

Entertainment JOURNAL

George Gruhn — real life guitar hero



By STEPHANIE EDWARDS
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Whether you are a part-time picker, a collector of stringed instruments, or even a multi-platinum recording artist, Gruhn Guitars is a must-stop location in downtown Nashville.

Recognized worldwide as the leading expert in vintage guitars, Gruhn initially approached the collection and restoration of vintage guitars as a hobby.

"It's a hobby that got out of hand," owner George Gruhn said.

Gruhn's pastime now fills a four-story building in downtown Nashville, near the historic Ryman Auditorium.

The first floor is Gruhn's public showroom, filled with new and used guitars. Here, guests can search for the perfect instrument, and seek advice from an expert staff. The remainder of the building consists of office and storage space, as Gruhn says — "You have to put the cases somewhere." That is except for two very special areas.

The entire fourth floor is occupied by the restoration staff.

"It takes fewer people to buy and sell guitars than to repair them," Gruhn said.

Here, luthiers and other craftsmen repair and appraise vintage guitars from around the world. Gruhn and his staff are often considered the last word in a piece's



A luthier works on an instrument at Gruhn Guitars in Nashville.

Photo by Ron Edwards

authenticity.

Another special space is a private showroom, not open to the general public. Here particularly valuable pieces are stored, and collectors and celebrities can examine and purchase instruments away from the public eye.

Buyers don't necessarily need to be up for a Grammy — while Gruhn does sell pieces well into the six figure range, featured collectibles under \$10,000 are available as well.

With today's financial climate, many are turning to guitar collecting as an investment, given that guitars are not only musical instruments, but works of art.

When asked what a musician should expect to spend for a "good" instrument, Gruhn suggests that the budget-conscious consider buying a higher-quality used instrument.

"If you can spend \$600, you can get something worth having," Gruhn said, noting that unlike many consumer items, there is no stigma to buying a used guitar, as well-made guitars can last for decades.

"It's hard to go wrong with big names like Martin, Taylor, Gibson, or Larrivee for acoustic, and for electric Fender, Gibson, or PRS."

Store hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Gruhn Guitars is at the corner of 4th

Avenue and Broadway.

To get there from Knoxville, take I-40 West to exit 209A. Turn right onto Broadway.

For more information, call (615) 255-2021 or visit www.gruhn.com.

Singer-songwriter's career racing to the top

By STEPHANIE EDWARDS
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If he is anything, singer-songwriter Aaron Robinson is passionate. He doesn't let anything stand in the way of making a dreamer's dreams come true.

Just to record his latest album, "We are Racing Ghosts," he sold his beloved guitar that he used to write the songs.

Highly anticipating the album's official release, Robinson stepped on the stage at the basement, a club in Nashville, on Feb. 21 to see a completely packed house.

Audience members barely had elbow room, but still managed to show their undying support.

Robinson's soulful, indie-pop has been heard in the past in middle-Tennessee staple groups such as

Imaginary Baseball League and Young Professionals, but this is Robinson's first solo effort.

His dramatic songs deal with themes like love, loss and growing up in a small town. Not only does his warm voice bring these to life, but Robinson also pens the words and notes that he sings and plays.

Even though I have only seen him play at one show, I have to peg him as a true romantic.

His songs about loving someone like "You Do It" and "The New AM" —



Photo by Ron Edwards

Aaron Robinson performs at his CD release party on Feb. 21.

exude emotion and have the power to invoke strong feelings within anyone listening.

Somehow even the songs about losing someone, such as "Dreamers and Preachers," and "Painful Fee," maintain a core of optimism and uplift the listener in an unassuming way. Robinson grew up in Cleveland, a small town near Chattanooga, and his struggle with the isolation of small-town life is evident in several of his songs, but especially in "The Road."

Robinson's sincere songwriting and vocal delivery have already generated quite a buzz around Nashville.

His ambitious touring schedule combined with national distribution from Undertow Music Collective should help keep Aaron Robinson as one to watch.

Several of his songs are available for listening at www.myspace.com/aaronrobinsonmusic.

"We are Racing Ghosts" can be purchased at www.undertowstore.com or downloaded at most music download sites like www.itunes.com, www.eMusic.com and www.Napster.com.

To find out more about Robinson, check out www.aaronrobinsonmusic.com.



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Standing outside Union Station, it is hard to believe that this gorgeous gothic-design stone building is a hotel.

When it was first built, in 1900, Union Station served as a railroad station.

The building was placed on the National Historic Register in 1977, and it opened as a hotel in 1986. The hotel is now managed and operated by Wyndham.

As striking as the exterior of the building is, nothing prepares you for the lobby. Tiffany-style stained glass panes decorate the hotel's atrium ceiling, and wood paneling and gilded framed mirrors enhance the beauty of the lobby walls. With views this grand, the lobby is the perfect place to sit and chat with family and friends.

Country music fans may recognize the hotel's name from bluegrass star Alison Krauss' band that was named after it. Several of Krauss' music videos and album art were filmed in the hotel.

Next to the check-in desk is a small sundries shops, where guests can purchase anything they may need during their stay from toiletries to snacks.

Walking into a guest room is just as amazing as the lobby. Unique architectural elements are quite surprising, and the newly renovated rooms have a contemporary flair decorated in aqua and brown. Extremely soft beds, down comforters and mounds of pillows make for a very relaxing night.

After spending the day touring downtown Nashville, the bed is especially inviting, as is the steeping tub or walk-in shower in the bathroom.

Bath and Body Works bath products make your stay even more comfortable, especially the shower gel/bubble bath.

Other room amenities include a flat screen television, cable, high speed Internet, plush robes,



ergonomic desk chair, Sony PlayStation, WebTV and complimentary weekday newspaper.

Elegant dining is also available during breakfast, lunch and dinner at the

hotel's gourmet restaurant, Prime 108.

The hotel is about half a mile from many of downtown Nashville's most-visited attractions including the Country Music Hall of

Fame, Ryman Auditorium, Music Row and Tootsie's Lounge.

For more information, call (615) 726-1001 or visit www.unionstationhotel-nashville.com.