

Store allows import bands to make their mark

By Jeffrey Frey
Staff Reporter

In 1987 Steve Schulz and a friend wanted to take their intense interest in music and turn it into a business.

The result was Project Import, 122 N. 14th St.

Project was founded with the idea of doing something different: making accessible to the public a varied and diverse type of music not found in most record stores.

The premise behind Project was to sell exclusively import and alternative music, centering the business on mail orders.

Today Schulz is sole proprietor of Project, and he says he intended to start the business small and slow and to build up from there.

"We started small -- with just eight or nine CDs and about \$3,500 worth of inventory," Schulz said. "We didn't have a lot of money when we first started, but it's grown pretty good."

Project has since taken on an inventory of hundreds of tapes, albums and digitals, with imports from nearly all of the major European countries as well as selections from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Originally located in the Burkholder Project in the Haymarket District, Project has since moved twice and now finds its home on 14th street between O and P streets.

Schulz says that it was important for the store to be moved downtown, so that people would have better access to this type of music.

"It was difficult for people to find

us in the Haymarket," Schulz says. "People just didn't know that we were out there. We moved onto O Street and that place was just too big. Now, I think we've found a place that suits us well."

As well as dealing in imports and independent label bands, Project deals in rare and limited edition music and has a selection of alternative magazines and posters.

Project also has a wide variety of 7- and 12-inch singles which are less popular in the United States than in Europe.

For Schulz, an interest in a less common and more alternative style of music came during his youth, which he spent in Amsterdam, Holland.

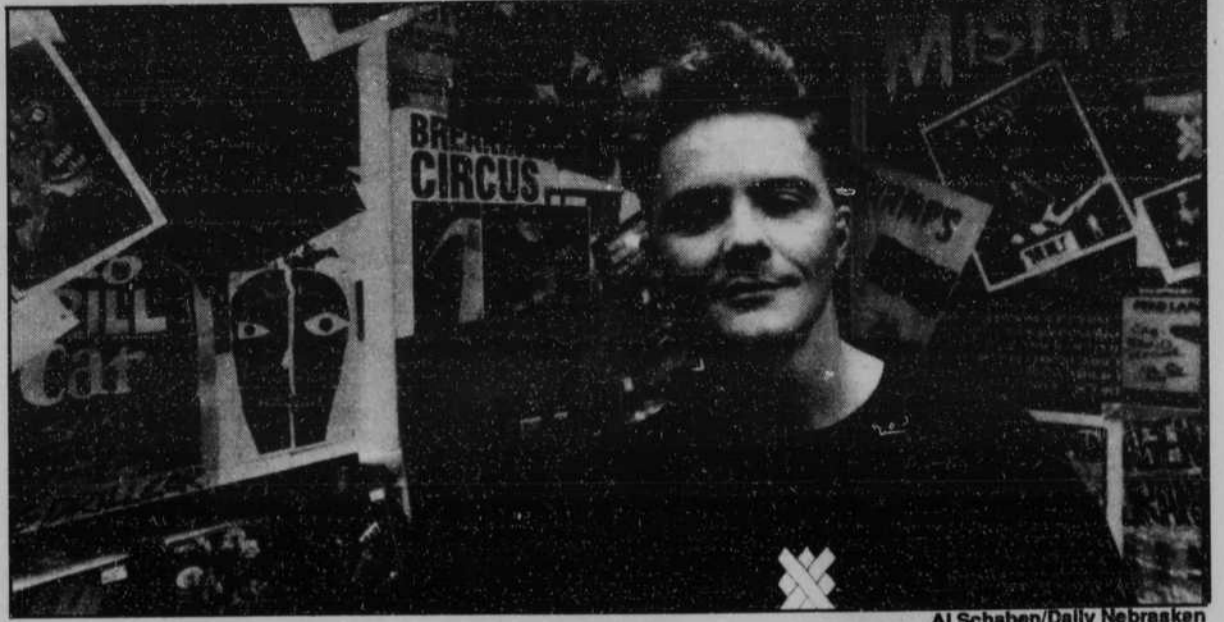
"When I was about 15 or 16, a guy that I worked for took me to see the band Roxy Music. This was the turning point, when I realized that there is different stuff out there."

The idea for Project Import came about when Schulz owned a tanning salon and spent his time listening to varied types of music.

"I used to spend about \$50 to \$100 a week on music. This turned me on to really good bands, and once I had a chance to sell my business and move into another direction, I wanted to do something with music," he says.

Although he listens to many different types of music, Schulz says alternative is his forte.

For many, "alternative" is a vague term referring to music that doesn't receive a great deal of air-play (music played often on Top-40 radio stations).



Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Steve Schulz, owner and manager of Project Import, 122 N. 14th St.

"It's best to break it up into sub-groups," says Schulz. "There is the English type of pop music which includes bands like The Jesus And Mary Chain and Happy Mondays. There are industrial bands like Nurse With Wound and Current 93."

In addition to these, Schulz says hardcore, punk and speed metal all have their place in the alternative scene.

"Basically, all music is diverse -- even Top 40. But I feel that the major label stuff is jammed down your throat. The idea behind Project was to do something different, we wanted to special-order music for people."

Some of today's most innovative and well-known bands first found their place on independent labels, before graduating to major labels and extensive air-play.

"People don't realize that bands like New Order and Depeche Mode started in stores like this," Schulz says. "They've been busting their butts to get where they are. People have a misconception that these bands were just thrust into the music scene."

Schulz also says that Project can tell which bands will expand onto major labels -- a portion of the industry that Project does not bring into its inventory -- and also that this transgression is important for Project's

business.

"I always know that there is going to be another band to take the place of those which make the move to a major label. In a way, it helps me. I can still get their imports, and people looking for their older music on independent labels can find it here."

According to Schulz, Lincoln has become somewhat of a midwestern center for this type of music -- something, he said, Lincoln can be proud of.

"It gets better all the time," he says. "The scene at Duffy's and the Zoo Bar, and also the campus station KRNU helps to support all of this. Bands love to come to Lincoln and play because of the intense interest here, and also because the people are really great."

It's essential not to underestimate the importance of Project's influence and purpose in Lincoln. In addition to supplying KRNU with the music to many of the new and innovative bands on the alternative market, Project is the primary motivator in bringing bands to Duffy's Tavern.

"We try and get involved with the scene," Schulz says. "It's good to be a part of this group of people -- those involved with Ecology Now and other progressive movements."

Project's influence can be experienced Tuesday nights at The Underground, where Schulz plays a selected blend of acid house and industrial dance music.

Schulz stresses that an important aspect to the alternative music scene lies in the fact that the people dealing with this music do so more out of their interest and less from a business standpoint.

"The major music industry is about business -- people in their 40s or 50s that don't care except for selling units," Schulz says. "It's about buying stock into a band and making a lot of money."

"I just don't know if I'd want to expand -- I think the independent scene is so diverse and progressive. I do get discouraged. I wish more people knew where we are and what we're about."

Schulz says that he has had customers from places such as New York who are impressed with the store, and have commented that in New York or L.A., Project would make a killing.

"But that's not what we're about and so we'll do what we can and just try and continue," he says.

"We don't ever anticipate making a great deal of money, but as long as we can remain in the scene and continue to feed ourselves, I think we're doing all right."



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Cliburn

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Baumert said that students would be interested in the program because Cliburn is an internationally known musician.

"Part of the draw is that he is

legendary," Baumert said. "And his reputation for performing Tchaikovsky draws people to him."

Cliburn's performance with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra is sold out, but there is a waiting list. To be placed on the list, call the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra offices. Baumert also will start a waiting list after 7

p.m. at the Lied Center. She added a special note for students.

Student prices are \$5 after 7:30 p.m., no matter where the seats are located, Baumert said.

"If students are interested in seeing the performance, we can almost always find something," Baumert said.

Black Elk

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Sheppard said the colors of the panels are suggested by Black Elk in the book.

Though not long in the actual process of making the piece, Sheppard said he had been working on the idea for almost two years.

"The work did not take a long time to make, but it was a long process coming up with the right idea and making sure exactly how I wanted it

to look," Sheppard said.

Sheppard has done corporate pieces around the country and has had work displayed at galleries around the Midwest.

"I do a lot of objective work, the kind of art appropriate for a gallery or something like the Culture center," he said.

According to Reshell Ray, Coordinator of Ethnic Minority Programs and Services, the display of Sheppard's work at the culture Center is part of the center's building towards a cultural art fair to be held in October.

Ray said she hoped the works they

obtain, such as Sheppard's "Black Elk," will be both educational and artistically pleasing.

As part of the educational side, Sheppard will be giving a speech explaining his work and answering questions about it at 3:30 p.m. today in the Culture Center.

One thing Sheppard said he did not want to happen to the piece was for it to become too popular or liked by everyone.

"I want people to either like it or be bothered by it," Sheppard said. "The one thing I don't want is for people to be indifferent."

Ian

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other Texas bluesmen. His play is often subtle, as good bar blues should be, but more often it strays into his own recklessness.

It also should be mentioned that Moore has an astounding voice, remarkably full of purpose for someone his age. He is clearly not your typical guitar hero, but maybe that's because Moore sees himself as more of a bandmember than a centerstage virtuoso.

Moments Notice is a trio, with bassist Ron Johnson and drummer Mike Villegas rounding out the troupe. The band is in the middle of a Midwest and Southwest tour

that took them to Lawrence, Kan., on Monday night.

Moore saw Stevie and older brother Jimmy Vaughan play on a regular basis in Austin. The first time was in 1973. At the age of five, his father took him to a show. At 16, he started playing guitar himself.

"People look back now, and think that Stevie was a legend from day one, but the fact is, he wasn't accepted initially," he said. "And that was because he didn't play the old, traditional blues -- he added a personal flair to it. That's what I want to do. I'm not interested in copying anybody."

Austin is more accepting of guitar interpreters nowadays,

Moore said.

"You still run into those died-in-the-wool blues fans, though, who don't want to listen to anything but the straight blues," he said. "But all in all, I couldn't have had a better hometown to learn about music in."

In a city that has spawned guitarists like Charlie Sexton and the Vaughan Brothers, people are quick to compare a rising young player to his predecessors, Moore said.

"The last thing I want to do is rehash what's already been done, or just stick the simple, traditional blues," he said. "I think that's what made Stevie so great, the fact that his playing was rooted in blues, but he wasn't afraid to experiment."