#### ..TRENDS

## 'Underground' music is branching out

#### By Momotose Nishiyama Emerald Contributor

The term "alternative music" is a broad name used to encompass the whole gamut of non-popular music genres.

The label is normally used to designate new music that is not commercialized through other existing genres, such as top 40, country and western, and heavy metal. But just what can be classified as "alternative"?

Unlike the alternative music scene of the '80s, the music of the '90s isn't so easy to classify. It used to be that alternative meant either postpunk or hardcore music. But diversity and increased accessibility are current trends in alternative music.

According to John Etheridge, program director for
community radio station
KRVM, the only station in Eugene which airs modern music, the trend in non-commercial radio programming is the
acceptance of diversity of
styles by radio programmers
and stations. "There is definitely a diversity of musical
styles. We no longer have just
punk or new wave, "he said.

The wide range of styles under the "alternative" umbrella is enormous. Included are the aforementioned post-punk, hardcore, and new wave, but that's only the tip of the iceberg. Some of the latest trends in modern music include "new beat" (electronic, hypnotic music often heard in dance clubs, which originated a few years back in Belgium), "industrial" (nihilistic, gloomy electronic music), and even rap.

Many artists combine a number of elements of existing forms to create their own distinct sound. Among them are The Red Hot Chili Peppers, which fuses rock, funk, and rap and punk; The Pogues, which mix elements of traditional Irish folk with

rock and punk; and Bad Brains, a hardcore reggae band

The '60s psychedelia-meets-'80s rock style is also widely used. The exponents include The Primitives, The Jesus and Mary Chain, The Church, R.E.M., and the critically-acclaimed Smithereens.

Electronic ("techno-pop") music is still going strong in the '90s, with groups like Camouflage, Erasure, Xymox, and New Order leading the way. Even modern-rock flavored country artists, such as k.d.lang and Lyle Lovett, are considered to be alternative.

However, the biggest trend in alternative music seems to be the emergence and acceptance of "world" music. When asked about the future of the alternative music scene, Etheridge said, "We will see more world music mixed in—music from all over the world, that is." He mentioned South America, Africa, and the Caribbeans as likely sources of this genre.

Unlike the '80s, when world music usually meant reggae, styles from all over the world are gaining more exposure. Brazilian music has gotten a huge amount of help from Talking Heads' David Byrne, who compiled and released two albums of Brazilian pop songs along with a solo album of his own which incorporates Brazilian styles.

Music from Pakistan, Zaire, and Cuba have been released in the States through the Real World label, which was cofounded by Peter Gabriel. Other recording artists who have their international sounds released in America include Kassav', Kaoma, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and the Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Choir.

Another trend in alternative music is the increased accessibility to this music. More alternative artists are being signed by major record companies than ever before, and

therefore are distributed wide-

Some major-label artists such as The Cure and The B-52's have recently received mainstream attention, although they initially started out in alternative circles.

Up and coming groups like Red Lorry Yellow Lorry, the Stone Roses, Severed Heads, and Passion Fodder have been recently released in the U.S. through major labels, and therefore are more accessible to the public.

Although alternative music in general does not sell as well as commercial pop music, there exists a market for the style. Even though some underground artists are distributed with ease by big record companies, many are still found through independent or import record labels.

According to Charlie Simpson, an employee at House of Records, "Import records are hard to get. The demand is high, but the supply is low." Therefore, most alternative music distributed through imports are less accessible. But they do sell well, Simpson said.

When asked about which alternative artists sell well at House of Records, Simpson said that Sub-Pop (a Seattlebased label with groups like Mudhoney, Soundgarden, and Nirvana) are the rage now, and 4AD (a British record company with the Pixies, Cocteau Twins, and Throwing Muses on their roster) sells well also. He added that groups like Ministry, a nihilistic, hard-driving rock band, and The Red Hot Chili Peppers are fast sellers as well

There will always be a channel for those who prefer new and cutting-edge music over the predictable top 40 music. But for those alternative followers, increased diversity and accessibility will expose them to more variety within the field.

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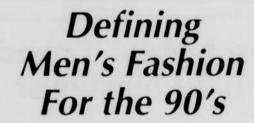
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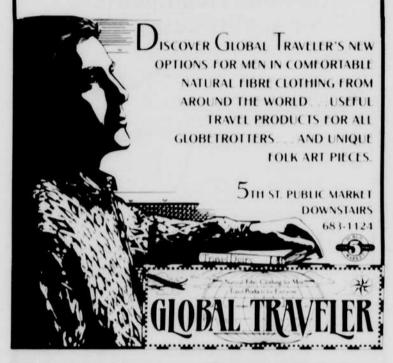
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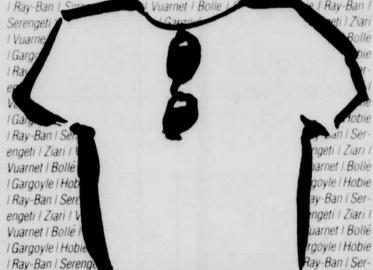






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