

ENTERTAINMENT: Fingerstylists host open stages, concert

## Southern guitar style picks up fans in Stouffville

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A distinctively American musical styling has made its way across the 49th parallel and rooted itself in the heart of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Fingerstyle guitar, whereby the musician plucks the strings directly with the fingertips, has found an audience at The Earl of Whitchurch. Once a month members of the Stouffville-based York Region Fingerstyle Guitar Association perform at the Main Street pub. The next open stage takes place Oct. 4 from 1:30 to 5 p.m.

"It's just a way for us to celebrate the art in a local environment and introduce it to other local people," said Stouffville resident Brian O'Sullivan, who, along with Erwin Shack and Bob Vopni, founded the association three years ago.

The technique has been around for the better part of a century and has helped blues, ragtime, country, gospel and jazz transcend geographical boundaries. But it is finding a whole new generation of guitar aficionados through the Internet.

"There is a resurgence and I think it's largely because of YouTube," Mr. O'Sullivan said, noting musicians are posting their performances online in the faint hope of getting a professional gig and to brag about mastering certain pieces.

"It's more of a challenge to play fingerstyle," he said. "When it's played well, it requires a high degree of technical proficiency."

Mr. O'Sullivan studied classical guitar at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, then moved over to jazz at York University in the early 1980s.

"(I got interested in fingerstyle) primarily through my interest in Bruce Cockburn and Steve Howe. I've tried to include it in my repertoire," he said.

Other noted fingerstylists include Chet Atkins and Tony Emmanuel.

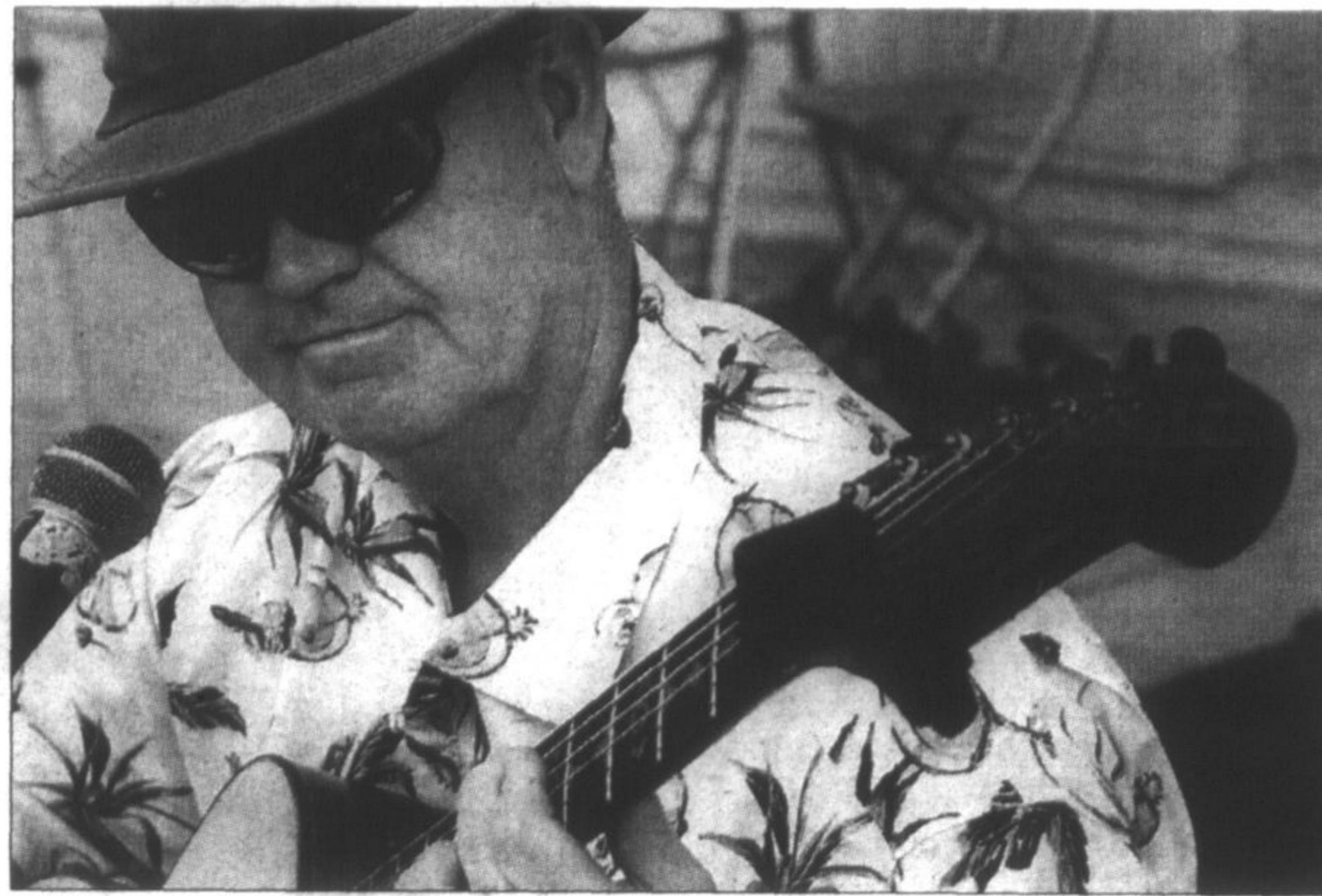
Fingerstyling utilizes all five fingers of the right hand to create more of a band sound from a single instrument.

The first and second fingers create the harmonies. Melodies come from the third finger, while the thumb produces the baseline and percussion is achieved through tapping the guitar.

"(Fingerstyling) really extend the boundaries of how an instrument can be played," Mr. O'Sullivan said.

If you miss Mr. O'Sullivan and the other local fingerstylists at the Earl, they will be performing at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment on Nov. 6 as part of WhiStle Radio's House Concert Series.

For more information, go to [fingerstyleguitar.ca](http://fingerstyleguitar.ca)



Stouffville resident Brian O'Sullivan and other members of the York Region Fingerstyle Guitar Association will perform at The Earl of Whitchurch Oct. 4.

9, Stouffville Sun-Tribune ■ Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009



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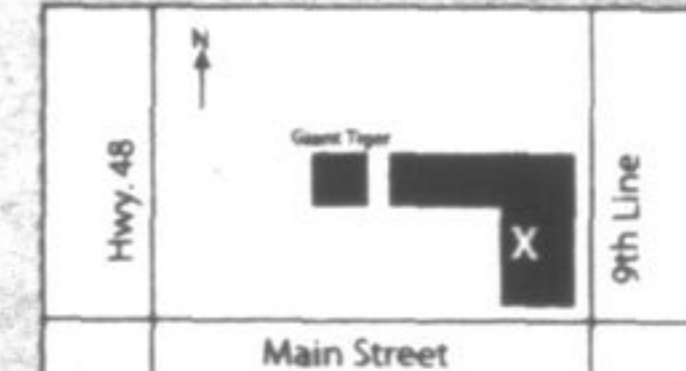
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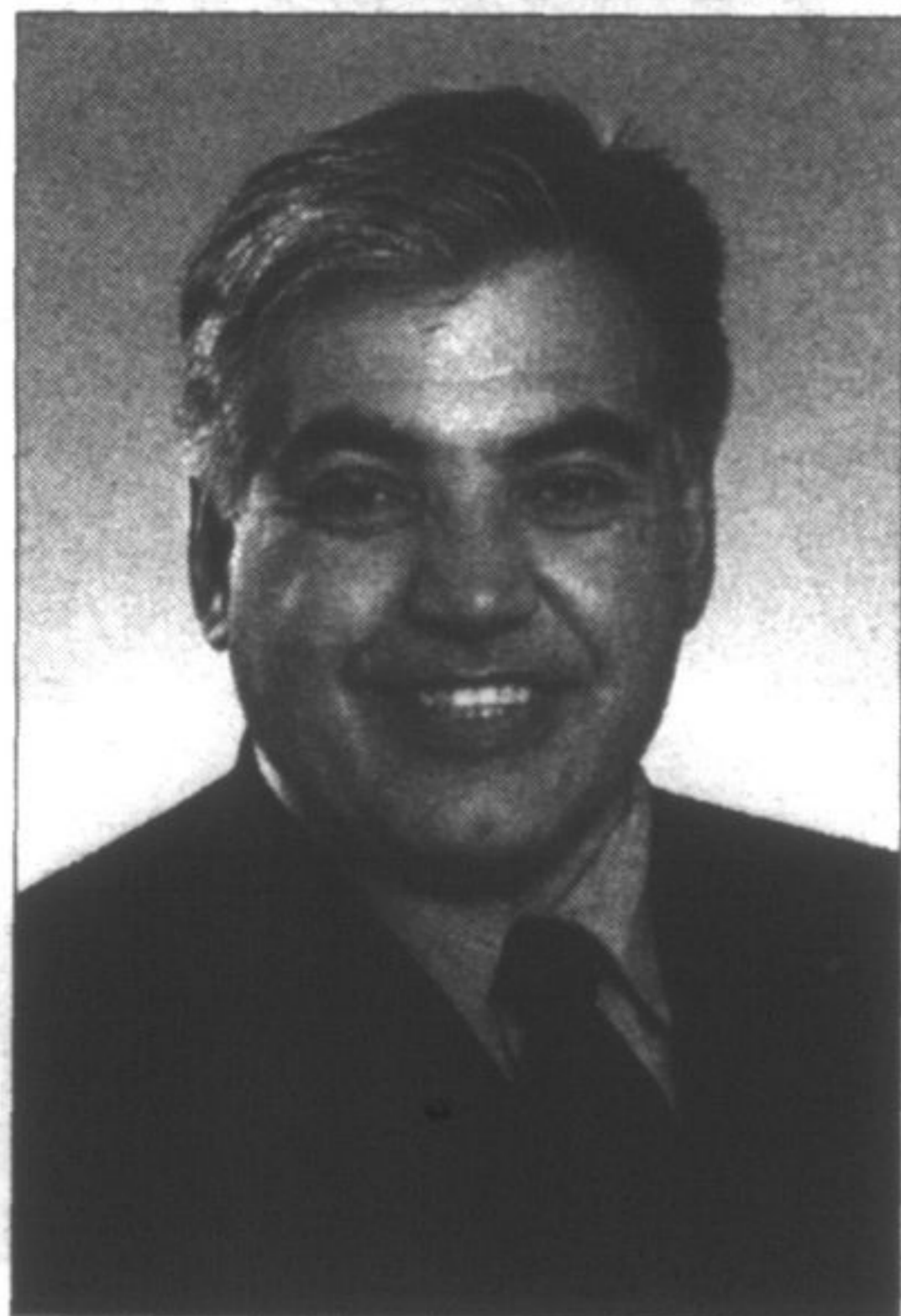
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