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ARTS AND LIFE

IN CONCERT

Acoustic artist plays to home crowd

By Vicki L. Kroll

Nick Motil bares his soul at every concert — and his feet.

“I like the music to be the focal point rather than what my T-shirt looks like or how cool my jeans are. There are a lot of groups out there that focus on image, and I just like to be laid-back and about the music. That's probably one of the reasons I play without my shoes.

“You feel more comfortable, more relaxed, more at home,” he said. “I like to steal from Neil Young and Willie Nelson's mentality of trying to turn the venue no matter how big or small it is into a living room, where everybody feels like they're your friend and they're just coming over for a drink or coffee and listen to you play guitar. I like everybody to feel attached to the song in their own way.”

The singer-songwriter who grew up in Maumee has been touring relentlessly to make musical connections.



“I'm just out here trying to be heard just like everyone else is,” he said from a recent stop in Newark, N.J. “Sometimes the shows are awesome. The other night at Richard Stockton [College] in south New Jersey, we had more than 125 kids come out to the show. I sold 30 albums and signed autographs for an hour — I felt like Bono.

“And the week before I played a small coffeehouse in a student union, and we had 20 kids come out and I didn't sell a single disc.”

Such is the life of an independent acoustic artist.

“The biggest obstacle to overcome is just to keep going,” Motil said. “It may not seem successful when you play a show for 10 people, but when you're packing up and two people come up and say ‘I love song X' and what it means to them, and you broke even and made \$5 on the night, you walk back to your car and you realize that's why you did it because it is working.”

The guitarist and pianist has sold more 5,000 discs in two years. He has recorded four CDs, including "One of These Days" (2005) and "Live at the Black Box," which was released in June.