

COMING UP

# TV series 'new radio' for singer

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Combine an old soul with youthful wonderment and you get the distinct musical stylings of Royal Wood.

The Toronto-based performer and Juno nominated songwriter plays the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park March 1.

Like a lot of kids, Mr. Wood took piano lessons, but that was after he started playing by ear, at the age of four, along with the guitar. Music became his passion, not a hobby.

"I think I came out of the womb knowing," he said.

In finding his musical bearings, Mr. Wood grew up listening to Cat Stevens, Leonard Cohen, jazz, classical and big band.

"I got to skip that whole awkward stage of following your peers and not really knowing what new music was," Mr. Wood said, noting as a kid, his friends were listening to Backstreet Boys while he was scanning the AM dial of his parents' car for the oldies.

Mr. Wood initially thought he would be a guitar hero and even played in some rock bands while attending McGill University.

"It didn't feel right," he said.

Mr. Wood always wrote but it was an exercise rather than an exorcise of emotions. That is, until one day when he came home from school and dedicated himself to the craft.

"I write from a personal, holy place," he said.

It resulted in The Milkweed EP (2002).

In 2011, Mr. Wood received a Juno nomination for songwriter of the year.

He has subsequently released another EP - The Lost and Found EP (2009) and four full-length CDs - *Tall Tales* (2006), *A Good Enough Day* (2007), *The Waiting* (2010) and *We Were Born To Glory* (2012).

"That's the driving message of the album," according to his bio. "We were born to glory. However, sometimes we lose sight of how precious life is in the midst of petty earthly strife. We forget that every second is special, every human glorious and every moment a gift."

## JUNO NOMINEE

The album debuted in the Canadian Top 25.

The 34-year-old has also added producer and arranger to his musical skill set, which includes playing piano, guitar, drums, clarinet, trumpet, tuba, harmonica, mandolin and banjo, to name a few.

"Sometimes I'm more excited to be in a studio ... You're making something that has never been made before," he said.

Unlike many artists who hone their craft at a post-graduate institution, Mr. Wood opted to take business.

He didn't study music because he didn't want his passion to become regimented.

"When you study too much with art (creativity) gets stomped out," he said. "It

blocks this normal, innate gift they have."

He actually didn't even want to go to university, despite pulling straight As and having scholarship offers. But Mr. Wood went on the suggestion of his parents, so he would have no regrets.

"They were very wise," he said.

But after two years, as per their agreement, he left to pursue music full time.

Like most musicians in his genre, he is gaining a following the old-fashioned way, through touring and word-of-mouth.

But he's also taken a new path. He licences one or two songs a month to television shows, including *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice*.

"It's the new radio," he said.

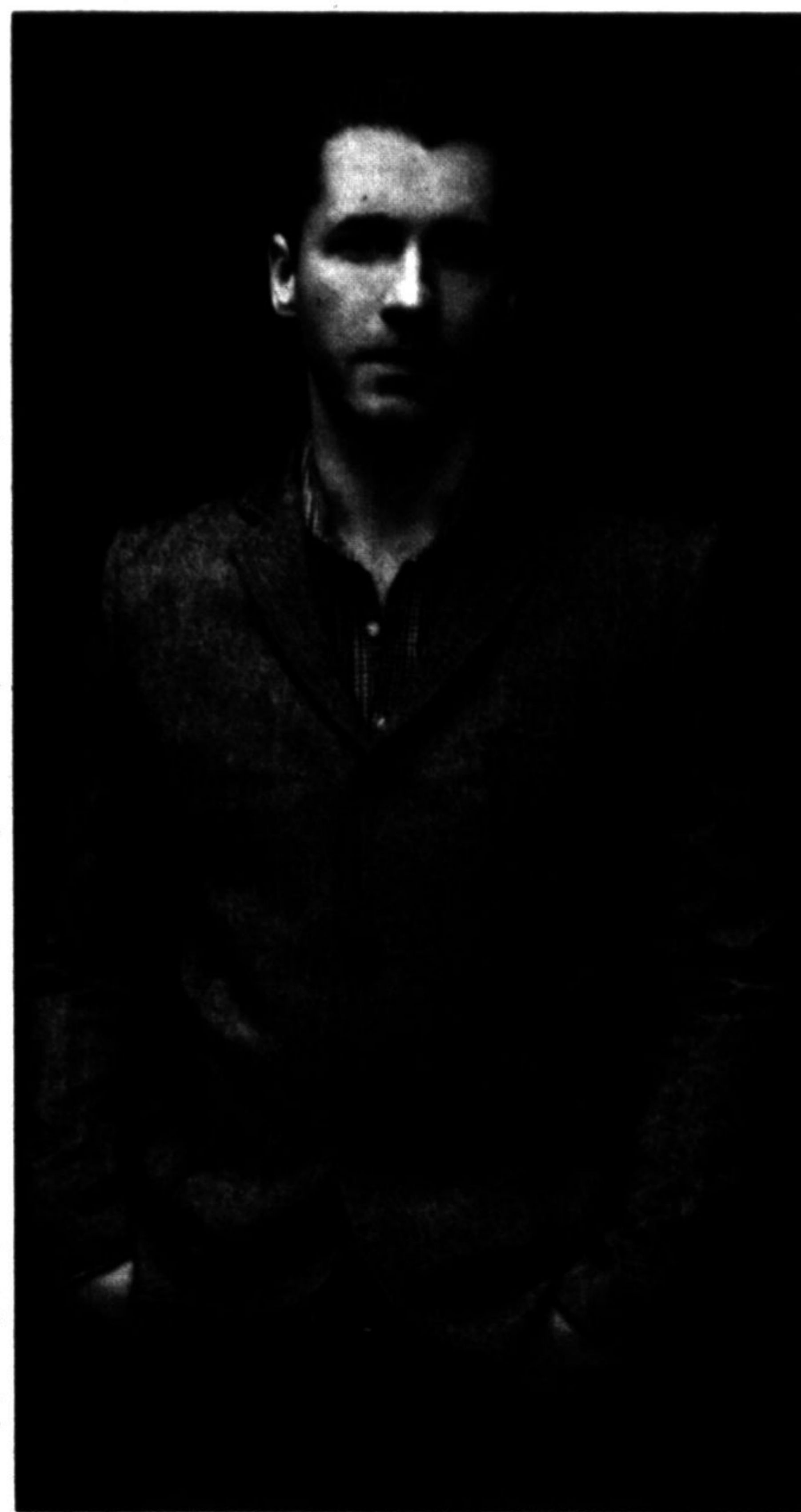
Mr. Wood has played to sold-out crowds in large venues accompanied by a full band and in front of a couple of hundred people in smaller theatres, with only the accompaniment of another guitarist.

"I love the small-town show, the intimate setting ... Make it a storyteller evening," he said.

Without any real promotion, tickets to the Stouffville show are more than half sold out, according to Dolly Bhatia-Frolick, the art centre's marketing assistant.

Seeing Mr. Wood up close and personal "might be thrilling to some, unlike the Sony Centre, where he's a million miles away," she said.

Tickets are \$35 for adults, \$18 for students and available at <http://nineteenonthepark.com/>



PHOTO/IVAN OJIS

Royal Wood plays Nineteen on the Park March 1.



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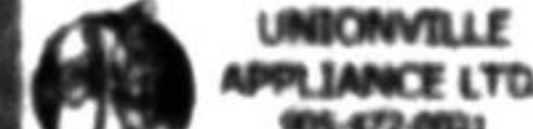
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