

■ In my opinion



RYAN NYBURG  
BUDGET RACK

## Payola: Just shortening radio's path to downfall

Hey everybody, guess what? Some radio stations might not be playing songs because of their artistic merit, but might actually be playing them for, gasp!, commercial reasons. Thank you to the attorney general of New York for bringing this shocking fact to our attention.

So apparently what happened was that Sony was paying radio stations to play certain songs more often than they would have anyway. This is known as payola and is illegal. Big scandal back in the 1950s. You might have heard of it. Anyhoo, Sony had to pay out the ass to the state of New York for engaging in the practice and now the state can fund some music appreciation programs for kids. Sony's clean, New York state feels good about itself and everyone is happy. Rah.

A few years ago I would have given more of a crap about this whole thing than I do now. I would have been spewing saliva and ranting on street corners about the misuse of our public airwaves by greedy corporate interests. But guess what? I don't really care right now. Want to know why? OK, I'll tell you.

First off, the reason payola is illegal is that radio stations are federally licensed and must use the rights given to them for the public good. Or presumably anyway, considering the Federal Communications Commission has been pretty lax on the whole "public good" thing over the past few years, preferring to take pleasant little ski resort vacations paid for by the communications industry instead (if you think I'm being glib take a look at the Web site for the Center for Public Integrity and see what you can find on the subject. It makes for some good reading). Because they are a public service, radio stations are expected to offer what the public wants, rather than what the recording industry pays them to promote.

Now here's why I can't really get riled up by this whole thing. The effects of payola are not what they used to be. Major music acts are so overexposed that radio is somewhat beside the point. It's a medium that is slowly dying out, as far as corporate interests are concerned. Personal music devices are becoming more popular than radios and satellite radio is a better business model than the old fashioned broadcast type. And in any case, if a radio station is paid to play a song that sucks, it doesn't mean that song will become any more popular (okay, maybe it will become popular, but bad taste would exist even if payola did not).

Radio programmers have become so detached from the needs of consumers in any case that this hardly even feels like a debasement for them. The only radio stations with anything to offer anymore are college stations (the playlists for which more often than not reflect the tastes of the DJs rather

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TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTO EDITOR



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## Gourmet Listening

The symphony continues to play at Musique Gourmet, one of Eugene's last remaining niche record shops

BY RYAN NYBURG  
PULSE EDITOR

Since the 1980s, Don Lambdin has brought classical music to Eugene. In his store at 942 Olive St., Musique Gourmet, Lambdin has collected over 5,000 hand-picked titles that range across the best recordings in the classical music cannon. The store itself, simply adorned with Oregon Bach Festival posters and neatly stacked and labeled racks, holds a treasure trove of recordings from some of the best labels around, such as Mercury and RCA Living Stereo. Lambdin also keeps budget labels such as Naxos in stock for those unwilling or unable to purchase higher-quality recordings.

One of the last niche music stores in Eugene, Lambdin's store has managed to stay in business despite declining sales and an increasingly aggressive music retail market. He credits this to the quality of his selection.

"When it comes to classical, most stores just stock whatever is selling and they usually don't have a staff that is knowledgeable in the area," Lambdin said.

Lambdin, a former health physicist who spent years investigating ionized

and nonionized radiation hazards for the United States Public Health Service, decided to open the store after buying some speakers from Bradford's Home Entertainment.

"I found out that Bradford's was looking for someone to sell music in the store so as to attract customers," Lambdin said. "Since I wasn't doing anything else at the time I offered to do it, and they gave me free rent in a corner of their store. Things kept growing, and I kept asking them for more space, and soon we were tripping over each other. Eventually I got a small inheritance and was able to move to a location on Fifth Street."

When the owners of his location on Fifth Avenue decided to let all the leases of their current tenets run out five years ago, Lambdin moved to his current location, in a storefront next to his old friends at Bradford's.

"I took over the place where their car stereo store used to be," Lambdin said. "Without them I wouldn't have gotten any of this going."

Lambdin credits the initial success of his business to the introduction of the compact disc, since collectors soon began replacing their vinyl

records with the more durable CD format.

"That surge topped off around 1995 and it's been in decline since then," Lambdin said. "I don't think any other technology will cause a boost in sales like that. Most people believe that CDs can't be improved on, so new formats such as Super Audio CDs don't sell as well."

Though Musique Gourmet still does well enough to stay in business, Lambdin doesn't have high hopes for the future of his store.

"I doubt I'll still have the store five years from now," he said. "The audience for classical music is graying. Many of my original customers are becoming elderly. So am I. And the younger people aren't getting as interested in it as they used to. I don't know if it has something to do with education in the schools or if attention spans are getting shorter and people don't want to sit and listen to a 40-minute symphony."

But while he's still open, Lambdin hopes to provide the best possible service for those looking for classical recordings.

"I've spent years researching the best sounding recordings," he said. "If you buy something here you can be sure that it will be good."

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## EVENTS MOVIES BOOKS MUSIC

s	m	t	w	th	f	s

**Thursday**  
Robert Dillon  
Luna  
8 p.m., \$5  
Fingerstyle guitar

**Friday**  
Reignition Vol. 7  
WOW Hall  
7:30 p.m., \$5  
Rock

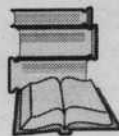
**Saturday**  
Hank Williams III  
John Henry's  
9 p.m., \$15  
Country rock

**Sunday**  
Disco Organica  
Sam Bond's Garage  
9 p.m., \$3  
Variety



### TOP 5 MOVIES

- 1: "Wedding Crashers"
- 2: "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"
- 3: "Sky High"
- 4: "Stealth"
- 5: "Must Love Dogs"



### NEWYORKTIMES BEST-SELLERS

- 1: James Patterson, Andrew Gross, "The Lifeguard"
- 2: Terry McMillan, "Interruption of Everything"
- 3: Elizabeth Kostova, "The Historian"
- 4: John Irving, "Until I Find You"
- 5: Dan Brown, "The Da Vinci Code"



### BILLBOARD TOP 5

- 1: Various Artists, "Now 19"
- 2: Mariah Carey, "The Emancipation of Mimi"
- 3: R. Kelly, "TP.3 Reloaded"
- 4: Coldplay, "X&Y"
- 5: Bow Wow, "Wanted"