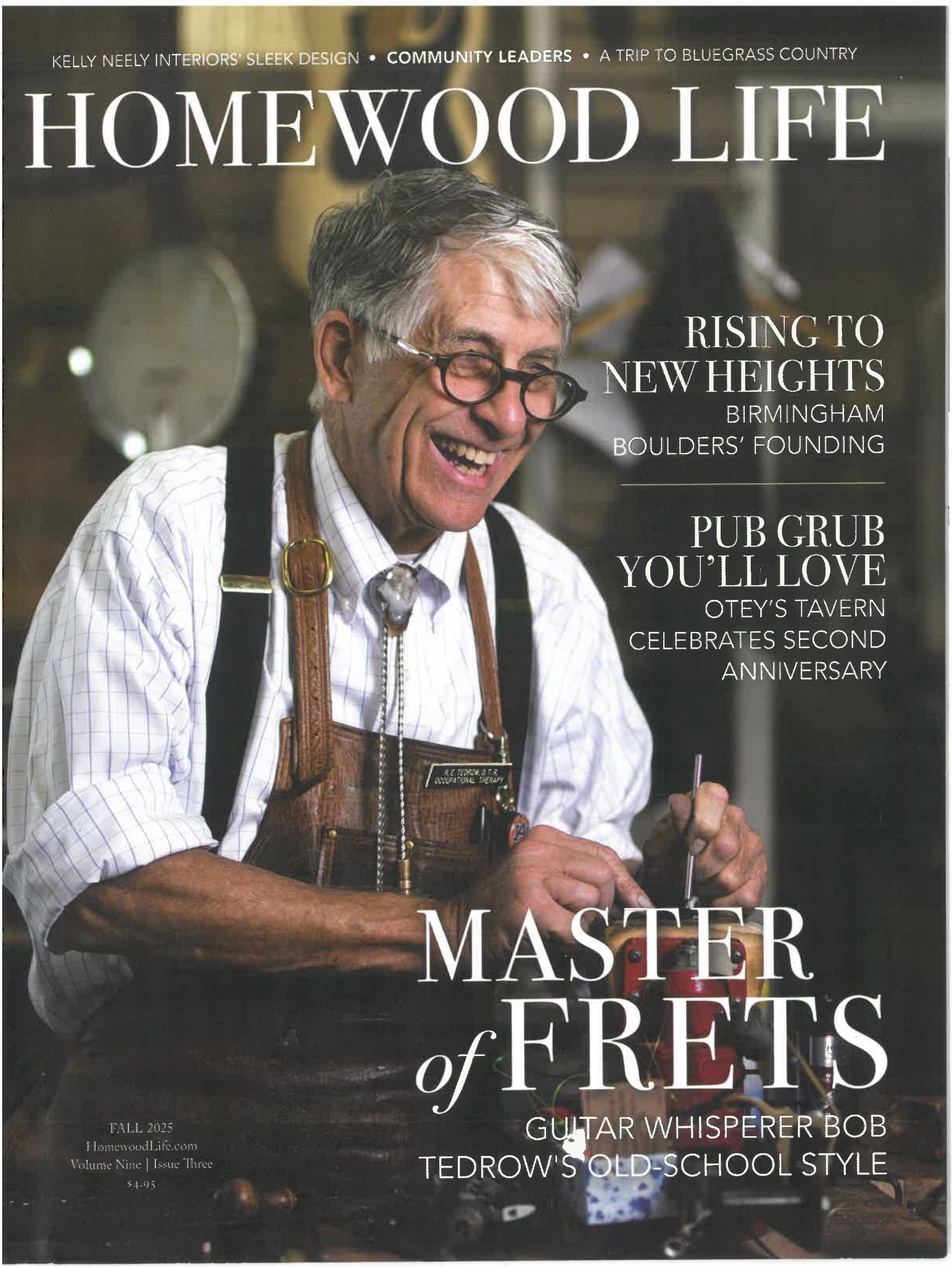
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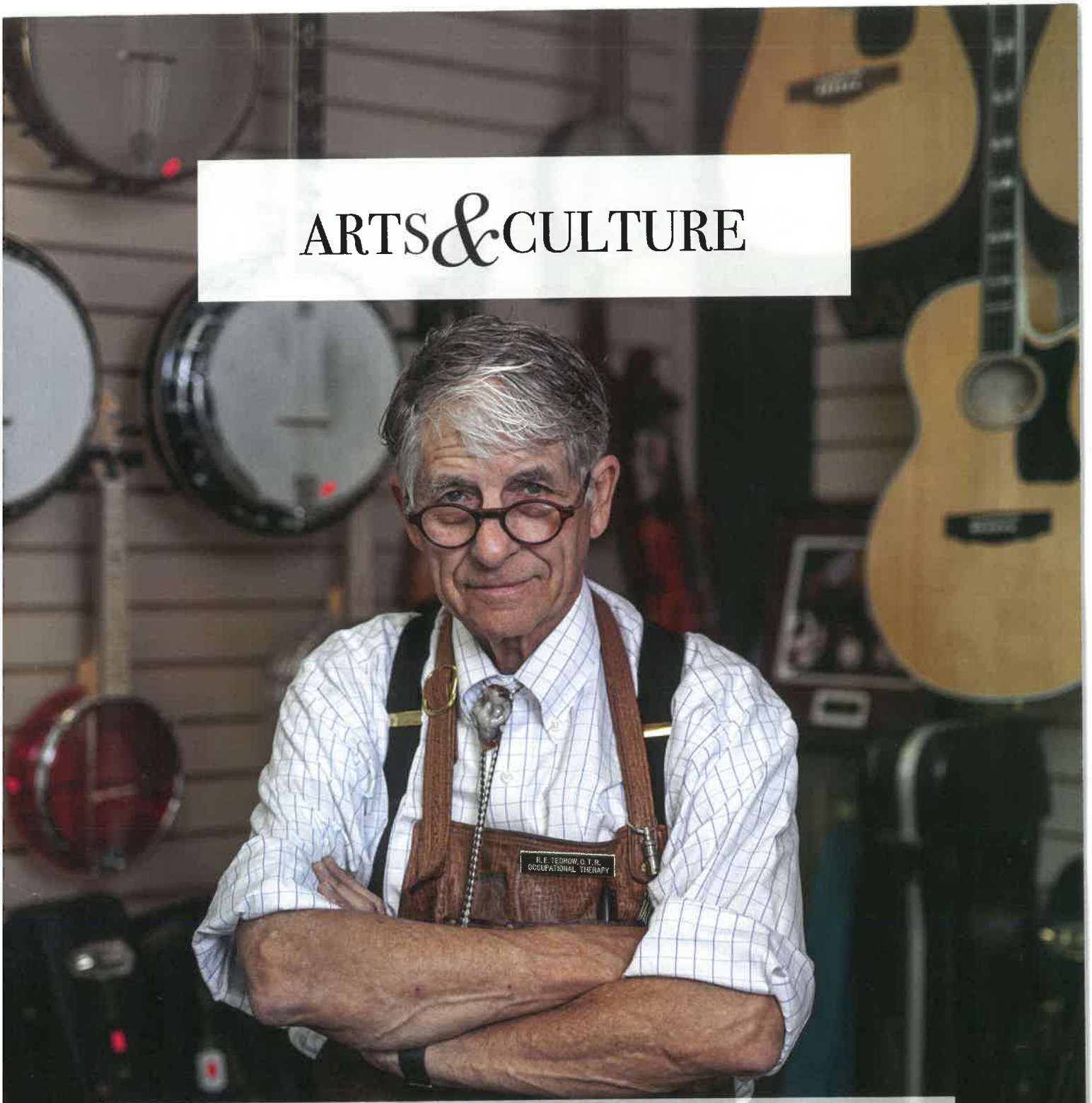
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A FINE-TUNED HISTORY

Bob Tedrow's old-fashioned musical instrument repair shop offers high-quality services.

BY KATELYN SMITH
PHOTOS BY BLAIR RAMSEY





Music is fleeting, specifically live music. One performance can go on for hours, but when it is over, only the silence is left and the memory of the sweet melody that was playing.

In this specific store, the music lingers in the air, even in the instruments that decorate the walls.

Bob Tedrow, the owner of Homewood Music, has been repairing, making and playing with instruments for a large portion of his life. Specializing in concertinas, violins and all kinds of guitars, he offers a wide range of high-quality instruments and exceptional services to ensure every customer is satisfied.

Tucked into the streets of downtown Homewood, Homewood Music has walls lined with various kinds of instruments, ranging from banjos to electric guitars. Each one is finely crafted, and some are even built by Bob or his team, themselves.

The store itself is known for being "behind the times," favoring the old way of hand-crafting instruments rather than relying on factory machines.

"Everything we do is old-school, or by hand, like they did in 1900," Bob says. "We take apart very expensive antique guitars and banjos and mandolins and ukuleles. Everybody here plays music. Everyone here has built world-class instruments."

There are more than 100 different procedures that he and his team offer in the shop. From stringing instruments to brass and woodwind repair, to guitar and banjo repairs and hand-crafting concertinas and squeezeboxes, the store fulfills any musical need.

"The skills that we learned to build instruments, we also use to repair and adjust and restore instruments," Bob says. "So, we do the real cutting-edge work, the real fine adjustments and fine-tuning of instruments that you can't get from a factory."

He not only builds and repairs instruments, but he also plays them. Music has been a part of his life since he was a child.

Although he was not aware of it at the time, his grandmother was a jazz pianist who played the stride piano-style, popular in the 1920s.

Growing up in a musical environment, Bob had always been drawn to the idea of playing an instrument and making music himself, so he began







playing the banjo and ukulele. In high school, he made his first banjo.

He attended college at Colorado State University because, despite his love for music, he knew he needed a degree. There, he met many different musicians and eventually began playing with a few of them in a Bluegrass band.

He traveled around Colorado and Wyoming, playing in the band with his banjo in bars and little rooms. He even played at the second Telluride Bluegrass Festival in 1975, an annual music festival.

His favorite part of performing is the people he performs with and the finished product they create.

"Making a product that is positive synergy, where the whole is greater than the individual parts," he says, later adding, "making something like that



happen is ephemeral. That's what's fun about music: You play, you do a good job and then it's gone, nothing but a memory, I guess, or a feeling that you can either grasp or give to somebody else."

In college, he earned his degree in occupational therapy, in addition to playing in the band. After graduation, he got married and moved to North Carolina, where he secured a job at Broughton Hospital, a psychiatric facility.

As a therapist in the hospital, he had access to all the equipment, including a wood shop, a pottery shop and a leather shop. With all the tools available, he decided to learn how to play, repair and make musical instruments.

After buying a book about how to repair band instruments, he taught himself in his free time. During his lunch break and after work, he would practice taking flutes and clarinets apart.

Although he enjoyed his job as an occupational therapist, he decided that he was more suited to working with musical instruments.

Eventually, his wife wanted to attend law school, so they moved to Homewood, where they have now been residing for nearly 40 years. When he first moved here, Bob rented a space in the back of a business called Fretted Instruments, where he operated a repair workshop.

"I bought enough wood to build two sawhorses, and then I used the two sawhorses to build two workbenches," he recalls. "Then, I started to work at the workbenches, and I tied a pillow to the sawhorses,

Fun Facts

Bob Tedrow's work life might be shrouded in music, but there's more to him than playing instruments. He owns a farm where he enjoys riding on his tractor and going fly fishing in the creek. He has four dogs, three children and six grandchildren. He has been married to his wife for 49 years, and his favorite instruments are the banjo, ukulele and concertinas. To follow his career, visit his Facebook page (Bob Tedrow's Homewood Music/Tedrow Concertinas).



and that's what I sat on. So that's how I started."

He started working for the educational department of the symphony for Birmingham City Schools, so he could repair their bands' instruments.

Using a map of the city of Birmingham, he would mark all the city schools and travel around to them to pick up their instruments. He would take them back to his little space and repair them before delivering them back to the schools.

While he did this, he also worked for several pawnshops in the area, repairing instruments for their stores.

Eventually, he officially opened his business, Homewood Music, in 1989. He expanded to the present space on 28th Avenue South in 2016.

For nearly 40 years, Bob has been serving the Birmingham community with his musical expertise and exceptional craftsmanship. In fact, he is one of the few people in the world who can craft concertinas, a free-reed musical instrument with more than 1,000 moving parts, which he sells globally.

He invites customers of all backgrounds, whether they have been playing for a lifetime or have never picked up an instrument.

"I don't care who you are, if you're a doctor, a lawyer, a [Native American] chief or a beggar," he jokes. "If you want to talk about a guitar, we have a common bond."

The old-fashioned business Bob offers is one-of-a-kind, filled with tender care that customers cannot find elsewhere. To make lasting music, a fine-tuned instrument is needed, and a visit to Homewood Music is essential.

Homewood Music is located at 1712 28th Avenue South in Homewood. It is typically open Monday-Friday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., but those interested can call for hours at 205-910-8262. For more information and inventory, visit hmi.homewood.net. ●



