

Fads and fashions:

The record industry reviewed by Richard Desjardins

When the "disco" label was slapped on dance music in 1973, few people involved in the music industry thought the fad would be long lived. *Billboard* magazine, in its year end wrap-up issue, cited no less than seven disco oriented singles as being among the top ten selling singles of 1978.

The recording industry currently commands the biggest share of the total spent for entertainment in North America. *Variety* magazine recently reported that while the motion picture industry earned 2.75 billion in 1978, the Record Industry Association of America expects their total sales to be in excess of 3.5 billion. In 1977, 4 singles sold over 2,000,000 copies each, while in 1978 10 singles reached that figure. More impressive still, 5 albums sold over 4,000,000 units each, two of which were disco oriented.

Clearly a big turnabout within the music industry is taking place, when performers as diverse as the Rolling Stones, Dolly Parton, Rod Stewart and Fleetwood Mac are venturing into the world of disco. The *Gateway* recently spoke to a cross-section of retail record outlet managers to determine current trends among the record buying public as well as what the new year may have in store.

Lana Franchuk, manager of A&A

Records at Edmonton Center sees a definite trend of rock music moving towards disco. She also sees more movie soundtracks featuring a variety of artists in the future, especially "something you can play at a party". Across the mall at Sam The Record Man's, assistant manager Terry Reeves is personally disappointed with the disco craze. He feels "record companies are slow in getting the disco 45's out" and added that he can't service the demand due to lack of product.

Student Union Records assistant manager Allan Luyckfassel, himself no great disco buff, begrudgingly admits that there is a trend of disco seeping into rock music. Kelly's manager Colin McDonald feels "Disco isn't dead", and he can't seem to keep enough 12-inch disco single in stock. Meanwhile at Opus '69, assistant manager George Dempster feels that disco hasn't taken over rock and roll. Rock and jazz are currently the biggest sellers at his location.

Generally, all stores visited by *Gateway* indicated that there is a market for "New Wave" product by groups such as Cars, Tom Petty, Talking Heads and Elvis Costello. However, new wave sales are generally restricted to British groups. Canadian new wave product does not seem to move at all.



Picture discs are a controversial fad which most store managers seem to regard as a headache. Basically, picture discs are albums which have the cover art actually pressed into vinyl which is then covered in transparent vinyl in which the grooves are placed. The sound reproduction quality is extremely poor and two or more playings may wear off the picture. Such a sales gimmick does not come cheaply, however. A & A Records' five imported copies of the Beatles' "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" are priced at \$64.95 each. Manager Lana Franchuk echos the sentiments of many customers when she told *Gateway*, "isn't that ridiculous".

Terry Reeves sees 1979 as being the end of the picture disc craze. They present a problem to him because the discs are not meant to be played and many become damaged during shipping. There are no returns offered on defective picture discs, and many customers have spent up to nineteen dollars for a warped record they can not even play.

While Heart's picture disc version of "Magazine" had a Canadian pressing of 30,000 copies, the Meatloaf album only had a pressing of 2,000 copies. That album may conceivably become a collector's item in time. However in the U.S., 100,000 copies of the Beatles' "Pepper" album were printed, and considering the price range of \$29 to \$95 dollars (depending upon where you can obtain a copy), it can not be considered a "rare commodity".

Records pressed on colored vinyl seem to be on the wane as well. After an initial flood of vinyl every color under the rainbow including something called "surprise vinyl", consumers appear to be reluctant to shell out an extra dollar just for the privilege of hearing their records in living color. However, if a new release is offered in colored vinyl and black vinyl at the same price, the colored copies usually sell first.

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