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Ignition Music Garage in Goshen working to create new music consumer

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
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Northern Indiana music fans and record collectors don't know how lucky they have it.

Fort Wayne residents are already familiar with great concert venues such as Embassy Theatre, Memorial Coliseum and C2G Music Hall, as well as several locally owned record stores where they can indulge in a wide variety of live or recorded music.

What most local music fans may not know is that there's another great source for live and recorded music just over an hour northwest of Fort Wayne — Ignition Music Garage in downtown Goshen.

Lovers of physical media such as vinyl and CDs have access to thousands of new and used LPs, CDs and DVDs at Ignition Music Garage. The store also has a nice array of new audio gear and vintage stereo components restored by audio specialist Kevin Yoder, who also makes custom speakers that are sold at the store.

Store owner and founder Steve Martin opened Ignition Music Garage in 2012 to fill a need for people who want to find a more authentic music-buying and listening experience.

Tired of the impersonal experience of downloading or streaming music, Martin wanted to be able to create a music store that could be not only a place to buy music, but also a place to see quality live performances.

Martin set out to create a place that could become a creative hub that would include buying, listening and creating music inspired by authentic singer-songwriters.

He also wanted to take the skills he learned in the corporate world and meld them with music. Martin previously worked as a corporate manager and later as a corporate consultant doing long-term scenario planning and sustainability planning.

"I thought, what if I took that (corporate consultant) skill set and a sustainability mindset to the music business because clearly it was in a major stage of disruption," Martin said.

"The real objective was to kind of save the music," he added. "And then if we made something that was artist friendly, it would be a premium experience for the audience."

Goshen College's public radio station, 91.1-FM, The Globe, which was named Best College Radio Station in the Nation in 2011 and 2013 by the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System, also has a booth in the Ignition store. On-air staff play a mix of Americana, alternative acoustic, folk, singer-songwriters and world beat music, which dovetails nicely with the live music that Martin promotes at his store.

"I volunteered at 91.1, The Globe, starting in 2007," Martin said. "By 2008, I had my own show, I helped with programming and I started going to the Americana Music Association conference in Nashville. ... I was also in a band at that point, The Minor Prophets, and we were trying to gig.

"And we found it easier to get gigs in Chicago and Grand Rapids than it was to get gigs locally because we have a bar scene, not a music scene," he said.

From his experience at The Globe, Martin met with record labels in Nashville, Tenn., such as Rounder Records, Six Shooter Records and New West Records, and determined there was a need for small venues where artists could play and sell their music. Over the years, they had lost radio and retail distribution, as well as places to play.

With the goal of creating a local music scene that would include not only the Michiana area but stretch as far as Canada and Nashville, Tenn., Martin ruffled the feathers of many local artists who were looking for a place to showcase their talents.

"We actually have some really good songwriters in this area," Martin said of the music talent in Goshen.

"And, man, they're mad at me, and I understand why," he said. "They just want a place to play. Especially a really, really cool room.

"Let me figure this out," Martin said he told several local artists who wanted to play at Ignition. "Let me build an audience for your music. You're going to thank me someday."

He's bringing in bands in hopes of creating a bigger base of music fans. Hopefully, bands from out of town that play at Ignition Music will help some area bands get performance gigs back in their communities, he said.

"I could have saved a lot of money and just thrown locals on the stage every week, got a liquor license, not moved my (CD and vinyl) racks and probably could have made a lot more



More Information

Check it out

- Ignition Music Garage is located at 120 E. Washington St. in Goshen, about an hour northwest of Fort Wayne.
- To read more about Ignition Music Garage and see an upcoming concert schedule, go to www.ignitionmusic.net.

money,” Martin said. “But that wasn’t what we were trying to do.”

Vinyl record sales account for a large portion of Ignition Music Garage profits, but the concerts Martin has been promoting there have been growing as well.

“The concert business is up about 40 percent from the first year,” Martin said. “We did eighteen shows the first year. But we’ve gotten real lucky, too.

“We’ve had people go on to tour with Jack White and play “Austin City Limits,” be nominated for Grammys, be on the ‘Tonight Show,’ ... so people are starting to say, ‘These people really do know what they’re talking about.’”

Martin’s goal of creating a local music scene is built upon creating a new type of consumer for music that includes physical media such as vinyl as well as quality stereo equipment.

“I don’t care whether it’s their favorite record that brings them here, or they see a live show,” Martin said. “Or, they hear a really good stereo for the first time. It all works together to create a new music consumer.”