

BY FRANK KING
Staff Writer

Figuring out former Triumph guitarist/vocalist Rik Emmett depends on what day you talk to him.

Rocker, award-winning flamenco/jazz guitarist, Humber College music teacher, studio musician and recording artist are all titles you can put after his name since he left the famed power rock trio nearly 20 years ago.

Now you can add one more: master interpreter of the Eric Clapton catalogue.

Mr. Emmett, 54, is wearing that hat when he and his four-piece band perform Jan. 26 at Markham Theatre for Performing Arts. But it's not his first time here. Back in 1977, he and Triumph performed at Markham District High School, of all places, complete with an early version of their flame-throwing light show.

What is it about Clapton that made you want to build an entire show around him?

It started with a friend, Peter Brennan, who organizes shows with community orchestras. Larry Gowan did a show with him and someone said maybe I could do it. So I did some Beatles shows with Peter and played a song Clapton covered and it brought the house down. Peter then asked if he did an entire night of Clapton songs would I do it?

It's great material and a walk in the park to play. It's a gentlemanly kind of rock and that suits me.

What will the Markham audience hear?

We open with Cream's White

Room and Badge, include Blind Faith's Can't Find My Way Home, Derek & The Dominoes' Bell Bottom Blues, Tears in Heaven, I Shot the Sherrif and Wonderful Tonight. You'll also get both versions of Layla, including the hit-you-over-the-head version.

You and drummer/producer Mike Shotten just put out Liberty Manifesto, your first hard-rockin' CD in about 100 years. What was it like to really crank it up in the studio again?

It was good and bad. It was hard pushing my voice and I played all the bass, so I was pushing myself there, too. But it was easy because working with Mike was so much fun and it was returning to things you feel comfortable with. I hope it results in sales and I'd like to see it become more than just a studio project, but you just have to wait and see.

In a recent interview, you said the music business is in complete disarray. You must be talking about illegal downloading and file sharing killing CD sales, yes?

Yes. People say music is content and content should be free. But how much do people pay for their computer and software and iPod and Internet? I think the people making the big money are the digital telecommunications conglomerates and they're integrated into everything from your laptop to your iPod. They lobby the government to say 'Don't reform that copyright legislation. Slow down.' They keep saying that in order to keep the status quo, so musi-

cians, songwriters and producers are getting screwed.

In a world where so many people get music without paying for it, do you ever wonder if you should keep on making records?

Sure, I wonder. The proof is in the pudding: I'm out there playing Eric Clapton tunes (instead of my own stuff). I think I have enough skills to survive no matter what, but in truth, what's the point of making a record? *Liberty Manifesto* was a huge undertaking, but how many copies will we be able to sell?

You lost your brother, Russell, to cancer in September. How has the recovery process been?

It's fits and starts. You think 'I'm coming to terms with this', then Christmas comes along and it's like a black hole in the family. So I'm not going to say it's been totally successful, but I'm not going to give up living.

From what I've read, you and former Triumph members Gil Moore and Mike Levine have made peace after a long falling out. Could this ever lead to anything musical?

Might. Don't want to say too much, but have there been conversations? Yes.

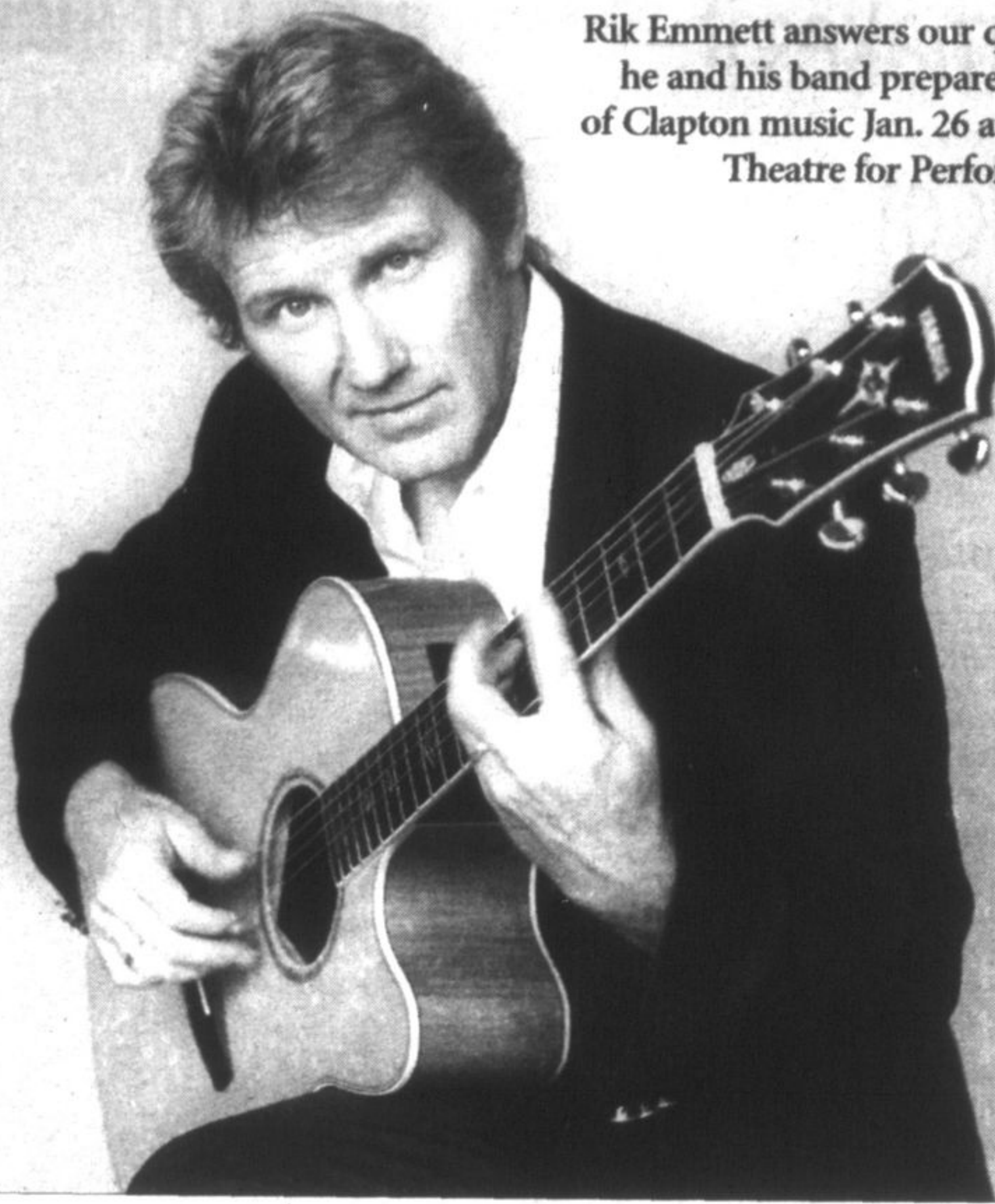
Tickets for Mr. Emmett's Markham Theatre show are \$36 and available by calling 905-305-7469. Showtime is 8 p.m. The theatre is on Town Centre Boulevard, in the Hwy. 7 and Warden Avenue area.

Check out www.rikemmett.com for more information on Mr. Emmett.

TRIUMPH

OF VERSATILITY

Rik Emmett answers our questions as he and his band prepare for a night of Clapton music Jan. 26 at Markham Theatre for Performing Arts.



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the New Year at our

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