

## Win feels like wonderful welcome

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It was just 18 months ago that Angela Siracusa up and quit her 9-to-5 job to embark on a solo music career.

In March, she released her sophomore album, *Drawn to the Flame*, embarked on her first tour and, on Tuesday night, took home the Niagara Music Award for country group of the year.

"It's such an honour. I'm so excited," she said, beaming. "This is the best feeling. It's better than ... being in Nashville!"

Siracusa, who moved to St. Catharines from Woodbridge two years ago after marrying Thomas Roeslein, had previously recorded a pop album.

"I wanted to do country music. Country has my soul ... and it's going to take me to the end of my years," she said.

Last November, Siracusa travelled to Nashville to record her independent disc. The CD's first single, *Hardly Heartbreak*, has been airing on a major country station in the city.

She co-wrote two of the songs on the album, which she called a combination of country, Americana and southern rock.

The Woodbridge native plans to return to Nashville for May and June and then again for October and November. She's also hoping to play some gigs locally and said Tuesday's win felt like a wonderful welcome.

"I'm going to be here for a long time. Thanks for welcoming me," she said.

A total of 24 awards were handed out at the Niagara Centre for the Arts in Niagara Falls in a range of categories, from jazz to instrumental and female vocalist to bar band of the year, with many presenters and winners praising the wealth of talent in the peninsula.

The inaugural awards show, which was organized by Capital M Productions and Giant FM, also featured several well-known Canadian performers, including Jack de Keyzer and The Mahones.

St. Catharines resident Jagger Cook was a double winner, taking home statues for songwriter and album of the year, for *All Our Hands Are Dirty*.

The Sault Ste. Marie native, who was also up for video of the year, went to Los Angeles in 2006 to work with renowned songwriters/producers Frank Gryner (Train, Bon Jovi, Goo Goo Dolls) and Karen Stever.

Cook said his awards are an acknowledgement of the trio's work, and the message they tried to get across through the album.

"We weren't trying to put together an album with one or two good songs. We wanted to put together a conceptual record you could listen to, from start to finish, and not get bored, or you'd hear a hit and the rest of the songs were filler," he said. "We wanted every song to stand on its own and to just touch people, to move people."

Another double winner was St. Catharines' Modern Digital Militia (MDM), which received the dance recording and heavy metal group of the year awards.

The group, which consists of Nux, SINic and Daniel X, began collaborating 13 years ago, but became MDM about seven years ago. Daniel X joined the group three years ago.

"It's unexpected," Nux said of the wins. "There was a lot of great competition."

"And these (statues) look really cool," Daniel X interjected.

The band's latest, self-titled album will be released in Europe on April 18 and here in Canada in June.

"We've toured all over Ontario, but we just signed a record deal this year and are hoping to get over to Europe," Nux said.

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