

Used Music - A Gold Record Deal

By Rich Ehsen

So you have finally broken down and conceded that your old album of 70's disco tunes is just about ready for the scrap heap. Armed with a synthesized backbeat pulsating in your head, you stroll down to the megalopolis music store to grab a new version on compact disc. Once there, however, you suffer a severe case of sticker shock when you learn that even old music on disc carries a hefty price tag. So how in the world are you going to get in step with the 1990's? Used CD's just may be your answer.

"People really are pleasantly surprised with how affordable used discs are," says Steven Reule of Obsessed With Music.

Retail pricing on new compact discs usually runs from \$14.98 to \$16.99 for popular new titles. Older titles still fetch as much as \$12.99. This is a stark comparison to

used discs, which typically cost anywhere from \$2.98 to \$8.99 in most stores, with the newest and most popular releases commanding the highest prices.

While Reule and his wife Petra Wynbrandt run their tiny music store at the corner of Arden and Eastern in Sacramento as much for the love of music as anything, a terrific sidebar to that affection is the ability to sell used music for a fraction of the cost of similar new titles.

"With the price of new CD's these days, once people have bought used they more than likely will again," Reule adds.

Music consultant Mark Purtill of Armadillo Records in Davis agrees.

"The majority of our used CD's run \$7.98," he says. "That's a great savings over buying it new."

Another financial perk with used music is that anyone who sells pre-owned music also buys it. This can

dramatically offset the costs of your purchase. The consumer can typically expect to get anywhere from \$1-3 in cash back for their old discs. You can expect slightly more if you choose to accept store credit instead of cash.

"We usually offer about 10 percent more for store credit," says Reule.

While that may not sound like a lot, consider that a three dollar credit is almost half of the cost of one of the new/used discs on the shelf. What other business starts you out with that kind of purchase power? The public obviously has caught on because people like you and me provide the biggest part of these store's inventories, which typically includes thousands of titles to choose from.

"We may occasionally buy from another store that is going out of business," Purtill confirms. "But almost everything we have in our inventory comes from the



general public."

It is true that not everything is available used. Reule's store, for example, carries very little country and classical music, and no rap at all. Although stores like Obsessed and Armadillo specialize in used merchandise, if what you are looking for is only available

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new they can still get it for you. But because they are getting it for you new doesn't mean they can't save you money.

"We sell all of our special order new CD's for a dollar under the list price," says Purtill. "We use all of the available resources out there, including ordering directly from the record company, so if what you want is in print we can get it for you."

Reule and Wynbrandt also sell under the suggested list price on special orders. Both stores also carry a large selection of used records and tapes as well as a variety of posters, knick-knacks, and other music-related merchandise.

One thing to consider when you venture into the used music market is to be sure your purchase comes with a guarantee. Most stores offer a 30 day exchange or return policy

against defects in the merchandise, and many are set up to allow you to listen to a disc before you buy.

For those of us burned out on warehouse style stores, smaller shops like Obsessed With Music also offer something in short supply at many larger outlets - personal service. Because they are smaller they can afford to take time with you to discuss your needs, and they genuinely need and appreciate your business.

"We've heard a lot of stories about folks being treated badly in the chain stores," says Reule. "Here we really try to treat people well and to make their experience a good one."

"We aren't everything to everyone," he continues, "But we do fill a niche that needs to be filled."

