawthorn plant and the folklore surrounding it. Returning to Cape Breton that Spring was a great transition and reminder of the importance of being home. The Summer and Fall that followed developed into a well-scheduled calendar of events performing the circuit of The Keltic Lodge, Glenora Distillery, The Normaway Inn, Big Spruce Brewing, Iona's Frolic & Folk Pub, Thirsty Hiker, Cabot Shores, etc.

2019 is shaping up to be another great year and time for a new album release this summer. It will feature mostly original content with the help of some wonderful musicians from Ireland.