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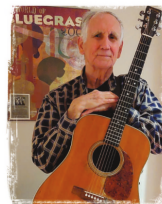
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# PAUL JOSEY - NOVA SCOTIA LUTHIER



By Karen DeCoste

## All about Paul's skillful mandolin building

Paul Josey's passion for fine instruments began early, having grown up in a home where music was a part of everyday life. His brothers, sister and mother were musical, some playing instruments while others in the family sang. In his early years, Paul played the guitar and sang, thereby developing a keen interest in the sound and tone of the instruments that they had at home. He learned on his own how to adjust and repair them to improve the sound. It's not surprising that later in his life Paul would become a well respected mandolin builder with a reputation for producing instruments of the finest quality.

Born in Halifax, Paul now lives in St. Margaret's Bay, N.S. In the late 90's he took some guitar lessons from Vic Mullen which inspired Paul, Vic, Joan Mullen and Denise Robichaud to form a band, playing local shows together. Since the mandolin they were using at the time was needed for teaching lessons, Paul began searching for a good mandolin. Unable to find something that provided the sound he wanted, he decided to build an instrument to use in the band and this started his passion for building mandolins.



Paul Josey

### "A PASSION FOR BUILDING"

There was no lack of experienced instrument builders in the Nova Scotia area that Paul was able to tap into for advice, including Vernon Robichaud, JP Comeau and Charlie Derrington. Paul is also a long time friend of Robert LeBlanc who is another well-known and respected mandolin builder from New Brunswick. He considers Robert to be a mentor and together they share ideas on mandolin building. Paul related a story to me when we spoke about building his first mandolin. As he was "voicing" the instrument, he had Vic Mullen finding notes on his fiddle so that Paul was able to carve the



Paul's Mandolins

top and hear the tones he wanted for the instrument. Paul told me: "I don't stop working on the instrument until I get it right." The pride in his workmanship shows and can be heard in each instrument he creates.

Paul made the mandolin that Ray Legere now has; he calls it his #2 "A" style mandolin. It is one of his favorites and it has a special meaning for him. He also made an "F" style mandolin for Lou Reid of the "Seldom Scene." There has been a lot of discussion about that instrument in the music industry. It has been described as having a deep, rich, dark tone with terrific range up and down the neck.

### "MIXES HIS OWN STAINS"

Paul is presently working on many mandolin projects that are in different stages of development. Everything is handmade and hand carved during the building process. He uses hide glue construction in keeping with the traditional methods of the 1920 / 30's and the early Gibson "Lloyd Loar" mandolins. Paul mixes his own stains, hand applies and hand rubs them. For the top coat he uses spirit varnish and uses "James" tailpieces. Interestingly Paul uses moose bone to make his own mandolin nuts.

*(editors tech note: "James" tailpieces with hinged cover are described as possibly the best mandolin-oriented invention to come along since the early 1930's.)*

## "BUILDS A TOTALLY LOCAL PRODUCT"

Paul also uses Nova Scotia red spruce for the tops, the most sought-after tone wood in the world. And Nova Scotia hard curly maple for the back, sides and necks. As Paul describes it – "the red spruce has a really high ceiling, meaning the mandolin responds well to rigorous playing without the notes falling off while emanating deep, loud, rich tones that are sustained."

Paul is very passionate about the quality of Nova Scotia maple and the red spruce tone woods that he uses. His selections make Paul's mandolins a totally local product that are being played throughout the Maritimes and beyond. The East Coast Bluegrass community has been very strongly supportive of Paul Josey's mandolins.

When he is not busy building mandolins, Paul also does a lot of instrument set up work and repairs. And he can often be seen at local events where he enjoys playing and singing with friends. Paul's favorite mandolin players are Mike Compton and local musician Trevor Boutilier of the band "Bluegrass Tradition." Paul fondly remembers the pleasure of having spent some "one on one" time with Mike Compton when Mike was in Nova Scotia for the 2013 "Celtic Colours International Festival."

I am looking forward to receiving an invite soon for my husband Trevor and I to visit Paul, take a peek at his workshop and hear some more great stories about his mandolin building. Perhaps we can pick a tune or two while we are there.

It was a pleasure getting to better know this very kind and talented man during our conversation. Check out a Paul Josey mandolin when you get a chance. You will not be disappointed.

Karen DeCoste

Photos courtesy Karen DeCoste

Send Comments & Feedback for Karen DeCoste to:  
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