

(more notes from Tom Purvis, continued from page 1)

It has been suggested that we establish a concert line for the Freshmen due to the frequent schedule changes that are not included in Fresh News and are not available to our members who do not have access to the Internet. This is a great idea but carries with it some cost, but more importantly some considerable responsibility to the volunteer(s) needed to make such a system reliable. Unfortunately, we do not have much success in recruiting volunteers who will commit to serious investment in time and energy.

The convention will also be a forum for discussions on our dues structure to determine if increases may be indicated in the near future.

An advance "heads up" to our members and fans in Northern Ohio, Southern Michigan and Eastern Indiana! The fabulous Four Freshmen will be guests on a one-hour public radio program to be broadcast probably in late November. SWING TIME airs at 8:00 PM on Saturday evenings, originating from the studios of WGTE/FM 91 in Toledo. Bob, Brian, Vince and Curtis will be joining DJ Larry Wagner earlier in November for live interviews to be included in the broadcast. The program will air following the Freshmen appearing in Findlay OH and will assist in promoting their May 2004 concert in Toledo. SWING TIME is carried on several public radio stations in Northern Ohio. When a date is confirmed I'll have it posted on our web site.

You may have noted the redundant use of the word "volunteer" in these ramblings...we are always recruiting talent and time...let us know if you wish to help.

FOR THE RECORD

by Matt Sebastian, Scripps Howard News Service

Whether it's for the love of the music, the delight of finding that elusive rarity or simply nostalgia, collecting records remains a passion for many, especially those who swear that - even in this age of digitally recorded CDs - nothing sounds better than the deep, warm grooves of vinyl.

The LP may have been declared dead a decade ago, but retailers and collectors agree that interest in vinyl has been on the rise over the past few years.

"In these crazy times, both within the music industry and the world as a whole, vinyl is just a throwback to simpler times," says Mark Pinkus, an executive with Warner Strategic Marketing, which has just launched a vinyl-only imprint of Rhino Records. "It takes you back to 1971 and gets you excited about the music all over again."

To be sure, relatively few new titles are released on vinyl today. According to the Recording Industry Association of America, 6.1 million records - LPs, EPs and 12-inch singles were shipped to stores in 2002, compared to more than 800 million CDs. Twenty-five years ago, retailers shipped 530 million records a year.

While record production is again on the decline - down 23 percent in 2002 over the year before - retailers say there's still a thriving market for niche releases and, particularly, used vinyl.

Still, many of the most acclaimed albums of the past few years have been released on vinyl as well as CD, including Bob Dylan's "Love and Theft," Wilco's "Yankee Hotel Foxtrot" and the White Stripes' "Elephant."

"I think vinyl is doing better than it was during its nadir in the 1990's," says Andy Schneidkraut, owner of Albums on the Hill in Boulder, Colo. "There is some mystique again, although the sensibility that drives it is not as much a musical sensibility as it is a collector's sensibility. In some ways, it's more like collecting Pokemon cards."

Retailers point to two factors for the increased interest in vinyl - nostalgia among older listeners for the records of their youth, and young DJs looking to create new sounds from vintage vinyl.

Rhino Vinyl launched in April with the release of three Grateful Dead records to coincide with the company's remastering of the Dead's early catalog on CD. Each record is presented on high quality 180-gram vinyl - which is heavier than traditional vinyl, and has deeper grooves - and in the original color sleeve.

At a time when an increasing number of listeners are opting to download low-quality MP3s over the Internet rather than buy new CDs, the Grateful Dead vinyl reissues are decidedly old-school.

Rhino plans to increase its vinyl releases, with 10 more slated this year. As many as 30 titles could be released next year. The company plans to issue classic records that will appeal to fans looking to replace old LPs.

For all the nostalgia value of vinyl, retailers say they're also seeing a sharp increase in interest from DJs and twentysomethings lured in by the medium's novelty.

For DJs, the goal often is to find the oddest, most obscure sounds. Some use records merely for scratching during live performances, while others construct new music entirely from samples snatched off old vinyl.

While nostalgia and novelty may account for the increased profile of vinyl in recent years, it's the obsessive collectors and audiophiles who have kept the medium alive since the '80s, scouring garage sales, used-record bins and the far corners of the Internet for rarities.

For many record enthusiasts the lure isn't just the hunt, but the quality. Nothing, they'll tell you repeatedly, sounds better than pristine vinyl.