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# Don't judge a record by size

Have you ever set the stylus carefully on the record groove, settled back to listen and been amazed at how long the guitarist could sustain that chord, and surprised at how deep the singer could drop his voice?

But then you realized you've been had by a mini-LP that plays at 45 rpms and not an LP that plays at the standard 33 1/3 rpms.

With the resurgence of mini-LPs, EPs (which stands for extended play) and the 12-inch single, record listeners are going to be forced to turn on the lights and squint at the label to find the right speed. Just because it's round, black poly vinyl, and the same size as an LP (which stands for long player) doesn't mean that it is.

EPs have been on the record market since the 1950s. Elvis Presley issued 12 EPs during his career. The Beatles released a number of EPs early in their career. But in the mid-60s the EP format all but died out.

Franklin Markowitz, owner of Earth River Records in the Downtown Mall, says the latter-day history of EPs is complex.

"In 1976 they got popular, but in 1979 they died," Markowitz says.

But three years ago the EP market started picking up when new wave and disco music crossed, according to Markowitz.

"They were a major force in the European market," says Bob Lee, owner of Face The Music on 13th Avenue. "Only recently has America recognized their value."

A lot of record buyers purchase EPs for various reasons. The foremost is price. EPs are priced about a third less than a full LP.

Bob Altschuler, vice-president of the CBS Records Group, believes price is the major force behind the rise in sales of EPs.

"It was economic conditions, starting in '79," Altschuler says. "People were price-sensitive. The EP, mini-LP were a good marketing tool."

"An EP is the first test of an artist," says Markowitz. He cites Duran Duran as an example of the synth-pop bands that released material on import EPs to test the market.

Markowitz sees the new record labels (not the major labels) getting into EPs because it's cheaper. If the EP makes money, the label can issue an LP.

Lee recalls the case of Thomas Dolby as a prime example of an EP breaking an artist or group. Dolby's "Blinded by Science" came out as a mini-LP in 1982. The record sold well, so well that the record company issued a full LP, Lee says.

"For new acts, success or failure will depend on an EP," Lee adds.

From the record company's point of view, Altschuler sees EPs and mini-LPs as a "marketing format." EPs and mini-LPs enable the consumer to hear artists. "We want to see sales expand in any capacity," he says. But Altschuler notes not all artists need to use the EP format.

"It wasn't necessary for Men at Work, Quiet Riot, Culture Club or Bonnie Tyler," Altschuler says.

The recent introduction of 12-inch singles into the market have added a whole new dimension to record buying — and record marketing.

"Record manufacturers have only realized the potential of the 12-inch market," Lee says.

Lee speculates that the 12-inch market was developed by the disco scene and black market. A 12-inch single is usually a "souped-up" remix of a previously recorded song. Often the mix is called a "dance mix" or "club mix" depending on the style of the artist.

"The listener wants a hot sound" on the 12-inch single, says Altschuler. He notes the success of CBS' 12-inch single release of Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney's "Say Say Say" to illustrate the rise in the market.

One thing is certain: when record buyers go into a record store they aren't faced with selecting one artist over another — only whether they'll buy the 12-inch single, the EP or the mini-LP.

Cort Fernald

## Ginsberg brings the Beat to Eugene

Poet Allen Ginsberg will make a rare Eugene appearance tonight in two shows at the WOW Hall, 291 W. Eighth Ave. Admission for the 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. shows is \$6.50.

Along with Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady and William Burroughs, Ginsberg was one of the leaders of the 1950s' Beat Movement, and he continues to be popular, prodigious and critically successful in the '80s.

Ginsberg's readings will include selections from his most recent album *First Blues*, which features fellow legend Bob Dylan and the new wave group, The Clash.

His most recent book, *Plutonium Ode and Other Poems*, was awarded the 1982 L.A. Times Book Prize for poetry.

Ginsberg has published 25 books and been translated into over a dozen languages. Since his 1956 public reading of *Howlin* San Francisco, he has consistently been on the forefront of various contemporary cultural events and movements.

Since 1972, Ginsberg has studied Tibetan Buddhist meditation. Currently, he directs the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute, a school of buddhist psychology in Boulder, Co.

Tickets for Ginsberg's readings, sponsored by Yeshe Nyingpo, are available at The EMU Main Desk, Everybody's Records and the WOW Hall box office.



Graphic by Shawn Bird

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