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Santana to Clapton & Frampton, he's transcribed the world's very best

BY CHRISTINA TOTH, THE TIMES MARCH 22, 2012

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Abbotsford musician Hemme Lutjjeboer has captured the notes of musical icons such as Joni Mitchell and transcribed them into those fat books we buy at music stores. He's transcribed well over 250 books of some of the greatest North American jazz and rock guitarists since the 60s.

Photograph by: Christina Toth, Times

Like a lot of teens living in the heyday of rock, Hemme Lutjjeboer picked up the guitar and tried to plunk out the iconic tunes played by his guitar heroes - Lennon, Santana, Clapton, Frampton, Breau.

The difference with Lutjjeboer is that he actually did it. The first tune he attempted was The Beatles' Day Tripper, he recalls.

"I figured it out, and basically I'm still doing the same thing today, and getting paid for it," says Lutjjeboer, who makes his living as a freelance music transcriber, putting notes to paper.

After graduation, he left a forklift job in a Mississauga warehouse to play in a

country band in Edmonton for three years.

Eventually Lutjjeboer entered a Lenny Breau scholarship contest and was a runner-up.

- He didn't win but the results convinced him he was on the right track, so he enrolled in the Guitar Institute of Technology in Los Angeles in 1986, and hasn't looked back since.

In Vancouver, he got busy teaching, playing and composing. Then

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Luttjeboer met one of his idols, jazz guitarist Mike Stern, and offered Stern transcriptions of some of his music.

"He was blown away. I ended up transcribing his first two albums," Luttjeboer recalls. After that success, he contacted music publishers, and soon they were contacting him to transcribe works.

Luttjeboer belongs to a unique guild of music masters, transcribing the classic songs created by rock icons who, for the most part, can't read a note to save their lives. He still gets thrills from the process, uncovering how the artists assembled their songs.

"There are standard licks, but sometimes it's just astounding what they come up with, like Day Tripper. Lennon was so young but he was a genius."

Luttjeboer, who recently moved to Abbotsford with graphic designer wife Wanda, has 250 or more full books published - he's lost count - of rock, jazz, blues and pop songs, plus countless single songs, in print and online.

He sets down notes for vocals, guitar and other strings, horns - in recent years, Luttjeboer has even crafted arrangements for big band groups in the region.

In a way, he's a historian, documenting for posterity the music that defined and spoke for a generation.

Thanks to him, and transcribers like him, those composers of the rock "classics" will continue to influence generations into the future.

Now he's also transcribing younger artists' work, such as Taylor Swift, Avril Lavigne and Nickelback.

However, some things in his trade have changed, he says.

When he began, Luttjeboer painstakingly scratched out each note on paper, using up buckets of No. 2 pencils. Today he uses Finale software and a computer, but the basic process is the same.

"It all starts and ends with this," he says, pointing to his ear. "I sit with my headphones at the keyboard and type in one note at a time."

The work has kept him very busy, sometimes transcribing a book or more a month, but in recent years there is less demand for sheet music, the publishers tell him, as there are more music software programs for amateur musicians.

The way music is put to paper is also changing. Many of Luttjeboer's transcriptions include tablature or "tab," which are not notes but a map of where to put one's fingers, a kind of paint-by-note guide, he says.

Over the years, he's met many of his guitar heroes - Joni Mitchell, Santana - the list is endless. Luttjeboer himself has won their admiration. In the foreword of his Complete Idiot's Guide to Guitar Exercises, no less than seven guitar masters praise his skill and musical intelligence.

To learn more about his fascinating work, see www.musicpaper.com.

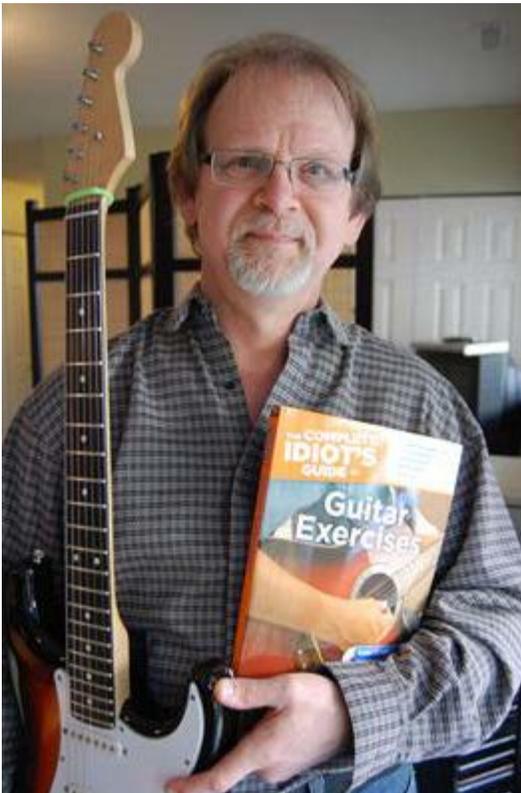
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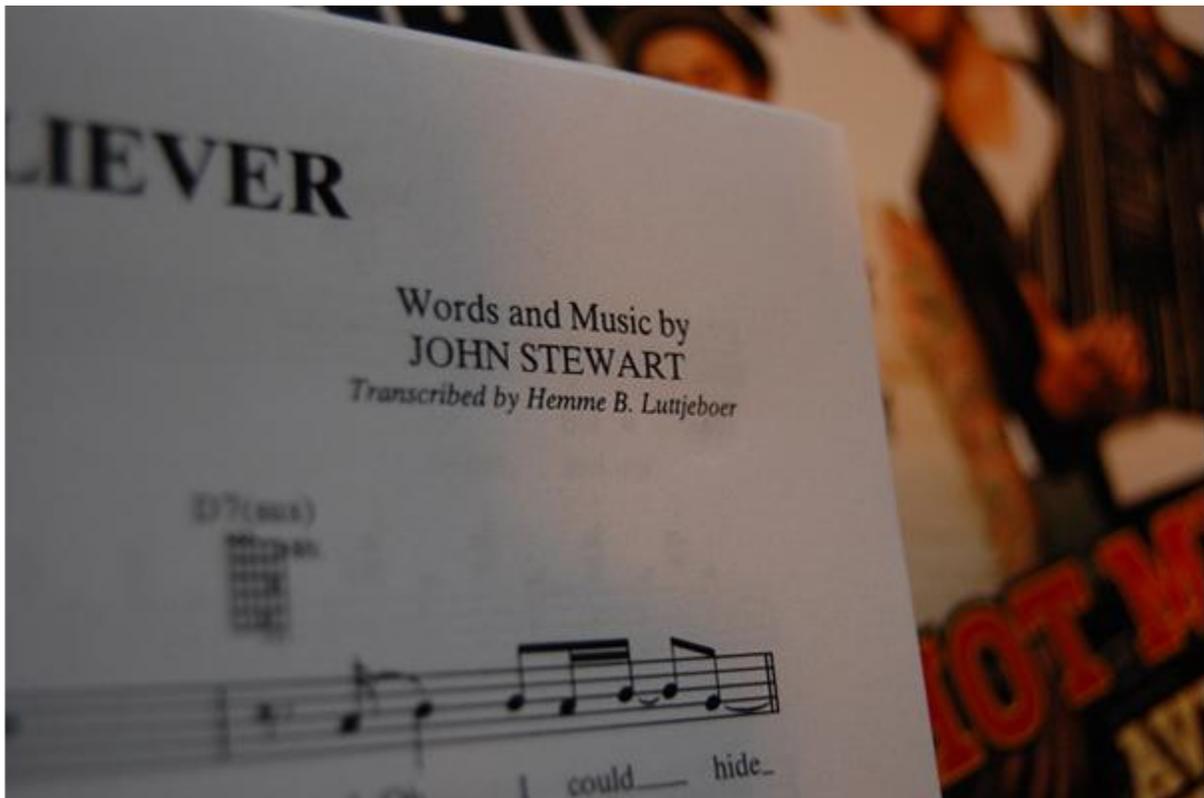
Abbotsford musician Hemme Luttjeboer has captured the notes of musical icons such as Joni Mitchell and transcribed them into those fat books we buy at music stores. He's transcribed well over 250 books of some of the greatest North American jazz and rock guitarists since the 60s.



Hemme Luttjeboer began picking out tunes on the guitar when he was a teen. As an adult he has transcribed the music of many of his 'guitar heroes' from his youth and onward. "I'm basically doing the same thing now," he says. You'll see his name on more than 250 books of some of the greatest North American jazz and rock guitarists since the 60s, and on many single songs in print and online.



He makes it look so easy. Hemme Luttjeboer of Abbotsford is a sought-after transcriber of music. He's also put together The Complete Idiot's Guide to Guitar Exercises, which has comments from seven guitar greats, whose work he has transcribed.



I'm a Believer, by John Stewart, made famous by The Monkees, transcribed by Hemme Luttjeboer of Abbotsford. Luttjeboer said he had a request to transcribe some Monkees music recently, just a few weeks before Monkee lead singer Davy Jones died at the age of 66 in February.

Photographs by: Christina Toth, Times