

# RECORDS

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are for sale, this isn't a place for people just out to find expensive first editions. The people here honestly seem to care about music.

"My first record was 'Telstar' by the Tornados and I haven't been the same since," dealer and KWVA DJ Marc Time said. "As a kid I would take money for my clarinet lessons and use it to buy singles, like 'All Along the Watchtower' by Jimi Hendrix."

I guess that part of the reason I'm sympathetic toward these people is because I'm almost one of them. After blowing nearly \$40 and filling a backpack with everything from Aretha Franklin to old 1960s garage rock compilations, I shouldn't be one to judge the obsessive behavior of others.

And this is obsessive behavior, without a doubt. What other way is there to explain the kinds of things people search for at conventions such as this?

"My personal genre that I'm searching for is Christian ventrilo-

quist records," Time said. "Anything where people have a puppet and are singing evangelical songs, that's what I'm looking for."

Of course, there is no place like a record convention to find obscure music. The mere volume of items is rather astounding, even if most of it is stuff hardly anyone would want to buy. How much demand is there for old Styx and Journey albums anyway? But in general the mainstream is set aside and people aim to find that one thing that they have never been able to get on CD. Old

Chet Atkins albums, the early works of Dick Dale or a vinyl copy of The Who's "Tommy," which no amount of digital remastering could improve upon.

Who knows what else? What people obsess over and why they obsess over it is always a murky area for discourse. Why do people get so worked up over the collection of wax discs? Why do they take such a defensive attitude should anyone question the validity of their obsession? These are not easy questions.

At least with music, the obsession is more than just the materialistic collection of stuff, unlike lunchbox or baseball card collecting. It is true that a good vinyl record sounds better than a CD, it is true that there is a lot of music you can only find on record and it is definitely true that records are cheaper. But it is still just an obsession, and, as I realized at this convention, has no deeper meaning other than itself.

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# FROG

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double that when using the series' trademark Booster.

But, given a little playtime, players will adjust to the unusual game mechanics and can start to win races. Winning grand prix earns players tickets, the in-the-spirit-of-arcade-gaming currency of the F-Zero universe, and also opens race car parts for purchase, letting players design their own custom cars. Players can spend tickets to buy those parts or unlock more cars (only four of the game's 41 cars — the Blue Falcon, the Fire Stingray, the Golden Fox and the Wild Goose, all of the original F-Zero's fame — are playable at the get-go). Tickets can also be traded for new missions, among other things, in the game's Story Mode.

The Story Mode itself follows a mostly non sequitur plot surrounding the F-Zero defending champion, bounty hunter and generic poster boy Captain Falcon. Players race on specially designed courses, sometimes having to meet special conditions to advance to the next chapter. In one course, Black Shadow (a mildly goofy but generic "cold-blooded king of evil feared by all") places a bomb on the Blue Falcon, and the Captain has to complete a serpentine highway course while never slowing below 700 kilometers per hour, Speed-style, lest the bomb detonate. Demanding exacting skill, the Hard and Very Hard difficulty versions of the Story Mode challenges will thwart even the efforts of players who have bested the game's Expert and unlockable Master difficulties. (At those difficulties, CPU cars are smart

enough to knock human players off the track, if they get a chance, but gamers can fight back with their own Side and Spin attacks.)

The game's comic book cast harbors no shortage of larger-than-life sci-fi and pop culture archetypes: the Mighty Gazelle is a pilot who survived an earlier F-Zero accident and was "recreated as a cyborg with enhanced reflexes;" Bio Rex is a sentient dinosaur cloned from a fossilized egg who, incidentally, is racing so that he can satisfy his unwavering appetite for mammoth ribs; and Zoda, a dopamine-pumped "phantom," plots to conquer Earth but is inexplicably still allowed to race. Such logical speed bumps don't draw much notice, though, as the game certainly doesn't take itself overly seriously.

Vehicles themselves vary widely in

driving style, too. Driving a the custom 880-kilogram Queen Sapphire handles radically differently from the 2340-kilogram Black Bull, and the possibilities for customizability — after unlocking all parts available on the American version of the game, players can create 8000 different custom cars — should satisfy even the most Type A players.

The game's courses are masterfully designed, each testing a different mix of skills. At the higher difficulty levels, success depends partly on judicious use of each car's Boost function: Boosting saps a fraction of a player's energy bar (which can be depleted, too, through collisions with other cars or guard rails), but a car will explode if the bar empties before the race ends. The visually stunning and expertly designed tracks vary from the highly technical

and very satisfying Aeropolis: Multi-plex to the challenging Fire Field: Cylinder Knot, wherein racers dash along the outside of a long, weaving cylinder, to the lush, looping and imminently fun Green Plant: Spiral. Winning the initially available Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald cups on at least normal Standard difficulty unlocks the deviously tricky Diamond Cup. (Players who manage to conquer all four of these cups on Master difficulty can unlock the so-called AX Cup, which includes the six fresh tracks from F-Zero AX, the arcade version of the game.)

The highly recommended F-Zero GX was released in August 2003 for the Nintendo GameCube.

Contact the editorial editor at traviswillse@dailyemerald.com.

# POEM

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A boy holds his mother's cracked palms  
And asks how much it costs to be free.  
How much does it COST to be FREE?  
We wear this paradox under orders of patriarchy  
But father has broken his promise.  
And so we are calling out into the dark of it all  
For our mother to come nurture us back to wholeness,  
Angels with dirty halos  
Gone mad, running from Moloch only to consume  
ourselves  
Under telephone wires and TV screens,  
Masturbating to phallic filled monuments  
In Washington's wet dreams,  
And they tell us to Buy, Buy, Buy, Buy!  
As though enough fancy fabric may cover the truth.

The truth is we are wearing our pants over our eyes  
And flexing our bear breasts like beasts.

Hanukkah feasts in the Holy land, and  
The government is passing settlement laws  
Across the dinner table to their children,  
Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam,  
And the candles are burning  
As a reminder of our faith, love, and strength  
And sister is asking for a slice of Khallah  
And it breaks in half as the bombs drop.  
Another Palestinian child commits suicide,  
Strangled by star spangled ropes,  
Noosed by her own hopes, and lies,  
The lies, the lies, who lies? She lies,  
Down beneath an Israeli bulldozer  
And dies in the name of justice.  
She was young with lungs full of revolution  
But no real means for a solution.

Here I stand  
Naked  
In front of a cracked mirror,  
Quest-ioning my origins,  
Slave stories embedded beneath my skin,  
Asking when will the war end,  
And when did the war begin?

Israel is bordering genocide,  
And the wall has been erected,

But I know naught what side of the fence  
To stand on

— Anonymous

This poem was voluntarily submitted to the Emerald for publication. Artistic submissions of any medium can be sent to pulse@dailyemerald.com.

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