

FASCINATING RHYTHM

COMPACT DISCS * RECORDS * MOVIES * BOOKS

What Goes



by David Morrison

I can equate my first dizzying visit to Fascinating Rhythm to an almost parallel experience. Standing slack-jawed in wonder just inside the entrance to the aircraft hangar that is Amoeba Music in Berkeley, CA., it seemed I had entered Ali Baba's cave, Golconda or Eldorado: "Oh. My. God.

So much awesome stuff!"

Having spent almost as many hours in music stores during my lifetime as I've spent awake, I know my way around one pretty well. This qualifies me to broadcast authoritatively that Fascinating Rhythm is one of the finer examples you will find anywhere. There's so much to take in, it's a store you could disappear into and never be seen again, lost forever behind towering walls of music, movies, books and memorabilia.

Owner and Nanaimo music community legend Steve Lebitschnig informs me there is in the region of 100,000 titles in stock at any given time, but when wading through them it seems as if he's underestimated by at least three zeroes. The vinyl choice alone is totally overwhelming, and as my long-suffering music widow-wife will tell you with a sigh, a brief browse is not an option. It has to be the entire day, my darling, don't you see?

Now occupying his fourth and, at 3,000 square feet, largest premises, Lebitschnig has been vending multifarious music to the people of this

city for not far shy of two decades, enjoying this task as much now as ever: "I love my job and look forward to seeing all the customers that come in on a regular basis."

At the core of this loyal clientele is a sizeable group of baby boomer music nuts that has been with him since he left forestry behind to realize his dream of opening a record store. "Thankfully, there are enough of them that I can make a living!" he tells me in sincere appreciation.

From time to time, this affable, laid-back individual recognizes a customer not as a local, but as the worshiped creator of some of his wares. Lesser known touring bands pop in for a rummage all the time, he says, but amongst the more household names to have come crate digging are Cowboy Junkies' Michael Timmins and blues legends Colin James and Duke Robillard. Lebitschnig also holds fond memories of Elvis Costello's eyes all-but popping out on stalks upon discovering the store's selection of Georgie Fame vinyl. But celebrity means nothing to Lebitschnig, serving



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the famous just as he does every customer – efficiently and courteously. With typical wryness, he reveals: “I’m expecting Oprah soon; she’s in the neighbourhood, I understand.”

And then of course, he has me to contend with. “Steve, will you be getting the ultra-limited edition 48-CD box set by (insert depressing Oklahoman alt.country band or cacophonous Uzbekistani thrash-folk singer of choice here)?” “No, Dave—I don’t think so... there’s not much call for that stuff here... but I can get them for you.” And get them he unfailingly does, ensuring that treasures await me on each and every visit.

I love Fascinating Rhythm. It’s like all the great record stores of my youth were before the megastore juggernaut steamrollered in to change music retailing forever. They were rendezvous and hangouts, staffed by bafflingly knowledgeable cool kids invariably overjoyed to sell me beautiful, life-changing things.

“If people want a real record store, I think that’s what we’re providing here,” states Lebitschnig “and many



Clockwise from left: Through the Glass, inside the store, “wow, I haven’t heard that in years!”, and the man himself, Steve Lebitschnig.

people think this is a richer music experience than shopping online or downloading.” Yeah, yeah, I wholeheartedly concur, Steve, but could you get on and order me that compilation of Swedish ambient goth-jazz? Thanks, dude! ■

Fascinating Rhythm is located at 51 Commercial Street in Nanaimo. Or call (250) 716-9997.