

Vinyl and java fill the air at 3G and Archtop Cafe

By Mark Pavilons

Few retail outlets make you feel like home.

When you walk into Bolton's 3G Music and Sound and Archtop Cafe, it hits you. A smile appears on your face and you immediately feel at ease, soothed by the sounds of light jazz. There's nothing quite like sitting on a comfy sofa and listening to some classic 1970s rock or perhaps even some Beatles' hits.

The welcoming atmosphere of this one-of-a-kind venue is the culmination of owner Ron Larcombe's life-long relationship with music.

And it's still evolving, taking shape.

It's the ambiance and the synergy that's been created between the music store and studio, and a slightly eclectic cafe. It's the type of place that would do well in Toronto's theatre district.

It can, in fact, help reinvigorate the downtown core of small town Ontario.

Nearing its second anniversary in Bolton, 3G and Archtop continue to grow.

Larcombe, a Nobleton resident, just recently introduced vinyl records to the shop. This is the fastest-growing of the pre-recorded media and Larcombe finds it exciting.

The wall displaying classic albums from the '60s, '70s and '80s creates a sense of nostalgia, and brings back a flood of memories. And the collection is growing exponentially, as new titles come on stream and consumer demand rises.

Larcombe noted an older couple came in recently and were simply taken back by the albums. "You could see the excitement on their faces," he said, adding they left with a new turntable.

For parents, it's something of a blast from the past. For the younger generation, they find vinyl "new and cool."

Larcombe said the new vinyl is 180 grams, providing a warmer sound that tracks better. As well, some of the new turntables have built-in USB ports so you can actually record your old (or new) vinyl to play on your portable devices.

Larcombe hopes to host some vinyl listening sessions, where music-lovers will be encouraged to dust off their old albums and bring them down. He's also trying to use old album jackets as decorative display items, so feel free to drop some off "they'll be appreciated."

The venue also provides live music every Friday night from 8 to 10 p.m. in a relaxed atmosphere. Local musicians of all ages get a chance to perform live in a family-friendly atmosphere. The setting is warm and the audience is very forgiving.

Larcombe said he's had performers as young as 13 and as old as 75 hit the stage. He's had a five-piece band and countless soloists. He's pleasantly surprised at the quality of local talent and he hopes to host more events in his unique coffee house and music store. Their motto is "food, brew and songs?" and it comes together perfectly in this historic building.

Larcombe said he stresses quality "from the types of coffees and desserts to the musical education from top-notch music instructors. Part of 3G is its focus on providing quality music lessons, primarily in guitar, bass and drums. He has a very solid group of teachers who provide superior levels of instruction with positive reinforcement.

Music is another language, one that opens minds and improves our cognitive abilities.

He wants his venue to exude a positive experience for everyone who stops in.

Larcombe is proud to have created his own little eco-system, one that combines music lessons, retail, supplies, service and great food.

It seems almost destiny that brought Larcombe to this point.

He was a typical kid interested in music and played in a band in high school. He became a professional musician and travelled across the U.S. and Canada. He then ventured into retail and has experience in musical instrument manufacturing.

He was drawn to a store-front operation, and knew from the first time he laid eyes on the old building that it was perfect. It even has very nice acoustics.

3G and Archtop is like a magnet to a musical soul. Larcombe wants to become a destination location for Bolton's core. He also wants to turn the venue dial up a notch, and become a well known hot spot for up and coming performers.

The place has a lot of potential.

And it already has all the ingredients for a perfect blend of robust java and jamming.

Drop in to browse, spin a record or enjoy some food. You may not want to leave.

3G and Archtop Cafe is at 56 Queen St. North in downtown Bolton. For more, visit 3musicandsound.com



Ron Larcome of 3G Music and Sound and Archtop Cafe.