



## They Know Where Everything Is

BY NATE SEARING

Old music has a smell. It's the decaying wood of an old guitar, the aged leather of carrying cases and straps, they are both buried here.

It is also the aroma of cracked-paint finishes on old violins, and even the tang of rusted metal strings and cymbals, something like dust and wood-polish arising from piles of instruments like smoke.

And though the doors are always open here at the Chicago Store in Downtown Tucson, the scent never seems to dissipate; it holds strong to the treasures aging inside.

For 60 years, the store has been a gathering place for musicians and collectors searching for rare and outdated instruments.

But it's even more than that. It's an attic; a final resting-place for old music-makers, a discarded history of the Tucson music scene.

"We actually used to be a general foods store," Mark Levkowitz says with a smile. "Clara Levkowitz, my grandmother, opened the original Chicago Store on the west end of Congress in 1928, but we didn't sell anything musical till the 40s."

At that time, her oldest son, Phil, was a freshman in the Tucson High School Marching Band.

Some of the other band members assumed that the store was carrying the band's sheet music, and after numerous demands from the music teacher,

## DOWNTOWN LIVE

Clara began selling the sheets for the school.

"Sixty years later, here we are," Mark says with a laugh. "All because my Uncle Phil liked to play the baritone."

"Baritones?" hollers an elderly man from behind the front counter. "We have four of them in the back by the cello cases, and two broken ones upstairs."

He is hunched over an acoustic guitar, replacing the strings with one hand and motioning towards the back of the store with the other.

"I still have no idea how he does that," Mark says. "But, somehow, Uncle Phil seems to know where every little piece-of-crap instrument is buried, upstairs or down."

And that's no easy feat, the store encompasses three floors and a basement carpeted by everything from finger-cymbals to organ pipes.

But with no lighting and most of the equipment too old or too mangled to be salvaged, the top two floors have been off-limits to customers for years.

"I used to live up there," Phil, says, "but the stock never gets any smaller, and I got forced out to make room for all this stuff."

Mark and Phil both estimate there are probably 5,000 guitars and countless more pianos, violins, drums, and other instruments on the three floors and basement of the building.

"At one point, there was a method to organizing most of the instruments, but now the 'junkiness' nature of it all has its own novelty," Phil says as he finishes tightening the last string on the guitar.

He still works 53 hours a week with his younger brother Joe, who took ownership of the store in 1967 after Clara died.

In 1966, she was forced to move her store to the present location, 130 E. Congress, after Old Pueblo renovations forced her out of her original storefront.

At the same time, a series of fires gutted the three-floored JC Penney's. After the company left its downtown residence, the Chicago Store took up the

shopping outlet's location next to the police station.

"She was hurt by having to leave our old home, and unfortunately she passed before the store really took off at this location," Phil says.

Today, it is the largest new and used music dealer in Arizona and has become nationally recognized for its unique selection of guitars and other instruments.

Players of all styles of music can be heard throughout the day in the store jamming on acoustic guitars, electric instruments through car-sized speaker systems, drum-sets, organs and player pianos, or even accordions.

Brian Kuper comes into the store twice a month to dig through the instruments in search of the perfect collectable guitar.

"I don't know exactly what I am looking for," says Kuper "but I know that it is in here somewhere, and sooner or later I am going to find it."

Like most other shoppers here, he plugs away at instruments that previously lay hidden under stacks of other equipment rather than looking at something new.

"I'm in here enough to know what they sell, and they know what they sell. The goal is to find something that they didn't know they had," Kuper says.

Even Phil, who at first stood firm by the *We Know Where Everything Is* sign behind the counter, admits that he likes not knowing what all might be lying under the dust.

"We even have a slot machine for sale back there," he quips. "Someone slipped that one in on one of my days off."

For now the piles of instruments sit and wait to be found, each garnering its own dust, each adding to the aroma of the collective orchestra.

And from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., every day but Sunday, anyone can come and play along.

Anyone can find an attic's treasure.

## Punk Ethos Pays Off

CHICAGO'S INDIE LABEL BLOODSHOT RECORDS CELEBRATES 100th RELEASE

BY JAMIE MANSER

Eight years since their first release, the bellwether of alt-country labels, Bloodshot Records is celebrating their 100th release this month with a compilation album, "Making Singles, Drinking Doubles."

And a celebration it is indeed. It's no small feat to start an independent label, let alone to get it off the ground and actually pay employees.

Co-founders Nan Warshaw and Rob Miller had the tenacity to pull it off.

"We had no expectation that Bloodshot would ever be our full time gig," Warshaw remembered. "In the first couple of years we would plan the next release after the last one broke even. We didn't, couldn't, pay ourselves back then. The first paid employee was Kelly Hogan whom we hired to work publicity."

Warshaw and Miller were brought together by a "conviction that both country and punk were moribund," Warshaw stated. "We were personally searching for music that was as exciting and meaningful as punk rock had been to us in the days when you could get right up front at shows like Black Flag and Nirvana, back when there was a sense of

community because the music hadn't yet been cooped by the commercialism and the major labels."

This year at South By Southwest—an annual March music conference in Austin, TX—Courtney Love averred that the people running major labels these days don't own record collections and they themselves are not music fans. Is it any wonder, then, that the consumer is faced with a homogeneity of music products that is tantamount to the choices one has in a communistic country?

The good news is that there are independent labels. People with record collections run these labels. The music and the artists aren't the means to a rich end.

"We strive to get the artists to a point where they can make a reasonable living off of their music," Warshaw explained. "Our bands know that we only work with artists whose music we love. We didn't get into this racket to get rich, but to have the opportunity to work with artists whom we respect, and then attempt to gain the exposure they deserve."

According to their web site ([www.BloodshotRecords.com](http://www.BloodshotRecords.com)) Bloodshot's ethos is to provide the discerning listener with the "finest roots inflected music – striving to encourage the cross-pollination between the spirit and sound of punk, the craft and tradition of country, folk, bluegrass and a general disdain for the confinements of mainstream taste making."

Keeping true to their promise, "Making Singles, Drinking Doubles" is a strong album that spans the breadth of Bloodshot artists and their styles with tunes so damn catchy you'll be humming them all

day and night long.

The compilation opens with the countrified Pogues sound of The Waco Brothers and is followed by a sassy Kelly Hogan tune, "1,000,001".

"1,000,001" was originally intended as a B-side answer song to The Sadies' "One Million Songs." Hogan's ditty has Jon Rauhouse on steel guitar. Rauhouse is a transplanted Phoenician who recorded the majority of his 2002 release, "Steel Guitar Air Show," at Tucson's very own WaveLab with contributions from Tucson musicians Joey Burns, John Convertino, Nick Luca and Craig Schumacher. "Making Singles, Drinking Doubles" features many tracks that were limited 7" editions and a few that were never released – like two Ryan Adams songs from his "Heartbreaker" sessions. It also highlights the true-to-form twang of Rex Hobart and the Misery Boys, the spaghetti western giddiup of The Sadies, Kim Docter of Moonshine Willy yodeling in "Complicated Game," and a Loretta Lynn cover sung by Neko Case.

Case, who performed at Solar Culture last month, is another Bloodshot artist that choose WaveLab to record her 2002 release "Blacklisted." Tucsonans Jim Blackwood, Luca and Schumacher helped her with the recording and Calexico's Burns and Convertino lent their musical talent.

"MS, DD" was initially just a "fun project" that thankfully turned into a full-blown release. It will be available at Zia Records, Hear's Music and on the label's aforementioned web site on December 10.