

# Used Records:

## Local music buyers are beating the high cost of music by buying used rock albums from local stores

By Kate McElroy

**R**ock and roll music used to be a cheap thrill. During the sixties, 10 bucks would buy a Rolling Stones' album and concert ticket. But to quote Bob Dylan, the times they are a-changing: Steely Dan's latest album "Gaucho" has a list price of \$9.95. And some popular albums released 20 years ago may have risen to today's inflated price.

"A lot of people come in here everyday just to look at the used albums," he said. "Sometimes we get something in that's hard to find — stuff that's not available anymore or we can't get it."

**W**hen a customer does spot a used album he wants, he should check the album carefully before buying it.

"Basically make sure it's in good condition," James said.

to be in good shape."

Because Budget is smaller, James determines the number of records he'll buy and for what price on an individual basis. Music Express has a set policy.

"We have a limit on how many, on how much we can spend each day," Burrier explains. "We have to turn quite a few people away each day and we tell them to come a different day." Music Express will buy ten albums at one time from a person, and a limit of 50 albums a day.

"We pay \$1.25 for single albums, \$1.75 for double albums," he continued. And if there are three or more in the album set, the price goes up accordingly. For example, Burrier said he would buy "Wings Over America," an originally-priced \$11 three-record set, for about \$2.25.

Burrier said the average seller is a college student, but he does get some business from local residents. Most of the used albums both stores have are rock music because that's what the people are selling.

**B**oth stores sell the records back at an extremely low price. Budget Tapes and Records, which has a small selection, prices the albums anywhere from \$2.25 for "Donald Byrd's Best" to \$4.50 for Bowley and



Cuts on album covers may be small holes near the corner, slashed corners or cut-away squares. The albums may be former hits that just don't sell anymore, or albums that never did.

One cheap way to beat the high cost of music is to just listen to the radio and wait for the good songs. A more practical method is to sell old unwanted albums back to record stores and then buy used records.

Used record stores are successful in large cities — Houston's The Record Exchange and Third Planet are two of the city's most popular. While no store in the Bryan-College Station area specializes in used records, two local businesses do buy and sell them.

Managers at both Budget Tapes and Records, on University Drive, and Music Express, on Church Street, find the used album market good business.

"It's a lot more popular because of inflation," said Buck James, manager of Budget Tapes and Records. "There are people who go into stores specifically looking for ... the good deals. They constantly browse to see what's new."

Bruce Burrier, assistant manager of Music Express, agrees that the bargain albums command a good market.

"Take the album out and look at it.

"If you look at an album you can usually tell — 'this guy bought this album, probably played it a couple of times and didn't like it.' Make sure it's not too warped."

Burrier said, "They're welcome to take the album out the cover and look at it. And if we're not busy and there's not a lot of people here, normally if they ask to hear some of it (on the store sound system), we'll put it on."

Both stores make sure their used albums are worth buying.

"I don't buy them unless they're in excellent condition and if I think it's salable," James said. "I've found from experience, you can take an album in real good condition and you can sell for a price that has a reasonable mark-up. But you can take an album that's scratched, mark it down so low where you can almost give it away, and it'll sit there in the rack forever."

"I think I have a good reputation — when people buy a good album here they know it's going

# Another way: cutout albums

Another way to spend less money on albums is to buy "cut-outs" — overstocked albums.

"They're albums that have been reduced in price for one reason or another," said Buck James, store manager of Budget Tapes and Records. "A lot of times the artists dies or the band breaks up. Or it's just a bad album."

He says the overstocked albums are a sign of overoptimism by a particular label. "They (the companies) press too many albums," he said. "They anticipate an album selling." Instead about 100,000 copies of the album sit in a warehouse.

"So they mark it down," he said.

Cut-outs may also be obscure or out-of-print albums as well as fairly recent popular records. Last December Hastings' Records and Tapes had a big sale on cut-outs which included George Benson's "Livin' Inside Your Love," a million-seller two-record set, for only \$4.99. Carole King's classic "Tapestry" was only \$3.99, and Steely Dan's fairly obscure "Countdown to Ecstasy," was about the same price.

These albums, like most cut-outs, aren't guaranteed. Bruce Burrier of Music Express said record stores cannot send returned cut-outs back to the manufacturer for their money back.

However, store managers say cut-outs are good for drawing customers into a store since the selection changes daily.

Some stores have set prices for cut-outs — Music Express sells them from \$1.99 to \$4.29. Any cut-out sold for more than that price is no longer a bargain.

"They are cut out to keep irreputable people from selling them at normal prices," James said.

Wilson's "The Wildest Show in Texas." James said the average price is about \$2.25.

Music Express has about 140 used records in about the same price range. John Sebastian's "Welcome Back" goes for \$1.50, while Cheap Trick's "All Shook Up" is \$4.99. That's \$3 to \$4 dollars cheaper than the list price.

Texas A&M University students Kathy Tyllick and Paul Schertz say they always look for used records when they shop

for albums.

"We think its a good bargain because our taste isn't middle-of-the road or top forty," Schertz said, proving his point by clutching an obscure Bob Dylan album, "and a lot of people get rid of their old albums."

They said used record selections are much bigger in Houston stores, but at least the albums are being sold here. There are no signs of a used cassette or 8-track market in this area.

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