

Lost Era of Portland Soul Recreated

Artist brings back House of Sound

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Times are changing north-east Portland.

Property values have escalated. Businesses have gone out of business. Longtime residents have moved. Institutions that helped define the community have disappeared.

The House of Sound was one of these social outlets. The record store at North Williams Avenue and Beech Street was one of the few places that catered to customers looking for soul music during the 1970s.

The store served as a social hub for people looking to drop some of their pay checks on the latest Ray Charles or Chi Lites record, or find some smooth tunes to play for a hot date. Blacks and whites shopped there and could count on whomever was working the counter to give them good recommendations.

Even after the building closed its doors many years ago, the iconic sign that

adorned its entrance remained, and was an object of fascination for many.

An art installation at the New American Art Union at 922 SE Ankeny Street, seeks to recreate this chunk of Portland thought to be long lost.

Vanessa Renwick's "The House of Sound" exhibit is un-

color of an old orange, sits a glass coffee table with soul records scattered on top. The entire installation with two couches and a record player is bathed in orange-red lamps that look they came from your grandmother's house. You almost expect the ghost of Isaac Hayes to materialize at any

"The neighborhood is changing so rapidly that I wanted to honor what is there, and point out what we're losing and what this change is bringing about."

— Vanessa Renwick

like other art exhibitions. It doesn't just show images, but attempts to create the feel and atmosphere of 1970s Portland.

The sign that is used to greet customers is the first thing visitors see, and a small field of candles lit in tribute are scattered in front of it. On top of a round shag rug, the

moment.

The exhibit plays a black and white video of the vacant and muddy lot where the House of Sound used to be, while an interview of former employees in the background.

"The neighborhood is changing so rapidly that I wanted to honor what is there, and point



Portland artist Vanessa Renwick recreates the old "House of Sound" soul music store in an unusual art exhibit at the New American Art Union building at 922 S.E. Ankeny St.

out what we're losing and what this change is bringing about," said Renwick of why she undertook the project.

The House of Sound building was razed earlier this year. At the time, Renwick had an art exhibit coming up and was look-

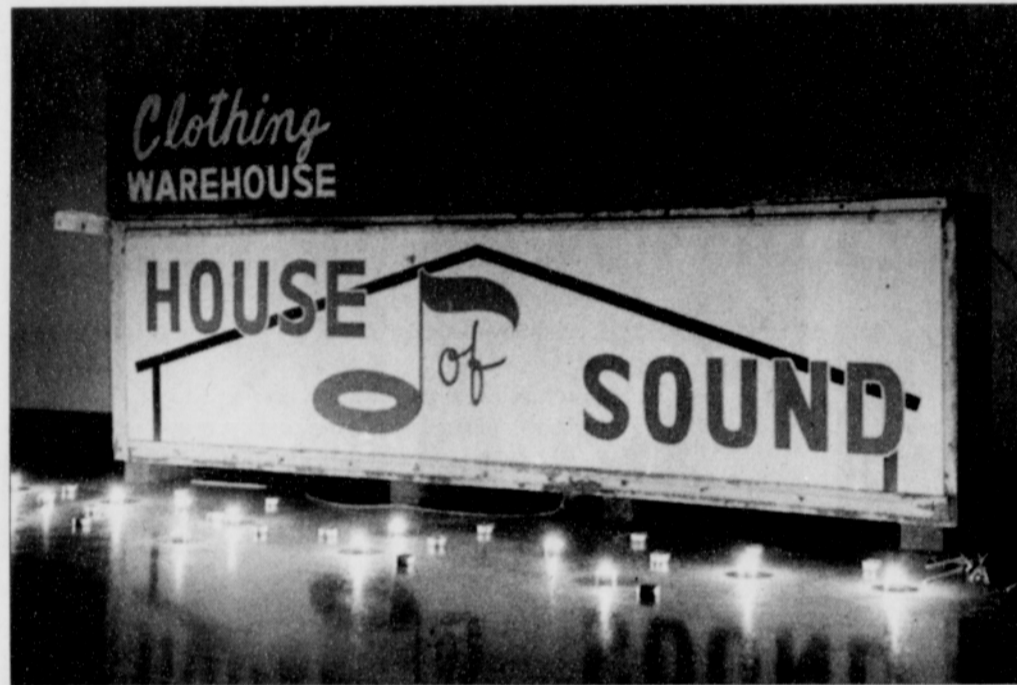
ing for ideas. When she found out about the building's demolition she got on the internet and found the owner, who was happy to pass the sign along to her.

Renwick got Mississippi Records to loan her the record

player and vinyl records, some of which were used records from the House of Sound.

"All these different elements came together to make it happen," she said.

The free exhibit runs until Sunday, April 19.



The original House of Sound signage was saved when the building on North Williams was demolished.

Jobless at Record High

(AP) -- Oregon's jobless rate has taken a dramatic jump, to 12.1 percent -- a rate seen only once before since the years after World War II.

The state Employment Department says the March jobless figure matches that of November 1982, which was the

high point of the recession of the early 1980s.

The department said Monday the statistics aren't exactly comparable, but it appears that 12.1 percent is the highest unemployment rate the state has recorded since the department first began

publishing the statistics in 1947.

The state's jobless rate has risen for 14 months in a row. The increases averaged a percentage point per month over the last five months.

Last month's rate was 10.7 percent.

Jeff Celebrates 100 Years

Acclaimed as "the world's largest high school" during its ground-breaking ceremony a century ago, Jefferson High School is celebrating its 100th year with a Fun Run on Saturday, April 25.

"We are looking for hundreds of people to take part in this event," according to Jefferson Alumni Chairman and Race Director, Maggie Brister-Mashia,

class of 1980. The run/walkathon will start at 8:15 a.m. at the north Portland school with closing ceremonies at the high school scheduled for 11 a.m.

Six divisions will participate, ranging in age from 5 to 9 and to 75-plus. Awards will be given out to the top three participants in each category.

Participants are asked to make a donation or to round up

pledges. Event T-shirts will be provided to each official entry.

Entry forms are available at the Jefferson High School Alumni Office or by visiting the jeffalum.com or jeffersoncentennial.com.

The centennial celebration will conclude with a golf scramble, dinner-auction, campus activities, and all-class reunions on the weekend of May 28-30.

Spiffin' up Martin Luther King Blvd.

The North/Northeast Business Association and SOLV, with the support of sponsors, organizations and businesses on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, are organizing a community clean-up event on Saturday, April 18.

By picking up trash, cleaning graffiti and removing street

debris, the volunteers will provide a public demonstration of the pride felt for this avenue where people work, shop, eat, and live.

The volunteers will register and have free coffee and pastries at Friends of Trees, 3117 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., starting at 8:30 a.m.

At 12 p.m., they will wrap up and head back for a 'thank you' lunch and bag of coupons and drawings.

Interested participants can also register online at solv.org or call SOLV at 503-844-9571. The volunteers are asked to bring brooms and rakes with them to the

Ask your outlets to open up and say AAHHHH.



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Saturday, April 18 - Saturday May 2, 2009 7:00 - 8:15pm. Off Thursday evenings.
Midnight Musical Friday, April 17, 2009 9:00 - 11:00pm. Reception at 7:30pm.
* Location: Sharon Seventh-day Adventist Church, 3204 NE 22nd Avenue
Portland, OR, 97211 Phone: (503) 287-7649 Website: www.sharonsda.net

Church Hosts Spring Musical

A spring musical will be performed Sunday, April 19 at 3:30 p.m. at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, 5935 N. Minnesota Ave.

The church's senior choir will present the musical under the theme "O Come Let Us Sing unto the Lord," Psalms 1-2. The public is invited to attend.