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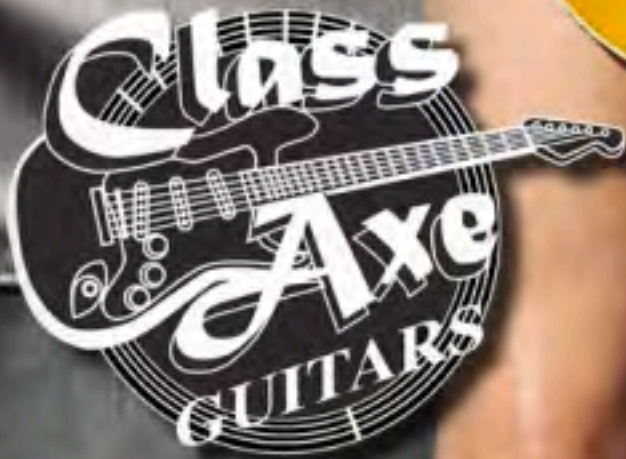
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Rockin' on the *Rideau*



Just doing what he *loves*

By JIM HURCOMB

A career, unlike an opportunity, doesn't always come knocking.

Sometimes careers are shaped from an early age. You develop an interest, pursue it in school, graduate, get your foot in the door, and the rest is up to you. Sometimes you can fall into a career through a chance encounter, or a part-time job can turn into a lifelong pursuit before you realize it.

And then there are those lucky ones who turn a passion into a career. You know those people. You probably envy them. They're usually smiling, even at tax time, taking coffee breaks when they want, and talking passionately about what they do.

Bob Besharah is one of those fortunate people.

In the 70s Bob was just another fair guitar player, playing in a band in the seemingly endless stream of Valley bars. He became a fixture on the music scene, and he loved to talk guitars. It didn't take

long for other guitarists to come to him for advice and a critical eye when they were looking to sell their gear. These were mostly guitars originally bought in the late 50s and early 60s.

"People would come up and say: 'I've got a guitar for sale. Do you want to buy it?'," Bob recalls. "So I just started buying them and selling them to friends. My first really great guitar was a 57 Strat. I had to borrow money from a friend to buy it, 'cause I didn't have enough cash. The 57 Strat is the ultimate. There are very few of them in the market. I paid \$6,000 for it."

Bob started to get a reputation as a straight shooter. People from all over began calling him, looking for guitars.

Then it became a full-time hobby, driving around the valley buying guitars. He was the middle man. He found there was no shortage of eager sellers – and equally-eager, and rich, buyers.

By 1990 Bob decided it was time to quit the band circuit and jump into the guitar business with both feet, converting





his double garage into a small store, and Class Axe in Kemptville was born.

Bob's clientele runs the gamut, from newbies looking to break into the hobby to guys with lots of money to spend on very specific guitars.

If you're a newcomer, Bob could probably set you up with a mid-60s Fender Mustang, mass-produced to cash in on the guitar-mania that followed the Beatles' arrival in 1964. A vintage Mustang will set you back about \$1,600. At the time it was produced, it would have cost about \$125 – a good indication of the money involved in starting a hobby that is not for the faint-of-heart.

"It's an addiction," says Bob. "I know guys who are going out daily looking for guitars. I have one buyer from Japan who has customers who will pay very serious money for the right guitar, the right year, the right colour."

He says there are a number of elements that determine a guitar's collectability.

"I think it's more the scarcity than the sound. Of course, condition plays a large part in the value, and original parts. I've had customers pass on a \$15,000 guitar because a part had been re-soldered. That's just the way these guys are".

As with any hobby that involves collecting and big bucks, Bob stresses a buyer has to be careful, especially if you're dealing with sellers on the Internet.

"Counterfeits are a big problem," he says, "and China is producing

guitars with the big names right on them."

So his advice is simple: make sure an expert checks out the guitar first before you buy it; and don't shell out money for a guitar before you plug it in and check the sound and feel.

But all rules are out the window if you happen to stumble upon what Bob calls "the holy grail" of guitars: the 1958 Les Paul Flame Top.

"It's very rare, very collectible," he says. "We're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars. That is the absolute ultimate."

Bob says there is really no way to predict which newer guitars are worth collecting.

"The market is so flooded these days with special edition models and reprints of classic guitars," he says, "that it's hard to predict what's going to be valuable to collectors down the road."

So for now, the best advice is to keep checking garage sales for that

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ROCKIN'

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1958 Les Paul Flame Top. And if you do have a guitar you'd like Bob to check out, just drop by Class Axe in Kemptville, or send him a picture. (Check the website: www.classaxe.ca.) ♂

Guitars they have *loved*

A musician's bond to his or her guitar goes far beyond the dollar figure. Writer Jim Hurcomb asked a few local guitar heroes to tell us about their favourites.

This is what they said.

Terry Gillespie



Photo by NICK SCHNELL

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Douglas Moose

Spotted this moose beside the road outside of Douglas late September. Got some great shots but believe that he wasn't well as he didn't seem to care that there were 20 other people getting real close to him. Rumour is that the Ministry had him put down.

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