

Large book chains sued

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The American Booksellers Association is suing Barnes & Noble Booksellers and Borders, alleging the bookstore chains used their clout with publishers to secure cheaper prices.

The ABA, a trade group representing independent booksellers, accused the two chains of soliciting special discounts on both large and small orders and threatening large returns to obtain extra discounts.

"The lawsuit alleges there are these practices which keep the play-

ing field far from level," Avin Mark Domnitz, executive director of the ABA, said Thursday. "We're struggling for the existence of independent booksellers. The dominance of the national chains is not in the best interest of the American culture."

The anti-trust lawsuit, filed late Tuesday in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, accuses the national chains of threatening the survival of independent bookstores, especially those in California, where both chains have focused much of their expansion.

"Much is at stake in the struggle for the survival of the independent bookstores," said Clark Kepler, owner of Kepler's Books & Magazines in Menlo Park. "The fight is about preserving what America is able to read."

Barnes & Noble declined to comment on the lawsuit, but said in a statement it follows "accepted industry practices in all of its business dealings."

Representatives for Borders did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment.

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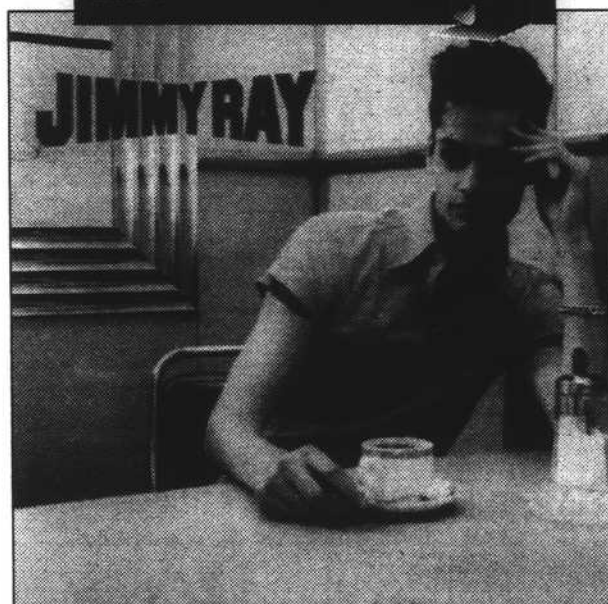
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Music



Jimmy Ray
"Jimmy Ray"
Epic Records
Grade: B-

One of the unfortunate aftereffects of the whole alt-rock revolution has been a general lack of fun in pop music.

After punk came out for the big time, angst and anger seemed to be the main selling points for most big artists, and it's stayed that way for far too long.

Last year's mini-pop craze, which included the Spice Girls and Hanson, threatened to break the dark stranglehold on the music industry. But sugar and sunshine doesn't sell with everybody, and somebody needed to step up with pop music that wasn't just for mall rats.

Enter Jimmy Ray.

With his toothpick figure, his Elvis-inspired hair and his glitter glam wardrobe, Jimmy Ray definitely has mall-rat appeal. But as he proves on his self-titled debut, he has a little more to offer.

"Jimmy Ray" is a 10-song blend of rockabilly guitars, techno beats and ultra-lounge attitudes that may be short on musicianship and sheer originality, but long on old-fashioned, rock-for-rock's-sake fun.

"Are You Jimmy Ray?" — the album's first single — sets the

tone for the entire album. The lyric content is virtually nil, consisting mostly of rap-inspired posturing and bragging; but the song is undeniably catchy. Sometimes style over substance is, as Martha Stewart might say, a good thing.

Other tracks, including the scattershot "Goin' to Vegas" and the decidedly unsexy "Sex for Beginners," further this notion, putting Jimmy Ray's persona at the forefront and squashing any attempts to find a message in the music.

Jimmy Ray's meanderings on love lost are about as deep as this album gets, and even these are fluffed up with laughable lyrical expressions, including what could be Jimmy Ray's ultimate show stopper, "I Got Rolled."

As for an overall sound, Jimmy Ray falls somewhere between the Stray Cats and Sublime, if that's possible. Yeah, he's just another white guy borrowing extensively from years of artistic innovation by musicians far more talented and original than he'll ever be.

But at least he admits it, and at least he does it well, which is a lot more than many artists — even the Spice Girls and Hanson — have to offer.

— Jeff Randall

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