

SADB has new artists arcade



Singh's Arcade owner Gursagar Singh

By Dan Laxer The Suburban

Gursagar Singh is genuinely excited to greet new customers that walk into his new arcade on Sainte-Anne Street in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue.

The arcade just opened last month, and is at first rather unremarkable and stark. But Singh quickly makes it clear that prior to this day's visit there had been art on the walls, with more art – murals, sculpture – on the way. Aside from a retro arcade, and soon-to-be café, Singh's Arcade is also a showcase for local artists. One exhibit had just ended with another one about to begin.

The arcade's games include an air hockey table, Street Fighter-Mortal Kombat, a double Fast and the Furious unit, an arcade basketball game, an old-style skee ball game, a pinball machine, and Pac Man. It is 4:30 on a Saturday afternoon, and there are kids moving from game to game. Singh says that depending on the time, or the day, they get tweens, teens, and college kids, or even 40 to 50-somethings.

But it's not like the sketchy downtown arcades of the 1970s and '80s. It's family friendly, "more like a community centre," Singh says.

The games come from different sources. The pinball machine, a 1991 Terminator model Singh describes as "vintage," is from a friend's basement. The skee ball game is about 40 years old, found in a factory in Miami, along with other games, and driven to Montreal in a U-Haul that broke down in Halifax, North Carolina, where Singh was stranded for a few days. Some of the games were play-ready, and some had to be rebuilt and restored.

Singh grew up in "Saint Anne's", attended Dorset Elementary in Baie D'Urfé, then Beaconsfield High School. He then went on to John Abbott College, just a bit further down the road. He is now studying environmental engineering at McGill.

He opened the arcade because he needed a creative outlet, and he felt that there isn't very much for kids to do in the town. One day while on a walk he saw that the building where the arcade is now was up for sale, and decided that an arcade was just the thing. He got the money together, bought the

building, and brought his dream to fruition.

Singh is always courting artists of different kinds to exhibit in the arcade. But they don't have to be conventional artists. In a couple of weeks, a local coffee brewer whose dream is to own his own café, will be setting up a temporary café inside the arcade. After it's gone, Singh's Arcade will continue to sell the coffee.

For now, players can refresh with a milk shake made with any one of several brand name breakfast cereals.

Singh has no plans to go full adult and serve alcohol. "Our strategy is work with the other businesses in town," he explains. "I would much rather not compete with anybody, and just add to the town."