

His Big Fat American Debut

Canadian singer **Pavlo** brings his folk music across the border for PBS special



READY: Canadian musician Pavlo is filming a PBS special at the Ford Community Center for the Arts in Dearborn on Friday.

Star photos: Scott Webster

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Following in the footsteps of Yanni, Canada's Pavlo is taking his Greek-based acoustic music to the United States by way of American public television.

The 38-year-old musician from Toronto, who plays a blend of latin and Greek folk music he calls "Mediterranean," will tape his first PBS television special Friday at the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center in Dearborn. The 75-minute concert special, titled Pavlo's Mediterranean Nights, will be offered to public television stations across the U.S. during annual pledge drives, starting in March on Detroit's WTWS (channel 56, cable 67).

It's an approach that has worked wonders for Yanni, as well as fellow Canadians like Loreena McKennitt.

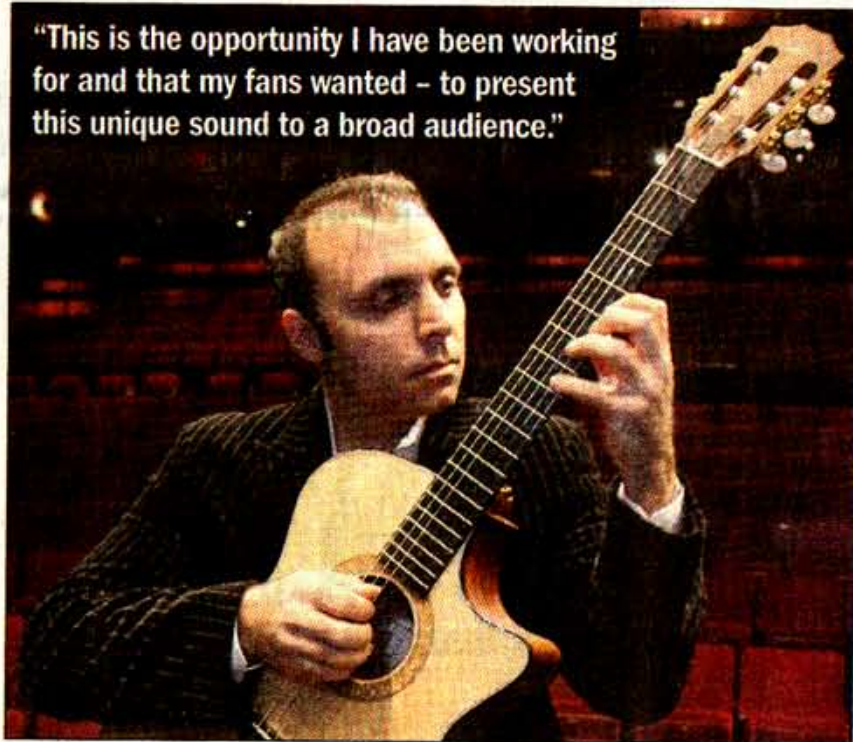
Pavlo will perform with his regular 16-piece touring band and dancers. His showmanship has made Pavlo Simtikidis a star in Canada, where his concerts, including an annual show at Toronto's Massey Hall, are instant sellouts and his seven albums are bestsellers.

"This will be Pavlo's coming-out party in the U.S.," said veteran TV producer George Veras, who is producing the special. Veras has directed every Yanni special on PBS, and is a native of Detroit's Greek community.

"The minute I heard (Pavlo's) albums, I wanted to do a TV special with him. He has the potential to be a huge hit in this country."

Pavlo said there are pockets of support for his music in the U.S., mostly in Greek communities. "I do maybe 20 or 30 shows there a year. Greek festi-

"This is the opportunity I have been working for and that my fans wanted - to present this unique sound to a broad audience."



vals mainly. But this will be my first TV show with a kind of mass-marketing approach."

Along with the special, CDs and DVDs of the show will be offered as pledge bonuses. It's also likely the special will air on pledge drives for years to come. McKennitt and others have enjoyed that kind of repeated success.

"This is my first concentrated effort to hit the American marketplace," said Pavlo.

In May, leading up to June pledge drives, Pavlo will play select American cities. A summer tour of Canada follows, including his annual Toast to Dionysus concert June 7 at Kings-

ville's Mastronardi Estate Winery, then he'll travel to Europe and Korea.

Come September, he plans to head back to the States for his first full-blown American tour through November, in time for the fall pledge season on PBS.

"This is the opportunity I have been working for and that my fans wanted," said Pavlo. "To present this unique sound to a broad audience."

Although Pavlo was introduced to Greek music at an early age, his first influences were pop and rock. The first song he learned on guitar was The Beatles' Day Tripper; he was also in a Rush tribute band as a teenager.

BOX OFFICE

Tickets to the taping of Pavlo's Mediterranean Nights at Ford Community and Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn, are US\$50 and \$35, available at the box office, 313-943-2354 or 1-800-545-7807, or online at www.pavlo.net and www.dearbornfordcenter.com.

It's Pavlo's pop sensibilities and his work ethic, said Veras, that will make him a hit in the U.S. "I hear in Pavlo the kind of respect for influences that have made Sarah McLachlan and Celine Dion big stars over here. It's something in the Canadian makeup."

That said, Pavlo's music has been embraced by the Greek community - the special is being underwritten by the Detroit chapter of The American Hellenic Congress.

"In Canada, we seem to hold onto our ethnicity more," said Pavlo. "But it's also a part of my upbringing that I was introduced to a wide variety of music."

In the 1990s when Pavlo took his tapes to record companies, he was usually turned away. "They'd look at me and ask: Why would anyone want to listen to bouzouki music? But I kept at it because this was the music of my heritage."

Eventually, he also added touches of flamenco and other folk styles. And the rock influences never disappeared - occasionally, Pavlo flips the guitar over his head and plays it like one of his idols, Jimi Hendrix.

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