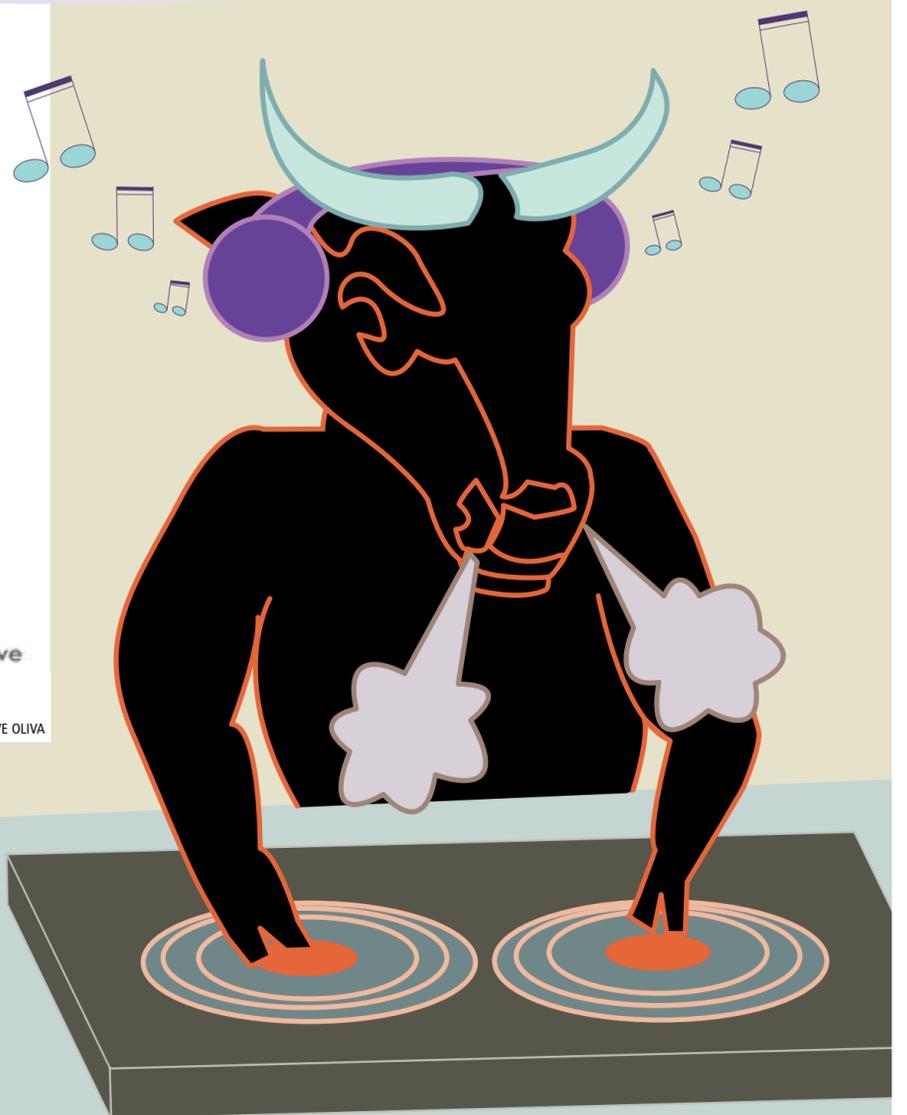


Bull City Records turns 5!



- Megafaun (Brad & Phil) -- 12:30
- Midtown Dickens -- 11:30
- Des Ark (solo) -- 10:30
- Maple Stave -- 9:30
- Cantwell Gomez & Jordan -- 8:30
- Last Year's Men -- 7:30

LINEUP

FIVE YEARS YOUNG

Bull City Records continues to groove

BY JOSEPH CHAPMAN
ASSISTANT DIVERSIONS EDITOR

By the time Chaz Martenstein, owner of Durham's Bull City Records, arrives at work, he has braced himself for the inevitable.

"One of the most-asked questions in any music store that I've worked for — word for word — is, 'What's new and good?'" Martenstein said.

And in his experience, to be on the receiving end of that question comes with a lot of weight, more than most people would ever consider.

"It's kind of a scary question," he said. "It's a very loaded question. You have to dive in and find what they like — 'What's new and good?' There's no easy answer to that."

Early in the business, the question came so frequently that it practically became a source of anxiety for Martenstein.

"In any job, the question you get asked the most, you start to get nervous about or anxious about it," he said.

So Martenstein thought up a way to embrace the question rather than ignore it. In an attempt to combat his fear of becoming passé, he started a blog, appropriately titled "WNNG."

"I just try to post what's new and what I like," he said. "It helps me answer that question in the store — it gets me thinking about it every day and how I'm going to answer it."

The forced dialog worked, and what was once a nerve-racking test of taste is now the most enjoyable part

of Martenstein's job and a staple of his customer service.

"I finally got over it and realized that it was a fun question, a good question to be asked," he said. "It's a fun process for me — it can take a little bit of time, but that's why I like working in record stores. It's what keeps the job fun and interesting for me."

Bull City Records began humbly enough: Five years ago, Martenstein was moving to the Triangle and "just needed something to do."

It comes as no surprise that his version of "something" would turn into opening a record store: High school was a blur of used bins and even in college, with the advent of MP3s, Martenstein found himself inside music stores.

This Saturday, Fullsteam Brewery in Durham will host Bull City Record's five-year anniversary party, featuring bands, beer, food carts and raffles.

For headliners Brad and Phil Cook, two of the three members of Megafaun, the party is a celebration of what has become a pillar in the Triangle's music community.

"The vibe Chaz has as a person is so vital to the scene," Phil Cook said. "He's been an avid supporter of the garage scene that's been happening in the Triangle and I think that's been really key."

The first time Brad Cook met Martenstein was playing with DeYarmond Edison, the predecessor to Bon Iver and Megafaun, inside Bull City Records.

"It was maybe 100 degrees inside," Brad Cook said. "I just remember none of us had our shirts on because it was so hot and everybody in there was dying. And we played all acoustic. We had him turn the air conditioning off to make it even more sensory, I think. It was awesome, man."

Martenstein's record store has acted as stomping ground for Triangle musicians, providing a venue and forum for distributors, musicians and fans.

"He made it happen here and he gave a lot of bands opportunities," Brad Cook said. "From Megafaun to Midtown Dickens, a lot of bands have come up to Chaz's to do a show or party at some point."

In a world of free music and disappearing record stores, Bull City Records marches on, backed by the support of local record-lovers.

"You've got to look at record stores like you look at bands now," Brad Cook said. "Nobody is making a million dollars anymore. So it's about functionality and doing something you love in that way."

While Martenstein is still fighting off debt from maxed-out credit cards, he figures if he's been around this long, he must be doing something right.

"Guys like Chaz, he's not looking to be the next Empire," Brad Cook said. "He's just looking to survive doing something he loves. I think there will always be a market for a people who appreciate that even more than what he's selling."

Contact the Diversions editor at diversions@dailytarheel.com.



DTH PHOTOS/JOSEPH CHAPMAN

While Bull City Records currently stocks mostly CDs, store owner Chaz Martenstein says he hopes to one day sell all LPs. The re-emerging popularity of new and used vinyl has helped to boost retail sales for stores like Martenstein's.



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features

AVETT-ERAN

Jim Avett's been in the business for years. Dive catches up with him on the new projects he's working on now.

PAGE 7

more features

ALL THINGS GO

A group of local musicians prepares to pay tribute to George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass* this weekend at the Cradle.

PAGE 9

movies

CINEMA BIUTY

"Biutiful" stars Javier Bardem as a Barcelona man whose cancer diagnosis sends his daily life reeling.

PAGE 8

music

GO-GO GADGET

The Drive-By Truckers' *Go-Go Boots* is an exercise in rhythm section heritage and modern, alt-country sensibilities.

PAGE 9