

Accident steers Sawyer back to his love of music

With passion rekindled, local songwriter set to play Mohawk Sun.

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Campbellville singer-songwriter James Sawyer didn't intend to pursue music professionally.

In fact, he'd just graduated from college for policing when a car accident turned his world upside down. With a back injury, Sawyer's dream of helping others through law enforcement fizzled away.

That's when he re-discovered music and quickly realized there's more than one way — and profession — to help people.

Take, for example, one of the songs on his debut album, *Next to You*. Inspired by a local child — Michael Papaioannou — bravely dealing with a rare disease, Sawyer decided to write the song *Save His World* to raise awareness of Michael's situation.

One of the lines, "A life of chillin' hospital beds/testing his will with all these meds," poignantly illustrates the hardships faced by the three-year-old boy, whose parents run the Trail Eatery in Campbellville.

Sawyer, 24, performed the song for the first time at the 2005 annual fundraiser for Michael, and said that's been the highlight of his career so far.

Memorable experience

"You could hear a needle drop as it was played," Sawyer said, adding it's an emotional song for him to sing. "No matter what, it's hard to sing."

Since then, *Save His World*, as well as the CD it's on, has garnered a positive response from fans and radio stations alike, perhaps the largest being play on 97.3 EZ Rock's Sick Kids radio-thon.

If fans are lucky, Sawyer might play the tune at his Sunday night performance at Mohawk Racetrack, which is part of the venue's Summer Night Concert Series.

Sawyer said he's excited about the upcoming concert, which will feature his original songs as well as a brand new tune written by a friend.

"I'm looking forward to playing my hometown of Campbellville where I've lived for 25



MAKING HIS MARK: With his first album under his belt, James Sawyer is gradually finding a place for himself on the Canadian music scene.

years," he said, adding his band will be backing him up for the gig.

Sawyer will play four 10-minute sets between races on the grand stage.

The past few years have been quite the journey for Sawyer. His CD was recorded in 2005 and 2006, and he's already gearing up for the next one.

His title track off his first album, *Next to You*, was released to radio stations across Canada in April, and has received air play on stations including ones in B.C. and Ottawa — and that's no small feat.

"Getting air play in Canada is like winning the lottery," Sawyer said.

It's out of necessity that Sawyer finds

himself spending a large amount of time promoting his music to radio stations.

"We have so many musicians and they're all trying to get onto the same radio (stations)," he said.

Sawyer is currently studying audio-engineering. Already having received a crash

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