

Memorabilia rocks entrepreneur's bottom line



By Thom Baur for USA TODAY

Jerry Gladstone with guitars signed by, clockwise from left, Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney, Brian Wilson, The Eagles, the Grateful Dead, the Rolling Stones.

By [David Lieberman](#), USA TODAY

George Harrison called his 1970 solo album *All Things Must Pass*. But that doesn't appear to be true for autographs and other collectibles from The Beatles and other rock music legends.

Last week, Christie's in London attracted the second-highest price yet for a piece of pop memorabilia — and nearly four times more than expected — when it auctioned the drumhead featured on the cover of The Beatles' 1967 album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, for 541,250 British pounds, or \$1.1 million.

That trailed the 600,000 pounds, now equal to \$1.2 million, paid in 2005 for John Lennon's handwritten lyrics to *All You Need Is Love*.

It's just the latest of many signs that rock music artifacts have become the fastest-growing major segment of the memorabilia business.

"Last year was our biggest year by far, and this year we're up another 20%" in revenue, says American Royal Arts CEO Jerry Gladstone, an entrepreneur in collectibles who shifted the focus of his 21-year-old firm a few years ago from animated-movie cells to pop. "People can't afford gas and this and that, and we are up 20%."

Gotta Have It Collectibles also is upbeat about the online auction it will hold in early August.

Its pop prizes include Lennon's talisman necklace, which he wore in the nude photo with Yoko Ono on their 1968 *Two Virgins* album. It could go for as much as \$500,000.

A jumpsuit called the Peacock that Elvis Presley wore in concert could go for \$300,000, a record price for an Elvis collectible.

Nostalgia's in the air this summer as concert venues rock to vintage performers including Journey, The Eagles, The Police, Donna Summer, Elvis Costello, Steve Miller Band, Rush, Kansas, Peter Dinklage, George Clinton & Parliament-Funkadelic, Bon Jovi and Tom Petty. It should get another boost next year with the 40th anniversary of Woodstock.

One reason is that lots of Baby Boomers can afford to indulge themselves. Many are in the prime of their careers, or no longer have to shoulder college tuition bills now that their kids have grown.

Many people also feel more certain that rock 'n' roll really is here to stay, making collectibles potentially savvy investments.