

Continued from previous page

singles, DVD audio and SACDs (super audio CDs) as “other physical media” in its annual and midyear reports.

While vinyl sales have steadily increased since 2017, all other physical media categories have steadily declined according to the reports. However, the 2020 midyear report noted a roughly 10% uptick in sales of other physical media, with revenue in the same category up about 7%.

Cassettes make up about 5% of all sales at Smith Rock Records, owner Patrick Smith said. A few tapes are displayed in the front case, while used cassettes are found on shelves toward the back of the store.

“I would say stickers are a bigger seller than cassettes,” he said.

Smith, a Central Oregon native and lifelong music collector, including cassettes, took over ownership of the store from Ranch Records owner John Schroeder last year, with the change announced in May.

“He wasn’t looking to sell; (he) and I had talked about it for a couple of years,” Smith said. “... He didn’t put it up for sale anywhere; he just was trying to keep it with friends and family. I’ve known John for 20-plus years.”

While the business has taken a hit due to the pandemic, Smith hopes to start hosting livestream concerts in the store soon, with in-person concerts when conditions allow. He redesigned the interior to give more of a



Brian McElhiney/The Bulletin photos

Smith Rock Records owner Patrick Smith shows off some of his cassette tape collection in the upstairs office of the record store.

concert hall or nightclub feel and beefed up the store’s vinyl section.

Smith Rock Records is the first record store Smith has worked at, let alone owned. But as a collector, he’s noticed a small resur-

gence in recent years. The appeal of cassettes to collectors such as Smith is similar to what draws music fans to vinyl albums: namely, audio fidelity.

“Say something like the Blind Melon (cassette) versus CD, it’s probably going to sound a little nicer on cassette,” Smith said while holding his copy of the band’s 1992, self-titled debut on tape. “And it’s always the sibilance; it’s the high frequencies, it’s the cymbals. Everything that has any kind of digitalization to it. The cymbals, especially crashes and hi-hats, they all have a pixelization or a halo to the sound, and it’s just the way it is with digital stuff. Analog, it sounds more realistic.”

Similar to vinyl and record players, cassettes and cassette decks require maintenance. Music fans of a certain age probably remember their favorite tape being eaten by a car tape deck, or having a pencil handy to rewind the tape on its spools. Many of these issues can be avoided with regular maintenance and cleaning, Smith said.

“The reason why people have to use the pencil is because it’s getting out of align-

“The reason why people have to use the pencil is because it’s getting out of alignment, or when you pull, it’s eating the tape. The reason why it’s eating the tape is because the rollers and the pincher are spinning much faster than what the actual little wheels are allowing.”

— Patrick Smith, Smith Rock Records owner

ment, or when you pull, it’s eating the tape,” he said. “The reason why it’s eating the tape is because the rollers and the pincher are spinning much faster than what the actual little wheels are allowing. And sometimes depending on if it’s dirty or not, that actual material will lag going between the rollers and the pinch head and the head, the playback unit, and it will get caught.”

Windlinx hasn’t had too many issues with her truck’s tape deck. Occasionally, a tape will get stuck and start making clicking noises; a quick bang on the dashboard usually fixes the issue.

“I had a tape stuck in that truck for the first six months that I was driving it because my grandfather got something stuck in it,” she said. “But after I beat the dashboard a while, it finally popped out and I realized that’s the trick to it.”

Despite the niche market cassette tapes now occupy, Antoniou doesn’t consider Zarlok’s tapes collectors’ items.

“I think people just want to get them because they’re cool, not because they’re particularly cassette tape collectors,” he said. “... This is what we make; this is our music. It’s not a novelty to make it on cassette.”

Windlinx’s collection began out of necessity, but the physicality and the artwork of the tapes keep her collecting. Smith Rock Records is her go-to spot, and she enlists her family to help find tapes as well. Her top finds include Def Leppard’s “Hysteria” (an old childhood favorite) and Fleetwood Mac’s “Rumours.”

“It’s a total rush,” she said. “I’m probably addicted to it. It’s like drugs for me, finding that rock album you’ve been looking for for a while.”

■ Reporter: 541-617-7814, bmcElhiney@bendbulletin.com



**SUNDAY
GUITARS**

**2021
SHOP LOCAL CHALLENGE**

**THANK YOU,
CENTRAL OREGON
FOR SUPPORTING OUR
LOCALLY OWNED,
SMALL BUSINESS!**

Come visit our amazing New Location!
759 NE Greenwood Ave • Bend
541-323-2332

music note

Smith Rock Records offering ticket refunds until summer

If you’re still holding on to tickets for a canceled show from last year, it’s time to get your refund.

People who purchased tickets from Ranch Records (now Smith Rock Records) to a show that was canceled by the pandemic last year

have until the end of May to present the ticket at the store and get a refund, owner Patrick Smith said.

If there are no announcements about the shows being rescheduled, at the beginning of summer Smith will donate whatever cash is left over in the ticket fund to a local homeless shelter or food bank, he said.

— Brian McElhiney, The Bulletin