

Singer nets record deal

Former Stouffville resident 'breaking new ground' as wheelchair-bound artist

BY SEAN PEARCE
Staff Writer

Twenty-five-year-old Newmarket resident Justin Hines doesn't let much in life hold him back from achieving his goals.

The former Whitchurch-Stouffville resident has been told, as a baby, he was already trying to sing before he could speak.

Even when Mr. Hines learned to talk, he just kept on singing and, to this day, he's still singing and writing songs on an almost daily basis.

"Honestly, I don't remember ever wanting to do anything else," he said. "I'd always been very interested by the various singer-songwriters of the 1970s that my parents listened to; they inspired me."

Even at the early age of 14, there was little denying Mr. Hines' talent when it came to music.

He won a Toronto radio contest and performed Canada's national anthem in front of 17,000 people before a Toronto Raptors basketball game.

From there, Mr. Hines continued his musical journey and performed and wrote songs as an independent artist. Then, last year, he achieved what many musicians can only dream of: he got a deal.

"I was independent and I'd never had a

JUSTIN TIME

- ▶ WHAT: Justin Hines concert
- ▶ WHERE: Newmarket Theatre
- ▶ WHEN: Saturday, 8 p.m.
- ▶ HOW MUCH: \$28
- ▶ GET TICKETS: www.newmarkettheatre.ca or 905-953-5122.

record deal before," he said.

"It was just sort of an accident how it happened because my producer dropped (my latest recording) off and, the next day, they called me. The rest is history."

Toronto's Orange Record Label signed him to a deal and went ahead and distributed his debut studio album, *Sides*.

Sides is getting a lot of positive buzz and its first single, *Wish You Well*, was the No. 1 song on radio station CHFI's charts for several weeks.

"It was very unexpected," Mr. Hines said. "I wasn't originally going to put that song on the album, but my producer heard it and little did I know what would happen."

It was difficult for him to decide which of his songs to put on the album because he had dozens from which to choose.

"I don't stop writing," he said.

"I had a lot of material."

All the attention and exposure Mr. Hines has received has been fantastic, he said. He

has been grateful for all of the support.

Through it all, however, the one thing he has especially not let hold him back is his struggle with a rare genetic joint disorder known as Larsen Syndrome that keeps him confined to a wheelchair.

Still, the singer said he doesn't really focus on it, because it's what he has always known.

In some ways, he said, he's grateful for the attention he receives as a result because it allows him to draw people in and showcase his true talents.

There aren't many wheelchair-bound singer-songwriters out there, he said.

"We've used it in a positive way, so I'm not really too negative about it," he said.

"We're breaking some new ground and that's cool. There has been a lot of interesting challenges and a lot of interesting victories."

What Mr. Hines is focusing on, however, is his busy upcoming weekend. He'll fly to Ottawa Friday for a show and then return to Newmarket for a concert Saturday night at the Newmarket Theatre. He said he's really looking forward to it.

"I was pretty excited when I found out that I'd be playing right around the corner from where we live," he said.

Mr. Hines' show at the Newmarket Theatre takes place at 8 p.m. and tickets are \$28 and are available by calling 905-953-5122 or by visiting www.newmarket.ca

For more information on Mr. Hines, visit www.justinhines.com



A man is captured on video attempting to rob Pace Savings and Credit Union in Stouffville Tuesday.

Suspect hits credit union for third time

BY JIM MASON
Staff Writer

Staff at Pace Savings and Credit Union in downtown Stouffville have seen enough of this guy.

A man who robbed the Main Street branch Tuesday is believed to have hit the same location two more times.

A staff member recognized the suspect when he walked into the branch Tuesday.

The man approached another teller and handed her a note demanding money at about 3:40 p.m. The teller handed the note back, telling the suspect her till was not accessible and that she had activated the panic alarm.

The suspect threatened "to jump over the counter" but fled through a rear door, Det. Mike Fleischaker of the York Regional Police hold-up unit said.

Investigators believe the man robbed the same location in June and December 2006.

"That's definitely unusual," said Det. Fleischaker of the repeat robberies. "Especially since he's not wearing much of a disguise."

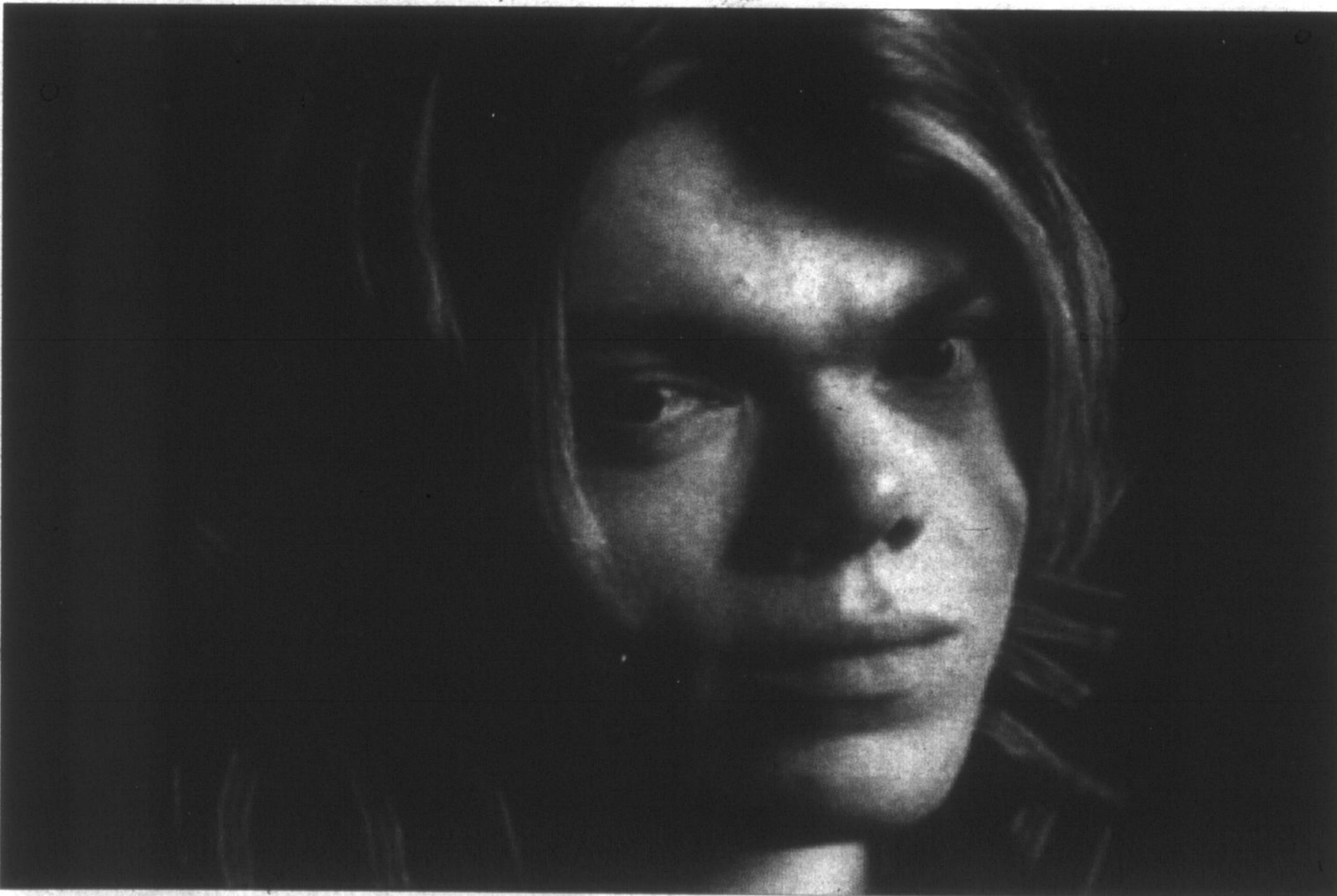
Because the man is not wanted for any other robberies in the area, police think he may be a local resident.

The suspect is described as:

- white, 35 to 40 years
- five-feet, eight-inches with a heavy build and a beard
- wearing a red and black jacket, blue jeans and a red baseball hat

Additional photos of the suspect are available on the York Regional Police website at yrp.ca under media releases.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the hold-up unit at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 6630, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at www.1800222tips.com



Former Whitchurch-Stouffville resident Justin Hines performs at Newmarket Theatre Saturday.

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