

AROUND THE STATE

OLD TECH IS NEW AGAIN

PORTLAND In the past few years, vintage technologies such as manual cameras and vinyl records have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity among 20-somethings and teenagers who grew up inundated by digital technology, and it's helped several Portland stores that cater to these niche markets survive.

Blue Moon Camera and Machine sells manual cameras and refurbished manual typewriters. In the last year and a half, Blue Moon owner Jake Shivery says he's seen a huge interest among students, hipsters and artists.

"People want to get as far away from digital cameras as they can because that's the establishment," says Shivery.

This has helped Blue Moon's revenue remain stable, though it's down slightly from 2008. The film processing aspect of business also continues to grow. But camera shops are not recession-proof. Citizens Photo is relocating to a cheaper space because of a drop in sales.

What people find appealing about manual cameras is the physical process of adjusting



PHOTO BY MARTIN GEE

The vinyl world of Everyday Music in Portland.

settings and using film to create a distinctive photo they can't make digitally. This appreciation of tactile experiences is shared by those who buy vinyl records. They enjoy physically putting a record on the player, listening to the sometimes scratchy music and turning the record over. Though manual cameras' market remains narrow, vinyl has gained mainstream popularity throughout the state in the past few years.

This popularity has helped boost sales at music stores, though it can't make up for the

decline in CD sales. Record sales make up 15% of revenue at Portland-based Everyday Music. Owner Scott Kuzma expects that percentage to increase. He also thinks the music industry will ruin vinyl's popularity by continuing to hike prices.

"With new vinyl you're paying more than for a new CD and that's actually inhibiting sales," says Kuzma.

Mississippi Records makes 90% of its revenue from records and revenue is currently flat over last year. It's one of four stores in Portland that sells primarily vinyl. In owner Eric Isaacson's opinion, Portland's scrappy youth culture helps support sales. He's also seen more teenagers purchasing records; so has Trina Brenes, co-owner of Ashland-based Music Coop.

"If you spend your entire day in front of your computer and listening to your iPod, it's isolating," she says. "[Teenagers] are now listening to LPs at someone's house together as a social event."

Though records and manual cameras remain a niche market, as long as there's a culture that appreciates tactile experiences, shops like Blue Moon and Mississippi Records will find a customer base for their vintage technologies.

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