

Wall mural honours inventor of famous Garnet amplifier

By Karen Wade

A west end resident who invented the amplifier used by a famous North End rock musician was honoured with a wall mural last week.

Garnet Gillies is credited with giving Randy Bachman his sound. At the tender age of 83, Gillies still owns and operates a shop at 706 St. Matthews Ave. where he repairs electronic equipment.

The modest music buff says he is very honoured, but slightly embarrassed, about the recognition.

"I don't think I've really done anything out of the ordinary. Don't get me wrong, I feel really honoured, but I guess I still kind of wonder what makes me so special?"

The mural, painted by local artists Mandy Van Leeuwen and Jennifer Johnson Pollock of Utopian Art Design, graces the Second Encore Music Store at 1349 Portage Ave.

It was unveiled Dec. 12 as part of a new series of murals highlighting "Famous People and Local Heroes" from Winnipeg, which includes movie star Adam Beach and Group of Seven artist Lionel Lemoine Fitzgerald.

"More murals are planned for next year," says Trudy Turner, executive director of West End BIZ. "Future mural recipients include former mayor Bill Norrie, filmmaker Guy Maddin and Rossbrook House founder Sister Geraldine MacNamara. We certainly have a lot of deserving people to choose from."

Funded by the city, the province, and Second Encore Music, the newest



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Garnet Gillies, 83, who gave local musicians like Randy Bachman 'the sound' with his Garnet amps, attends the opening of his mural with deputy mayor Dan Vandal (left) and councillor Harvey Smith.

mural features a picture of a young Gillies as he performed in the 1940's jazz ensemble The Gar Gillies Jump Band. To the left is Gillies as he looks today, adjusting the volume on one of his amps. To the left of that, Gillies is flanked by a picture of North End rock legends the Guess Who.

"I used to be a jazz trombone player, but nobody will hire me anymore," quips Gillies. "But I have a very sincere interest in what musicians want and I pay attention to their musical styles, so maybe that's why I've been so successful at what I do."

Gillies says he feels extremely honoured to have known people like Bachman, the Guess Who lead guitarist and Bachman Turner Overdrive founder.

"Randy always credited the Garnet amp that I invented with giving him his sound."

Although Bachman was not able to attend the unveiling, he did send a letter of congratulations to Gillies.

"I thank Garnet from the bottom of my heart for all that he has done for me. I have a unique sound that people recognize and that, to me is everything," wrote Bachman.