

Audience exposure key for new bands

By Milan Zupcic
Of the Emerald

While success in the music industry is often determined by the number of hit songs a band has on the radio or the amount of airplay a video receives, a great many of today's aspiring groups find musical satisfaction in much simpler terms.

The success of bands such as U2, R.E.M. and The Smiths has been largely due to their exposure on college radio and other non-commercial stations, which are becoming increasingly influential in the discovery of new bands.

Without the support of college radio stations and small independent labels, the U2s and R.E.M.s of the future would have little hope of lasting in the music industry, said Johnny Etheridge, the program director for KRVM, a local radio station.

As a result, major record labels and commercial radio stations are taking notice of new trends in the music industry by monitoring college radio in hopes of discovering the same types of bands they have been passing over for years.

Since recording and distribution contracts may very well make or break a beginning band, a great deal of importance lies on the exposure a band receives through touring and live performance. A great many bands find performing live the most exciting and rewarding aspect of the business.

One such up-and-coming new band that finds performing live more enjoyable than recording albums is the Vancouver, B.C. based Go Four 3, which recently visited Eugene for performances at the EMU Beer Garden and Max's Tavern.

"One of our most memorable shows was playing in front of about six people, simply because the audience was so energetic and enthusiastic about seeing us perform," said vocalist Roxanne Heichert.

Heichert said that playing for an audience that has absolutely no knowledge about the band or its music is the greatest test for a new group.

While Go Four 3 has played for crowds as small as six, they have opened for such well-known bands as The Cult, The Replacements, and Rank and File. Go Four 3 headlined the Third Annual Vancouver Independent Music Festival and currently has two videos receiving national airplay on Much Music, Canada's progressive music version of MTV.

Go Four 3 currently records under Zulu Records, a small in-

dependent label based in Vancouver, which Heichert believes is ideal for a beginning band because the group has been able to maintain a certain level of control over their product. Many bands must give up this control when signing on with a major recording company, she said.

The growth and success of independent recording companies has allowed small bands to control and influence their product more than would major record labels. These bigger labels often are concerned primarily with musical demographics rather than the music itself, Heichert said.

Although traveling across the country for months in a crowded van or bus and sleeping on strangers' floors may not seem as glamorous as one would assume the life of a musician to be, most beginning bands often must sacrifice the luxuries of travel due to lack of money.

For most beginning bands who have a limited popularity, the money they receive for playing clubs and bars rarely covers the costs of gas, hotel rooms, food, equipment and other necessary expenses. Often, beginning bands simply tour in order to expose audiences to themselves and their music in hopes of establishing recognition.

Attracting audiences is one of the greatest obstacles a beginning band faces while on the road. New groups must rely on local promoters and radio stations to expose potential audiences to the band and their music. This becomes a major difficulty for many promoters who must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of putting on a show that features a relatively unknown act, said Chris Metzler, the music coordinator for EMU Cultural Forum.

"Most promoters are overly concerned with how a show will do financially rather than musically," he said.

"People are generally not willing to take a chance by going to see small bands. People are more willing to put out five or six dollars to go listen to Top-40 music in a club which they can hear on the radio, rather than pay half that much to see innovative new bands," Metzler added.

Finding places for bands to play in Eugene is a problem for promoters, and beginning bands who perform in this city have a very limited option in



Members of Vancouver B.C.'s Go Four 3 from left to right are, Gord Badanic, Roxanne Heichert, Steve Quinn and Ian Noble.



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