

Music stores prepare for new Garth release

By Mike Kluck
Staff Reporter

If past sales are any indication, Garth Brooks' newest album "Fresh Horses" will be sold out by lunchtime.

His last compact disc, "The Hits," sold out at Best Buy, 400 N. 48th St., in just over three hours, said Scott Hoffman, media manager at the store.

And Brooks' second compact disc "Ropin' the Wind" sold out in Lincoln in under four hours.

Because of Brooks' past success, Lincoln-area record stores have been ordering extra copies of "Fresh Horses" and planning promotions for the start of the sale today.

Hoffman said Best Buy closed its doors at 9 Monday night to prepare for the sale of Brooks' album, along with new releases from the Beatles, Don Henley, Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen. Best Buy planned to open from midnight to 1 a.m. this morning for early sales of the albums.

Amy Lueth, product manager for Homer's, 6105 O St., said she ordered 150 compact discs and 40 cassettes of the new Brooks' release. Lueth said the normal ordering of a new release was 50 compact discs.

Homer's, which usually opens at 10 a.m., planned to open at 6 this morning for the sale of Brooks' album. Lueth said because her store has a strong country crowd, she hoped to sell 100 "Fresh

Brooks searching for new musicians

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Musicians, prepare your resumes. Garth Brooks is looking for two band members who aren't obsessed with job security.

Brooks, whose new album comes out today and who is booked for a U.S. tour, lost two musicians to solo careers — guitarist Ty England and the country star's own sister, bassist Betsy Brooks.

"The two faces that are probably most known to people, Ty and Betsy, are lost," Brooks said. "So it'll be tough."

Brooks said he told both they could rejoin the band any time.

— Associated Press

Horses" compact discs today.

Advertisements shown during ABC's "The Beatles Anthology," Brooks' performances Monday night on "The Late Show" and on Fox's Thanksgiving NFL pre-game show, combined with a big shopping day Friday, have Lueth predicting huge sales for the album.

'Muppet Show' spirit lives on

Elton John, George Burns, Dizzie Gillespie, the Star Wars cast and Carol Burnett.

All celebrities of yesteryear. All performed on different stages.

But sometime during the late 1970s, each journeyed to ATV studios in Borehamwood, England (near London), to guest star on "The Muppet Show." The stars connected the show's all-puppet cast of the show with its worldwide audience.

I suppose having real people in the weekly cast helped bridge the expanse between that magical puppet world and mine, but I remember thinking the Muppets were doing those big-named entertainers a favor by booking them on the show.

And Miss Piggy, in my estimation, was too taken with the stars. They were, after all, ordinary people ... nothing like the extraordinary puppet cast surrounding her.

Of course, as a youngster tuning in from the Great Plains of America, I was quite unaware of the technicalities of puppetry or television production. I knew that Kermit was green, and propelled and squashed easily. That I could see.

The monsters were the fuzziest of the beastly cast. To a child, fuzzy was good.

But there were many things I didn't know about the show.

As a 5 year old immersed in the energy and lunacy of the Muppets, I had no idea who Jim Henson was. And I did not realize how much I



Kelly Johnson

knew of him. The Muppets projected and amplified his spirit.

And until recently, when I heard mention of Frank Oz, I thought people were referring to the Wizard. I supposed people close to him called him Frank. Now I know that Frank Oz, indeed a wizard, was Henson's creative sidekick.

When the Swedish Chef appeared on the show, he tossed chickens with human hands. One hand was Henson's and the other, Oz's. They coordinated the puppet's movements together, which makes the idea of juggling meat cleavers a bit more impressive.

I didn't know that the environment I saw on the screen was a set constructed on stilts. So, there were no trapdoors or tunnels for the humans under the puppets, as I'd imagined.

I did know the Muppets. They were uncannily familiar. The sense I had about those gonzo, googly-eyed puppets was that they were much like myself.

They were like me because we

weren't adults. They were fabric-covered humans, animals and monsters with spunk and zeal. And I was a kid with a curiosity about their peculiarities.

The Muppets helped me recognize who I was.

They combined a tinge of the absurd with emotions, warmth and compassion.

Kermit was small, like I was, but he ran the show. Also, he was green, and that was cool.

Fozzie Bear's insecurities and general lack of comedic talent were offset by his stick-to-it-iveness. Inspiration for a small child.

I imagined Sam the Eagle would be president of the Muppet universe, if one were ever elected. He reminded me of certain adults I knew, serious and removed from the wonders of childhood.

Now that I'm a bigger kid, I know that the Muppets were more than they appeared to be. They were the merging of the humans who gave them life and my attentive imagination.

Things have changed. The show ended. Henson died. And as I age, the danger of becoming stiffly serious — like Sam the Eagle — increases.

But the Muppets created a oneness among all who understood their entertainment as children. Through this, Henson's vision perseveres. And the show goes on, in this spirit.

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