

Rock legends in new light Bridgewater photographer goes back to '60s for first exhibit

By Renee Stevens

Bridgewater - Eric Hayes lived the life of a rock star in the '60s but unlike the legends he travelled with, he has photographs instead of sketchy memories to show for it.

The Bridgewater photographer had dreams of being a musician but soon realized that his true talent was best expressed through the lens of a camera. That didn't stop him from being part of shows and recording sessions and hanging out backstage, though.

He started his career in England at the age of 23 photographing the likes of George Harrison, Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones. And he did get to grace the cover of Rolling Stone magazine with his work anyway.

"I got to go on some wild adventures," he recalled Saturday. "And now when I look back at the pictures, it's the most awesome thing. It's like I'm looking at someone else's life, but it's mine. It's like the song says - those were the days, my friend."

These rarely seen prints are now the focus of the artist's first show, Legends of Rock and Roll, at Viewpoint Gallery in Halifax. It features 38 digitally restored photos from the era when the greats lived wild and sometimes short lives.

Hayes says this show is a sort of therapy for him as not only were some of his subjects lost, but also a good portion of his work.

"I moved back to Canada and left the majority of my negatives with a friend in England to make me some money and he got sick and spent a couple of months in the hospital, couldn't pay his rent and the landlord threw everything out, so they are now lost," he said. "So the show is closure.

"The loss of those negatives haunted me for years. Abandoning them in England was a terrible thing to do."

As the photographer matured, so did his work, affording him a photojournalism career that took him from the Toronto Star to many Canadian magazines, and then to Nova Scotia, where he remarried, tying the knot with photographer Mary Dixon.

He is still very much a photographer, but is now getting to take some time to explore other aspects of his art.

"I was too busy before, being an artist," he said. "Now I have time to devote to the art that I created, so it's different."

One of the things he is now devoting time to is showcasing his art in shows like the one at Viewpoint Gallery. About 150 people attended the opening on March 6 to get a glimpse of the rock legends.

Hayes already has plans for his next show in 2004. In Their Own Skin focuses on a nude cruise on a tall ship.



Eric Hayes
A young Joe Cocker learns She Came in Through the Bathroom Window from George Harrison in the Beatles' Apple Studio. This is one of 38 digitally restored photographs taken by Bridgewater resident Eric Hayes on exhibit at Viewpoint Galley on Gottingen Street in Halifax.



Eric Hayes
Jimi Hendrix performs in February 1969 in London's Royal Albert Hall.



Eric Hayes
Janis Joplin raved after her April 21, 1969 show at the Royal Albert, 'Nobody, nobody ever, anybody ever thought it would be that good!'