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Forum

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## Tesh uses music, stories to connect with audience

By **DAVID YONKE**

**BLADE STAFF WRITER**

John Tesh does double duty every time he takes the stage for a concert.

A large number of his fans come to hear his music, while many others go to the show to see the guy behind that smooth radio voice.

The keyboardist, composer, and radio host, who will be in



John Tesh will be in concert at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Stranahan Theater, 4645 Heatherdowns Blvd. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster outlets for \$19, \$35, and \$45, with a \$99 VIP package that includes

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concert Wednesday at the Stranahan Theater, said he manages to please both types of fans by injecting tidbits from his Intelligence for Your Life radio show into his musical presentation.

dinner and concert plus a backstage meeting with Tesh. Information: 419-381-8851.

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"We never just go out and do a concert. If it doesn't involve the local radio station [locally WRVF-FM, 101.5] we don't do it. Our idea is to get out there and make the Intelligence for Your Life show come alive on stage," he said from his home in Los Angeles.

Tesh, 56, a native of Garden City, Long Island, specializes in providing positive and inspiring information to his radio listeners in order to help them live happier and healthier lives.

His show, which is broadcast on 315 stations, employs 10 full-time researchers who comb through myriad publications and the Internet searching for practical and helpful tips on everything from training pets to saving money to improving relationships.

But music is Tesh's true passion - so much so that he quit his high-profile job as co-host of Entertainment Tonight after 10 years to pursue his musical career.

The fact that he walked away from a six-figure salary and the power of TV to take a risk on a completely different career serves as an inspiration to many of his fans, Tesh said.

"I'm sort of the poster boy for leaving the high-paying job you're not digging and doing a job you want to do," he said. "Finding the deepest desire of your heart. Finding what kick-starts you every morning."

He is touring with a crew of 20, including eight who appear on stage with him.

Tesh said the band is prepared to follow his lead every night because he likes to keep it flexible.

"Depending on the place we play, we'll change things up song-wise," he said. "If we play a couple of piano solos and get a huge reaction, then I'll add more piano solos. Or we can crank it up more, or if we're in a church we can play a gospel piece. We're very co-dependent on the audience."

He borrowed a trick from his friend and neighbor, Reba McIntyre, and places a camera backstage every night trained on the audience, without their knowledge. He later studies the tapes to see how the crowd reacts to

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12	13	14	15	16	<b>17</b>	18	
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different segments of the show.

One thing he learned from the tapes is that audiences like to hear him talk about the songs, Tesh said.

"Instead of coming out and doing 15 songs and saying 'Thank you, good night!,' they like a frame of reference. Stories about my family, about how a song got written, about what it was like at the Olympic Games, or hanging out with Walter Cronkite when I was 23 years old. It's sort of like Prairie Home Companion meets Emerson, Lake & Palmer," he said with a laugh.

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