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ALL THINGS MUSIC

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MUSIC FOR
THE WEEK
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Audiophiles, physical media fans embrace cassettes in Bend

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY • The Bulletin

Erika Windlinx of Prineville grew up listening to rock 'n' roll bands such as Def Leppard, Guns N' Roses and AC/DC on rides in her father's truck. But the 21-year-old didn't have a physical music collection until about three years ago when her grandfather died, and she inherited his truck. It only had a tape deck, so Windlinx started scouring Smith Rock Records (formerly Ranch Records) in downtown Bend for cassettes. She now has a collection of between 50 and 100 cassettes.

"It's something material," Windlinx said. "I'm sure I could find some way to hook up my phone to my truck and play media through MP3s and stuff, but I like the material. I like having the little flip booklet that you have that has all the funny little pictures of rock stars in them, and then it has a little cover picture. ... In this day and age we're definitely losing that, and I feel like that's a bit pricier of something to have to pay, to lose the material for more convenience."

In the last decade, cassettes have seemed to have a resurgence in popularity — though nothing close to the vinyl boom. But it's more common now to see local bands offer their releases on cassette, either for practicality, collectibility or both.

For Bend progressive/noise rock band Zarlok, cassettes give fans the added value of a physical object. The band's latest EP, "Computer, Computer," is available on cassette at Smith Rock Records.

Releasing music on cassette or vinyl makes it harder to pirate, said drummer Andre Antoniou, who owns SOLSK&S Skate Shop, record label Spice Trader Music and the connected recording studio, Solside Sound. And fans don't seem to be interested in CDs.

"People don't buy CDs. My record label that I run, we do put CDs out usually for promotional purposes, with two or three singles, to be able to get them to radio stations or drop them off at Smith Rock Records to give out," Antoniou said. "... For Zarlok in particular, we're very adamant about putting our music out on cassette, so there are no CD options at this moment for the catalog."

Cassettes sell far less than other physical music mediums on a national scale. The Recording Industry Association of America lumps cassettes in with CD singles, vinyl

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Smith Rock Records owner Patrick Smith shows off his cassette copy of Blind Melon's 1992, self-titled debut album.

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