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Your (1) WEEKEND

Your Weekend

Tune up Tours

What's on: Tune Up Tour 2010

The first Tune Up tour of 2010 kicks off in Aberdeen tonight and **Colene McKessick** had a chance to speak to headline act Breabach's **Calum MacCrimmon**

TUNE Up tours were introduced into Scotland seven years ago by the Scottish Arts Council and the National Lottery to promote music touring. Since 2003, they have enabled hundreds of bands to put on thousands of concerts, bringing both home grown and international music to communities around the country.

Ironically, Calum MacCrimmon, who is performing during the latest tour with his band Breabach, first got into Scottish music while growing up in Canada. "My father and my grandfather play the pipes. Where I grew up in western Canada, there was only one big pipe band in the province, so I was surrounded by it," he said.

"It was a big thing in our family, and I went to a lot of Highland games over in Canada

"I started playing when I was about eight and then kind of stopped playing when we moved over to Scotland a couple of years later, but I got back into it again when I was about 11."

While studying music at university in Glasgow, Calum

met three friends on the session scene and soon Breabach was formed.

"Three of us were studying music and Ewen was studying outdoor recreation, but we just clicked, we all had that interest in traditional Scottish music, but we knew we wanted to spruce it up a bit," he said.

"We would go round to each other's flats and practise and try and get gigs in the evenings and weekends.

"Things weren't really picking up the way we'd hoped so we decided to give things one final push and entered the Danny Kyle Open Stage competition and won it. I think that saved things for us. Before then, we weren't going anywhere fast, but that brought us together and encouraged us to keep going, and now things are fantastic."

Breabach features the double pipes and flute of Calum and Donal Brown, and the fiddle of Patsy Reid, with Ewan Robertson adding his energetic guitar. Although the band is now a more permanent fixture, all of the members of Breabach are involved in many aspects of the Scottish music scene.

"It's very difficult to make a



Keeping tradition alive

The Breabach
line-up



living in a folk band. I doubt anyone is in one band full time," said Calum. "We all play at ceilidhs, and are in different projects, but Breabach is our main band, and we spend the majority of our time touring with it. "I suppose we're a modern folk band. We play a lot of new material, but it's usually highly influenced by traditional tunes; a lot of it is based on dancing, in terms of the rhythm. "We tend to go for tunes that are very rhythmic because they are usually good for accompaniments from guitar and bass and I think that's the crucial thing, you have to pick the right material so that it works in a contemporary stage." Although traditional music has long appealed to an older audience, Calum says that, thanks to new bands who are experimenting with their styles, this is changing. "It very much depends where we play; we get very mixed

audiences up in the north-west, but generally the interest we get is split into two groups," he said. "Traditionally, we get the younger people who are learning the instruments that we play, who come and get inspiration from us, and then there's the older generation

who love traditional music. "However, it's slowly changing and there's definitely less of a divide. Thanks to new music competitions and artists, traditional Scottish music is becoming accepted as another generation-spanning form of entertainment, and it's growing in popularity all the time."

■ The first Tune Up tour of 2010 kicks off tonight at Aberdeen's Music Hall, featuring Breabach and Canadian band Le Vend Du Nord. They then play Universal Hall, Findhorn, tomorrow night, and the Eastgate Arts Centre, Peebles, on Saturday. For more information visit www.tuneup.org.uk

