

## STREET SCENE

## Teddy Richards makes his own way



CHRISTINA FUOCO

following day.

But a good friend persuaded him to go, and it has proved to be a turning point in this Southfield pop singer's career.

Hanging out backstage with INXS, Richards slipped a copy of his six-song EP to Andrew Farris, the band's songwriter/key-boardist.

"I thought it would end up in the garbage. This is a guy who has written 20 to 30 No. 1 hits, like he has time to listen to my tape," Richards said.

Not only did Farris listen to the tape, he called Richards and suggested that they collaborate on a few songs.

"I couldn't believe he was making himself available, somebody of that stature. He thought he might be instrumental in helping me get this to the right people."

Farris and Richards inked a deal through Farris' publishing company to write two songs. By early 1995, Richards was on a plane to England, where Farris resides. The two wrote the rock song "Naked" and the funk tune "Hangin'," both of which fell together quickly and easily. The two-song publishing deal evolved



**Showcasing material:**  
Teddy Richards performs Friday at the Magic Bag in Ferndale.

into 11 songs.

"By watching him and working with him, I am able to reconstruct a song and make it more cohesive and not clutter the music. It lets it breathe," Richards said.

Richards also wrote songs with Oliver Lieber, who has penned songs for Paula Abdul and who is the son of Leiber and Stoller's Jerry Lieber, and also wrote with Gary Clark of the InterScope Records band Transistor.

Among the songs written with Clark is the ballad "Brand New Day," which Richards calls "the song that's getting my phone calls returned." If everything

goes as planned, "Brand New Day" may show up in an episode of the television show "La Femme Nikita."

On his demo tape, which is not available for purchase, Richards shows his affinity for ballads while dabbling in Motown-flavored funk and ethereal pop.

He performed the material when he opened for INXS in California where he was reintroduced to Nina Blackwood, a VJ for MTV during the 1980s. The two met at the opening of the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio.

"She offered some assistance. She could see that at that point I was running this thing on my own. All the people I was working with were in England."

Since his demo tape was finished, Richards played a showcase in England with the U.K. band that includes Depeche Mode's drummer. While rehearsing for the show, Richards was visited by Elvis Costello, who was practicing for a BBC special with the Bromley Quatlet.

On this side of the ocean, Richards will hit the Magic Bag's stage Friday, Jan. 30, to perform for the public and record company executives. His U.S. band includes longtime bassist Joe Hayden, keyboardist Randy Sly of the swing band Atomic Fireballs and formerly of BOP (harvey), guitarist John Antone, background vocalist Susan Calloway, and drummer Jerome Day of the Howling Diablos.

A musician all of his life,

Richards was hired to play guitar for his mother, Aretha Franklin, in the fall of 1984. Since then, he has backed her up at the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame opening, on "The Late Show With David Letterman," and on numerous tours. He and his mother will make a return appearance on Letterman's show in late February.

"I love working with my mom. It's a real honor. It's a wonderful thing to be able to do. But I have my own song to sing."

Although he is Franklin's son, it hasn't been an easy road for the Oak Park High School graduate.

"Being Aretha Franklin's son does not make me privy to anything. ... I don't think there's a musician in the world who has an easy road. The average serious musician works really hard. It's not an easy thing to be a full-time musician. Most musicians are weekend warriors and have a full-time job somewhere else," said Richards who earned a degree in telecommunications from Michigan State University.

Teddy Richards performs with special guests Stewart Franche and Sue Calloway Friday, Jan. 30, at the Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Doors open at 8 p.m. for the 18 and older show. Tickets are \$6. For more information, call (248) 544-3030 or visit <http://www.themagicbag.com>.

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