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Tom Harmon, toiling at his perfectly cluttered TV-repair shop in Obetz

DORAL CHENOWETH III | DISPATCH PHOTOS

Tom Harmon takes TV repair seriously — but not seriously enough to let it interfere with his day.

# Channeling an easier pace



A closer look at the electronic components of a disabled television

By Aaron Beck  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

**TV** repairman Tom Harmon isn't factory-authorized, online or prone to working inside a building past noon.

Lately, though, the semi-retired one-man show at Obetz TV has spent much more time in his expertly cluttered two-room shop (a former carryout attached to the Ruby Hill Bar on Groveport Road) than he has in his impressive tomato patch (a plot growing near the foundation of the bar) or playing fiddle and guitar with his beer-drinking buddies in his "rec room" (a garage attached to, yes, the bar).

On a recent Tuesday morning in the shop, Harmon was performing surgery on the guts of a 10-year-old, 50-inch Zenith.

"You should have been in here last week," he said during a break. "We had to walk sideways, the place was so full."

Amid a sluggish economy, business has picked up for the 74-year-old Korean War veteran — who

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Harmon on modern televisions: "They're all pretty much the same."

► To see an audio slide show of Tom Harmon, visit [Dispatch.com/multimedia](http://Dispatch.com/multimedia).

First Person is a weekly forum for personal musings and reflections from readers.

**FIRST PERSON**

## Minus one, jelly shoes still useful at the beach

As a 6-year-old, I went with my family to Charleston, S.C., for a vacation with an aunt, an uncle and a cousin.

When we arrived in late afternoon, eager to get to the beach, my brother and I begged the adults to take us.

Instead, the adults opted to take us all out to dinner — with the promise of visiting the beach early the next day.

My brother, cousin and I endured dinner, then were treated to ice cream on the boardwalk. We ate our dessert as we perused the storefronts.

We passed many shops, but we were attracted only to the ones with seashells and neon-colored beach towels in the front window.

Upon entering one of those shops, I was immediately drawn to a rack of children's flip-flops and other beach shoes.

I was mesmerized by the rainbow of footwear, but one pair in particular caught my attention: the most beautiful shoes I had ever seen. I tore off my old, ratty sandals and kicked them aside with disdain.

I put on the beautiful shoes and discovered them to be a perfect fit. I admired my little feet and was elated that the only pair of such shoes in the whole store seemed to be made especially for me.

I had to have them. I tugged on my mother's shirt sleeve and begged until she gave in and bought them for me.

They were stunning. They were sparkly. They were golden.

And, after a quick exchange at the register, they were mine.

I had my very own jelly shoes.

In thinking about the shoes today, I remember them as being nothing more than semitransparent rubber infused with golden glitter and molded into a geometric design.

They must have been uncomfortable. After all, being plastic, they probably made my feet sweat.

Yet I don't recall any discomfort that the shoes might have caused. I remember only the pride I felt as I strode out of the store that day, wearing my glittery jellies.

Heading back to the car, I looked around at all the people mingling on the boardwalk: Surely they noticed me and my fancy new shoes.

How could they not? My shoes, so bright and shiny, reflected the sun as it slowly

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**THEME OF THE DAY**

Each Saturday, Life & Arts showcases material involving reader interaction.

**INSIDE**

► Now You're Talking | **D3**

**SOCIETY**

## At gay bars, customers just as likely to be straight

By Kevin Joy  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Seated in a dimly lit booth at Axis, a gay nightclub in the Short North, Jordan Harris and John Peters sip cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon as nearby speakers blast techno music.

A blonde in a tank top approaches. "Hey, are you guys gay?" she asks matter-of-factly.

Both shake their heads: They're straight.

"Want to dance?"

Through smoke from a fog machine, she leads Peters to the floor.

They move together closely for a few songs, his hands on her hips.

Despite the setting, with drag shows and male revues of "hot college



COURTNEY HERGESHEIMER | DISPATCH

Ben Pritchard and Margaret Moore at Union, a predominantly gay bar

jocks" making up part of the weekly schedule, a heterosexual presence (or even a pairing) isn't so strange anymore.

This month, Axis hosted Sweatn' — a high-energy, agenda-free party that attracts gay and straight patrons interested in dancing, socializing and, perhaps, looking for a fling.

As for the gay-friendly location: "Nobody seems to think about it," said Harris, a 24-year-old who lives near Ohio State University.

"There's no pressure. It's just people who want to have a good time."

As younger generations benefit

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**Q&A | ALICE COOPER**

## 25 albums later, rocker not punch-line material

By Bill Eichenberger  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Rock critics love to make fun of old rock acts — the geezers in, say, Journey, Kansas and REO Speedwagon or even in the Rolling Stones, Van Halen and the Who.

Few make fun of Alice Cooper, though.

Cooper, also known as Vincent Furnier, just released his 25th album, *Along Came a Spider* — drawing raves from coast to coast.

Beyond the music, the shock rocker said, is the Alice Cooper ethos in concert.

"I'm 60, and they see us up there onstage, and, yeah, maybe one critic did call us dinosaurs — but I went out there and told the crowd we play carnivore rock," Cooper said by phone. "We eat little bands."



Alice Cooper

After he stopped laughing, Cooper — who will perform Sunday night in Columbus — turned serious.

"I've always said that, when I can't get up onstage and do

28 songs five nights a week and throw in a five-hour radio show and play golf with the best in the world . . .

"When I can't make an audience stand up and cheer and scream for more, that's when I'll call it quits.

"But that hasn't happened yet."

**Q: You never got caught up in fads or fashions. Does that ex-**

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