

Excuse me, are you a guitarist?

by David Ngiau
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IN the couple of years prior to joining this paper, Ivan Lim co-fronted The New Paper's about-town feature "The It Squad".

As a result, he found himself a sort of celebrity, getting recognised on the streets every now and then.

Then there is Ivan Lim, the Formula One buff. Apart from making a pilgrimage to Silverstone, he writes on the subject every race day.

But Ivan Lim the classical guitarist? Many who know the journalist of 13 years aren't even aware of his musical side.

Realising his inclination towards music while he was still young, Ivan's parents started him first on the violin, before the guitar. When he was 13, Ivan aced the solo junior classical section at the Singapore Guitar Festival.

Four years later, in 1984, Ivan took second place in the open section of the Yamaha-organised festival. Of the four finalists, Ivan was the only student – the other three were Yamaha teachers.

A professional career as a guitarist beckoned, but Ivan's parents dissuaded him.

After a year at an advertising agency, Ivan joined The New Paper when it launched 13 years ago.

A journalist he may be,

but Ivan still practices every week and performs occasionally – in the past year, he has twice performed in public.

But those appearances were small gigs.

Last night, the 2nd International Guitar Festival kicked off. On closing day Sunday, Ivan will be performing a one-hour solo recital at lunchtime, at the Alliance Française.

"This time will be like going back to when I was a kid. At recitals then, you'd have to be note-perfect. When you're playing at shopping centres, on the other hand, you can relax a little bit, play the not-so-difficult pieces and get away with it."

The nudge to take to the stage came from Ivan's old friend Tomas Liauw, a fellow guitarist who is also the festival's organiser.

"There's this little bit of fear that I'm not good enough to perform solo, on this platform. I was originally supposed to do a duet with Tomas. But when he heard me play, he said to me: 'Come on, you can do it on your own!'"

"On hindsight, I'm thankful that my parents gave me a good start in music. If they didn't, I wouldn't be here! I feel that I'm a better player today, as I've matured as a person and developed my own sound, an emphasis on timbre."

As our chat at The Yard, a popular watering hole



TODAY photo by WONG KHING CHONG

with journalists, winds down, pub-owner Mrs Poon stops by our table and is surprised to learn that Ivan plays the guitar. And she's known him for over a decade. "Perhaps one should write about it ...," he jokes as he pours himself another whisky.

Ivan Lim, the classical guitarist, he may be, but he's still every bit the journalist.

Ivan Lim's recital is on Sunday from 12 to 1pm at the Alliance Française, Sarkies Road. Tickets are available at \$10 each.