

Arts & Entertainment

Brooks to bring unique style to church concert

Musician's new CD set to be launched Nov. 18

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

It takes an interesting set of life experiences to churn out a musician who feels just as comfortable performing in a nightclub as he does in a church.

Danny Brooks is such a man. With his tale of drugs, alcohol and prison, and his ensuing conversion to Christianity, the Miltonian has an ability to relate to people from all walks of life.

Despite the differences between his audiences, this musician — whose southern roots music is a blend of soul, gospel, blues, R&B and country — believes what all people need is the same. Hope. Encouragement. Peace.

And so, though his method of delivery may be different, with one venue allowing more "preachiness" than the other, his basic message is the same — whether surrounded by nightclubgoers or church ladies.

"Words are very powerful. The Good Book says the power of life and death are in the tongue... My music speaks on conflict and resolution. It gives answers. It offers hope," he said, adding the message is never judgemental.

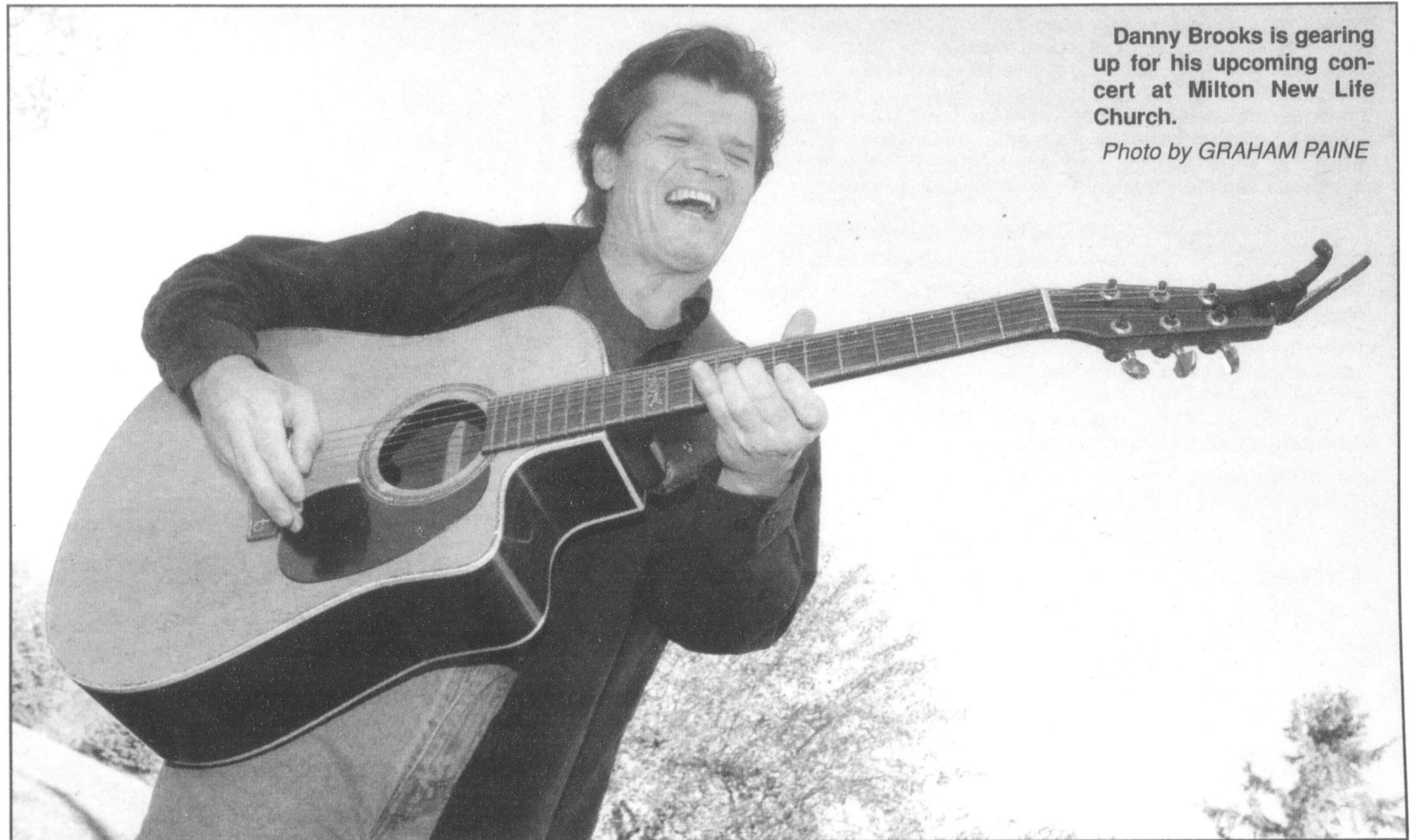
The musical style doesn't change much either, which, he readily admits, doesn't get him invited through the doors of every church.

"A lot of churches are a bit too conservative for what I do," he said in his raspy voice. "It's not sit-down-and-fall-asleep. It's pretty coming at you. It's pretty strong."

One church that will be opening its doors to Mr. Brooks for an upcoming concert is the church he attends regularly, Milton New Life Church, 824 Thompson Rd. S. November 18, Mr. Brooks and his band, the Rockin' Revelators, will perform at a CD release party in celebration of his seventh album, *Soulsville: Rock This House*. Doors will open at 7 p.m., with showtime at 7:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

'Soulsville: Rock This House' is the second in his *Soulsville* trilogy, and the third album released on Mr. Brooks' own record label, HIS House Records.

The 13-piece Rockin' Revelators band features award winning singers John Mays, Hiram



Danny Brooks is gearing up for his upcoming concert at Milton New Life Church.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Joseph, Amoy Levy and Steve Ambrose, as well as special guest Jonathon Urie.

"I have to sing for my life around some of these singers," he quipped.

The musicians with whom he tours boast impressive resumé's, working with some of the best in the industry.

Richard Bell, who produced *Soulsville* and plays keyboards, worked with none other than Janis Joplin. His drummer has worked with names running the gamut from Carole Pope to Mr. Dressup.

Mr. Brooks said he grew up listening to the likes of Hank Williams, Taj Mahal, Solomon Burke, Joe Tex and Bobby 'Blue' Bland, all artists who've influenced his music.

One of the highlights of his career was sharing a stage with blues great Brownie McGee. Mr. Brooks said he'll never forget what the legendary musician told him as he was walking off the stage.

"He said, 'Son, fo' a white boy, you sho' nuff

gotta suntan on the inside,'" Mr. Brooks recalled, slipping into a southern drawl.

Awards are nothing new to Mr. Brooks, whose list includes nominations for two Junos and, this year, a nomination for the best male vocalist at the Maple Blues Awards.

Not surprisingly, the radio stations giving play to his music range widely as well, from contemporary Christian stations to the CBC, to college and university radio stations, he said.

His songs are particularly big in the southern United States where the 'beach music' — an old classic form of R&B and rock 'n' roll — scene is big.

But all hasn't always been well. In the 1960s, Mr. Brooks said he was swept up in the drug scene. He eventually became hooked on an abundance of drugs including speed and heroin. "When I think back on how I used to be, I shudder," he said.

That dark period in his life lasted about 20 years.

After Mr. Brooks was released from a stint in drug rehab, he began reading self-help books, and eventually what he frequently refers to as "the Good Book."

He said he wanted to write encouraging music that did for his listeners what self-help books do for their readers. "When a person is encouraged, they're given strength and hope to carry on," he said, adding, "This world is a hard world."

That, however, doesn't mean every one of his songs is spiritual in nature. In fact, many of his concerts just give hints here and there of his faith.

"I speak my mind as to where my heart's at, but the way I do it isn't overtly preachy," he said.

Tickets to the upcoming CD release concert are available by calling New Life Church at (905) 878-3358 or by contacting HIS House Records at (905) 319-8767 or on-line at www.dannybrooksmusic.com.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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