

Vintage jukeboxes, advertising items will be sold at auction Saturday, Oct. 3, by Hal Hunt

By Ken Hall

Dated: Sep 18, 2009

The world-famous jukebox and advertising collection of the late John Gurrech of Houston, Tex., will be sold at auction on Saturday, Oct. 3, starting at 10 a.m., by Hal Hunt Auctions in Northport, Ala., in the firm's spacious gallery facility.

(NORTHPORT, Ala.) – The world-famous jukebox and advertising collection of the late John Gurrech of Houston, Tex., will be sold at auction on Saturday, Oct. 3, starting at 10 a.m., by Hal Hunt Auctions. The sale will be held at Hal Hunt's spacious gallery, located at 5925 Hwy. 43 in Northport. Dozens of rare and vintage jukeboxes, all lovingly restored by Mr. Gurrech, will highlight the auction.

“John Gurrech was first a record collector who later became a jukebox collector in 1980, when he purchased his first Wurlitzer jukebox,” explained Hal Hunt. “He became well known within the industry for his passion for collecting and patiently restoring each jukebox to its original state. He would travel across the country to shows and flea markets. He'd scour the ads in newspapers and magazines.”

Two of Mr. Gurrech's finds included an extremely rare 1940 Gabel Kuro, dubbed “the last jukebox” and one of only a few known; and a 1936 Wurlitzer Model 35, quite possibly the rarest of all the Wurlitzers. This Model 35 has not been restored, however. It sat in Mr. Gurrech's museum, with a tag hanging from it, “Not For Sale.” Sadly, he died in December 2008, before the unit could be restored.

Other noteworthy Wurlitzers that will cross the block include a gorgeous and colorful 1941 Model 850 Peacock; a 1946 Model 1015, probably the most famous of all the Wurlitzer jukeboxes; and a 1942 Model 950. Other expected top lots include a 2-piece 1941 Rock-Ola Spectrovox; a 1961 or '62 Scopitone, which plays actual music videos; and Wurlitzer Bakelite wall boxes (Models 120 and 125).

One of the more curious items in the collection is the “Strike Up the Band” band-box, a clever plug-in novelty item that sits atop a jukebox. When the jukebox music begins to play, the curtain to the band-box opens, revealing a Lawrence Welk-type band that seems to be playing the music. Then, when the song ends, the musicians stop playing, too, and the curtain is drawn until another tune is selected.

“These jukeboxes are all original – no reproductions – and all antique, from the 1930s to the 1960s,” Mr. Hunt remarked. “Some will sell for \$1,500, some for \$15,000 and the truly rare, museum-quality machines will go for \$50,000 and up.”

While the jukeboxes are certain to take center stage (with all major manufacturers represented, to include Seeburg, AMI, Mills, Aireon, Packard and Filben Maestro), the other items in Mr. Gurrech's massive collection should not be overlooked. Offered will be advertising signs, gas pumps and other petroliana, records (mostly 45 and 78 rpm), speakers, neon signs and barber chairs – over 500 lots in all.

Sold will be a large selection of Coca-Cola advertising signs and posters, plus a Coke vending machine in great condition; highly collectible examples of petroliana (to include rare signs for Derby Oils and Rebel Gas, plus a wide assortment of globes and pumps); antique tin signs for known and long forgotten drinks (like Grapette soda, Grand Prize beer and Southern Select beer); and cigarette tin signs.

The music memorabilia is extensive, and begins with boxes full of 45 and 78 rpm records, most of them country and early rock 'n' roll from the 1950s and '60s. Those will be sold in multiples, but the vintage Sun

discs – like the 45 signed by Johnny Cash, the 78 recording of Carl Perkins' hit Blue Suede Shoes (with sheet music) and the large collection of Hank Williams records will be sold as single lots.

Rare and vintage music posters will appeal to collectors. Included are two promoting live shows for Elvis Presley; two advertising the Beatles (one for their historic 1966 appearance at Shea Stadium, the other for a 1962 show in England – pre-British Invasion -- where they shared top billing with Little Richard); a Patsy Cline poster for a March 1963 concert in Kansas City; and Johnny Cash memorabilia.

Also sold will be over 20 neon signs, most of them for beer (like Pearl, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Schlitz, Coors, Grand Prize, Falstaff, Lowenbrau, Michelob and Budweiser); hundreds of older Life magazines, many from the 1940s (including one featuring Marilyn Monroe on the cover); a 1954 Marilyn Monroe calendar (with her famous nude photo from Playboy); and vintage Philco TV sets.

Antique music boxes will include a rare mahogany Edison Victor 6, expected to fetch \$4,000-\$6,000, and a 15 ½-inch Regina bowfront changer, rare because it is oak, not the customary mahogany. Game room décor will feature an oak restored Koken barber chair with leather, a massive carved oak back and front bar, and a monumental pair of mahogany winged griffin carved arm chairs with leather.

A preview will be held on Friday, Oct. 2, from 10-6. There will be no Internet bidding for this sale, but absentee bids will be accepted. Visit the Hal Hunt Auctions website for more information on directions, hotels and airports, at www.halhunt.com. For reserved seating, call (205) 333-2517. Hal Hunt Auctions is always accepting quality consignments for future sales. To consign an item, estate or collection, you may call them directly, at (205) 333-2517, or e-mail them, at halhunt@bellsouth.net.

To learn more about Hal Hunt Auctions and the Oct. 3 sale of the John Gurrech Collection, log on to www.halhunt.com.

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Ken Hall writes pre-sale and post-sale press releases for auction houses, for a fee. He writes, submits and tracks stories for clients. Submissions are published in trade magazines, posted on industry websites and appear in local newspapers.

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