

Doug Nash/Records

Stores hope for 'record' sales

Eugene record merchants carry on optimistically, despite an industry-wide sales decline and a campus community that leaves stores empty over the holiday season.

The recession that sent record companies reeling in the 1970s has yet to let up.

"Business right now is the same as last year, when we cut our stock close to 50 percent," says Leslie Kerr, employee for Everybody's Record Company on 5th Avenue. Many people are simply unable to afford the \$7.99 tab for a new LP, she says.

But Christmas, at least for her establishment, is a source of happiness.

"Things will really pick up between now and Christmas," she says, adding that prices for older albums have been dropped to \$4.99 as an added shopping incentive.

At Earth River Records and Tapes, located on the mall, all Top 28 cuts are reduced \$1 to attract Christmas bargain hunters. And manager Monte Cohen says the year-old store is gaining a good reputation despite an almost invisible advertising budget.

"Things are definitely better than last year," Cohen states. "More people know about us now. We're gonna stay."

Rock and roll is the big moneymaker, and Cohen expects many new releases through December, mostly by well-known faces on the recording scene. Led Zepplin, Tom Petty, Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen, Devo and Rod Stewart are all making holiday appearances on the charts.

"Christmas is gravy-train time for the record industry," comments Bob Lee owner of just-opened Face the Music, on 13th Avenue across from the Bookstore. "Right now, they're

really flooding the market with known, established artists."

Due to his campus location, Christmas will not bring a boost in sales, Lee says.

"Holiday times tend to be slower because the students go home, and students are my clientele."

Indeed, for those outlets close to campus, the yule season has an unorthodox affect.

"Business will be a lot better in January when the students come back with money," manager Alan Lee of Play it Again Sam, a used-record store, comments.

Despite the appealing prices (\$3.25 for a single LP), the store was forced "by economic reasons" to close its downtown shop.



"So far this month, we're doing about as well with one store as with two," Lee says.

In contrast to "normal" stores, where Network and Benatar are hot and anything over two months old is outdated, Sam's best-selling music are old 1960s acts. "The major ones — the Stones, Who, Doors, and Janis Joplin — do very well."

Lee blames the "many choices open to a person — like video games and computers" — for the industry's fall. Most, however, find the record

companies themselves guilty of ineptitude.

"In the late seventies the industry flattened out, and the company guys panicked because they had no growth to account for," Cohen contends. "So they raised the prices."

Face the Music owner Lee agrees. "The record industry tends to do things that don't make sense. They were continually raising prices and at the same time wondering why sales were off."

So why, given present economic conditions, open a store now, especially in a location not suited to holiday shoppers?

"You have to enjoy the record business," Lee says in an understatement. "And you have to have some sense of optimism."

All the recession did, he maintains, is "weed out the people who didn't run a business-like record store." University students provide a substantial market for his establishment.

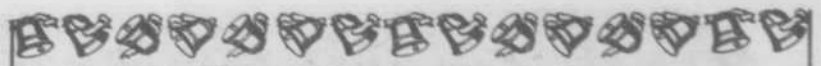
"Students don't necessarily want to go to the trouble of going downtown. We expect to have as good or better a selection as any other store," Lee said.

To stay in the business, it seems, one has to keep the faith.

"The record is one of the last things people will quit buying," Cohen says with sincerity.

And for newcomers like Cohen, the attitude is realistic but hopeful.

"We're on the bottom floor in the worst part of the economy, and we're making it."



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