

## ***BurrellesLuce Express***

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**SOURCE:** Mobile (AL) Press Register

**AUDIENCE:** 646,584 [provided by Nielsen//NetRatings]

**DATE:** 08-30-2007

**HEADLINE:** Taylor Hicks finds his rhythm on tour

### Source Website

Thursday, August 30, 2007 By LAWRENCE SPECKER Entertainment Reporter

What does Taylor Hicks bring to Orange Beach this Sunday that he didn't bring to Mobile in February? His answer is a bit surprising:

Rhythm.

Oh, nothing as simple as the sense of the rhythm in a song. He needed that to take his unlikely soul music revival campaign to an "American Idol" win in 2006. This is something more complex, the rhythm of a band informed by months of steady touring.

"It's interesting ... the music's evolved," Hicks said this week. "There's not as many pieces (in the band), but there's definitely more added to the set list.

"Once you've toured for six months, seven months straight, the music gets intricate. And we're having fun with it," he said. "We've settled into a great rhythm. The more you can play, the better the rhythm gets. Doing six months of work, the body of work grows, and it gets exciting, because you start understanding the synergy onstage with the different musicians. It's definitely a fun job."

Though Hicks hasn't really kept away from the coast — he's recently played dates in Biloxi and New Orleans — he said he's eager to roll into The Amphitheater at *The Wharf*. (Tickets for Sunday's 8 p.m. show range from \$15 to \$59.50 plus service charges and are available through Ticketmaster outlets.)

"That's one thing that you try to build off of everywhere you go," he said. "It doesn't matter which level you're on, you want to build your fan base. And the way you do that is by performing live."

"The South is definitely good to me and I enjoy being down there during the summer," he said.

Since that February show, Hicks has been busy on several fronts. He released a memoir, "Heart Full of Soul: An Inspirational Memoir About Finding Your Voice and Finding Your Way."

The book tour has been fun, Hicks said, particularly because it has allowed him to meet fans in a more personal setting than his concerts provide. And despite the incredible volume of exposure he's gotten since becoming an "Idol" favorite, he said he thinks the book has also allowed him to reveal himself to fans, unfiltered by third-party interviewers.

"I think they kind of got a sense of who I was," he said of the book. "I think that's key for an entertainer in today's society. You get to tell your side of the story."

Naturally he's crossed paths with some other stars in his touring. Among them, he mentions on his Web site, was none other than Dan Ackroyd, aka Elwood Blues.

"Getting to play with a Blues Brother was quite fun," Hicks said. "He's a pretty good harp player, too."

Hicks said that once the current tour ends, he hopes to get "in writing mode."

That means a new studio album isn't close at hand. But he is working on a project that's likely to see the light of day fairly soon, he said: A recorded live performance, to be released on cable and home video.

He's eager to finish the editing work, he said, because he thinks the DVD will "let my show go into the households, kind of like 'Idol.'"

While Hicks is a Birmingham native, he says he's spent enough time in Lower Alabama to consider Sunday's show special.

"I consider that part of the country my hometown," he said. "It was half and half for a long time."

And it'll be good to see friends and family who supported him back in his pre-fame days. He wants to give them "a big 'thanks,'" he said.

"I hope they have a great Labor Day weekend and I'm looking forward to seeing them at the beach," he said.

#### TAYLOR HICKS IN CONCERT

WHEN: Sunday, 8 p.m.

WHERE: Amphitheatre at *The Wharf* in Orange Beach

TICKETS: Range from \$15 to \$59.50 plus service charges through Ticketmaster outlets.

INFORMATION: 434-0033

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*Highlights: The Wharf*