

# The EVENT

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First part of two in a history of the Cosmic Aeroplane, for over twenty years a community center for thought and action out on the edge. By Joe Stohel. Page 4.



## COMMUNITY

# The nine lives of the Cosmic Aeroplane

## Thinking about the Cosmic

Aeroplane always brings back great memories. It was cool, hip, on the cutting edge. The people there not only knew their stuff, be it music, books, comics, or jewelry, but they were passionate about it as well. You could get an education just talking to them. During the store's peak, there was an energy and a vitality there that no other store had. The Cosmic, as it came to be known, was an important part of my life and always will be.

When it finally closed down, I wasn't necessarily saddened. After all, most of the folks I knew there had left, many going on to form their own stores. For the most part, I left with them. Near the end, the store seemed to go through a series of death rattles and when Cosmic Aeroplane finally did shut down, it was like seeing someone die after a bout with a terminal illness. I was glad it wasn't suffering anymore.

The Cosmic Aeroplane was the brainchild of Steve Jones and Sherm Clow and first opened its doors in June, 1967. It was a small place on the corner of Ninth East and Ninth South that sold underground newspapers, bells, beads, paraphernalia and other assorted hippy merchandise.

"I thought there should be a place where you could get underground papers, cigarette papers, jewelry, that kind of thing," says Jones. "Posters were a big thing at the beginning, dance posters, W. C. Fields posters. It was a head shop, but a head shop in the terms of using your head."

"When I was coming up with the name, I wanted some kind of image of travelling in your head, hence the aeroplane part. That didn't necessarily entail drugs, either. The Cosmic Aeroplane would take you off into the cosmos, but without having to take some acid or actually physically go anywhere. I don't know if I really envisioned what it would turn into. I don't think I did."

Of course, this was the beginning of the psychedelic era and personal freedom of expression was the foundation for an alternative culture that was spreading across the country. In addition to the running of the shop, Jones was also publishing his own psychedelic underground paper, the *Electric News*, which lasted six issues over three years.

The store soon became one of the gathering spots for people seeking out items they couldn't get anywhere else, from the hippy merchandise to classic blues recordings. "It was so neat to watch," says Larry Ficks, who was later a shareholder for a while when the Aeroplane moved locations. "It was the same kind of things that were going on at the coast and Steve and Sherm were doing it. They were on top of it."

But not everyone was happy with either the psychedelic movement or the premise of the store. John "Smokey" Koelsch, who

would later start up the store's new record department, recalls: "Some other guys and I were trying to form a blues band and we were trying to get set up in the back room of the Cosmic to practice. It was a summer evening on Ninth and Ninth and probably in between shows at the Tower. These three drunk A.W.O.L. Marines wandered through the store which was also filled with these flower children milling around. These guys started berating everybody about being yellow-bellied hippies, calling us communists and pinkos and stuff like that."

"Then they started getting violent. One guy smashed through one of the display cases and another guy basically walked through the glass door. Everything kind of spilled out of the Cosmic into the street after that. I went out and here's these guys in a circle with all these flower children kind of cowering in a circle around them. These Marines are lecturing them and berating them about what kind of wimps they are for not supporting the Vietnam war."

"It pissed me off," Smokey continued, "I had a couple of harmonicas and I put one in each fist. I jumped in the middle of the circle and said, 'Who's going to pay for my friend's shop?' This guy goes, 'You god-damn hippie,' and he jumps on me, knocks me down. I hadn't swung a fist at him and it ended up I never did. I put my harmonicas down. He ripped a chunk of hair out of my head and I realized while I had my face down on the pavement that this guy was drunk and I wasn't, that he really wasn't functioning very well and I could easily dispense with him. I stood up and threw him off my back. He just fell on the pavement and kind of writhed around. Then the police came and arrested him and a bunch of other people."

The Marines were later sentenced and had to pay restitution for the damages to the Cosmic.

The Cosmic lasted two years in that location. In 1969, Jones moved the operation into an L-shaped building on the corner of Fourth West and South Temple directly across from the Union Pacific Railroad Depot. Why the move? "Well, we got evicted, for one thing," says Jones. "The landlord died and his sister was not too thrilled with the Cosmic Aeroplane. But I think it would have only been a question of time until I wanted to move somewhere else."

Space was a consideration and the West Side seemed like an interesting place."

The days over on the West Side turned out to be financially trying times for the Cosmic Aeroplane and for Steve Jones. He notes: "It turned out to be too far west. Nobody knew where the hell we were. Nobody was used to going down there because there was

nothing to go to. It was a real struggle."

"I'd loan Steve money on a Friday," remembers Ken Sanders, who would later become a partner in the store, "so he could run down to the Greyhound bus depot and pick up a COD shipment. He'd then sell it all on Saturday and Sunday, which were his two big days, and then he'd pay me back the next Monday. He chronically never had any cash. He lived in the store for years since he couldn't afford an apartment."

The Cosmic Aeroplane endured for five years at that location, and though it was a constant struggle to survive, it managed to leave a mark on the Salt Lake City scene. A big open space in the back of the building was converted into a performance area where the legendary Human Ensemble, an underground experimental acting company, got its start. It was also a rehearsal area for the Smoke Blues Band, a popular local blues band that played at the Railway Exchange, the bar next door to the Cosmic.

It was also home to the first, and probably only, draft resistance counseling center in the state. "It was a separate operation," says Jones. "We rented them the space, but it was part of the whole Cosmic philosophy. A guy named Peter Crockett was doing it at first and then a guy named Hal Sparck took over. He was a real go-getter, very knowledgeable about the Selective Service regulations. In fact he was more knowledgeable than the local Selective Service people and so he was always having confrontations with them. The Federal attorney would have to tell them how it worked and explain to them that Hal was right. A lot of people, I think, got out of the draft because of the draft resistance counseling. But, because that was there, the place got watched by military intelligence."

"We had somebody come in and test the phone to see if it was tapped and it was, but I think we could probably almost assume that. But we didn't really do much with that because we were just kind of surviving day to day."

Ken Sanders still remembers that phone. "Steve didn't have a regular telephone in the Cosmic in those days, just a pay phone. In fact, we carried it over to First South because Steve insisted at great cost that we keep a pay phone inside the building. And the phone company charges a lot for that."

"The standing joke was that even though Steve would never pay the phone bill, it still worked because the FBI wouldn't let the phone company turn it off. Steve had a rotating schedule of items to talk about so that the FBI would feel like they were getting their money's worth. We would always talk about mysterious subjects and give them something to do. It never got shut off and he never paid a dime for it."

During Cosmic's stay on the West Side, Sanders also started the seedling of what would become the store's famous bookstore. "We had an old dilapidated magazine rack in there," he says, "and I used to run a little collectors corner in there for Steve that consisted of collector's comic books and illustrated books, stuff like Poe, Doré and Maxfield Parrish. It never made any money, but Steve let me do it. It was a pretty silly venture and actually never made any money, but Steve was very indulgent and tolerant of people just trying things out, whatever they were. He had all kinds of people doing arts and crafts consignments."

After toughing it out for five years on the West Side, in 1974 Jones decided to move the store to a small building near Fourth South and West Temple. "That little spot was open," he says, "and it was only like a hundred bucks a month. When we moved there, things picked up immediately. There was

more traffic since it was more convenient and closer to downtown. But space became a problem. It was small and I started to get popular. I mean, twenty people would fill the place up. It would get a little crowded."

With the sharp upswing in patronage, Jones knew he had tapped into something and when his soon to be partner, Bruce Roberts, came into an inheritance, they decided to expand the focus of the shop and move to a bigger location.



Look in the next issue of *The Event* for the continuation of this chronicle.

The store at the First South location has closed, replaced now by a comic book store. But is the Cosmic Aeroplane really gone? I don't think so. Many of the people that worked there over the years went on to establish their own unique shops and the spirit, the passion, of the Cosmic lives on in them. Here is a run down of a few of the stars that shot off from the Cosmic galaxy.

### Blue Boutique 2106 South 1100 East

Tony Martinez worked at the Cosmic for fifteen years, first in the jewelry and incense and then as buyer for the head shop. "My partner Laura started the Blue Boutique as a lingerie store in 1987 and I joined with her in 1988," he says. "We still have a large lingerie store, but in terms of square footage, our largest inventory is futons. We sell some adult novelties, jewelry, a little bit of everything, really."

"And we have an exhibition art gallery now called Synapse Gallery. It doesn't cost an artist anything to display in there. They can display for exhibit if they want or to sell. Once a month, a different Utah artist is featured in there." Also, the Blue Boutique is looking for artists and craftspeople to display their works in an art space they've set aside for Christmas.

Interested artists should contact Tony at the shop.

### Chameleon Artwear 875 East 900 South

Camille Chart was the jewelry buyer when Cosmic opened on First South and remained there a couple of years. "The Cosmic was a really positive experience for me because it allowed me to meet all sorts of wonderful and interesting people. It was a coming together of all sorts of groups. And Steve never ran it in dollars and cents. He ran it with a social consciousness."

"I started Chameleon Artwear in 1985," she says. "I got the idea when I was in New York. There was a huge art to wear movement in Soho at that time and I saw a real need for that here. The original concept was that it was wearable art, art that you would see in a gallery only you could also take it off the wall and put it on. That wasn't successful here, so the store evolved into imports. I travel to Thailand, Indonesia and India. I also get clothes from other people who travel in South America. The idea is to bring indigenous artforms from other countries with the emphasis of being wearable."

### Dr. Volt's Comics 2023 East 3300 South

Jon Bray worked for Cosmic from 1978 to 1983. "I was fifteen when I started as an underling for someone else who was running the comic department. I was just a kid hanging out and they ended up hiring me on after the summer was over." He was later given full charge of the comic books. After leaving the Cosmic, he co-started Cinema in Your Face.

His primary interest is music, which he has been playing for a number of years. He's a member of the band Idaho Syndrome, which has released its first CD, and he also commissioned noted comic book illustration artist Dave McKean to film the band's music video. The result, he says, is stunning.

Jon bought Dr. Volt's Comics last spring. He keeps it well stocked with both mainstream and alternative comics, as well as

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# COMMUNITY

hefty amount of back issues. "I feel like I've gone full circle. Fifteen years later and I'm doing comic books again."

## **Fifth World Books and Gifts** **419 East 2100 South**

Robert Firmage was the floor manager of the bookstore at Cosmic in 1979. "I think that was the real flower point of the store, myself. Before that it was smaller and it was right after I left that Jones and Ken were bought out by Bruce. It was really quite a family by that point."

Since then, he's had his translations of poetry published, most notably Song of the West: Selected Poems of Georg Trakl, and has been teaching at the University of Utah.

Robert opened Fifth World Books and Gifts in January of 1990. "The basic idea is to make good books available to the public," he says. "To have a book store with the ambience of one you'd find on the west coast, or on either coast for that matter. We're trying to do classics in all genres. It's a bookstore for book lovers."

"I've always thought in terms of having a bookstore in Salt Lake much like what I saw that the Cosmic might turn into. And although I'm limited to used books right now, I'm still hoping to do new books."

## **Ken Sanders Books** **PO Box 26707, Salt Lake City, UT**

Ken started his own publishing company in 1980 and named it Dream Garden Press. The company is probably best known for its annual series of western calendars, most notably the Edward Abbey ones.

"Now, though," he says, "I've turned those over to a California company called Golden Turtle press. I still create them and make them here in Salt Lake City, but they print, market and distribute them. Dream Garden Press still remains a small publishing company of which the thing I'm most proud of is our edition of Edward Abbey's The Monkey Wrench Gang which was illustrated by Robert Crumb. I still keep that in print."

"I also have a mail order business that I just call Ken Sanders Books. I deal in anti-quarian books, literature and nonfiction, about the American West and Southwest and the environment. Books are my passion. In my background, I've been a printer, a publisher, a book store owner, a book store employee and a collector."

## **Raunch Records** **1121 Wilmington Avenue**

Brad Collins worked in the head shop at the Cosmic from 1980 to 1983. He also had a popular hardcore radio show Saturday nights on KRCL for years. "The Cosmic was a legacy," he says. "We all felt something heavy for that store, more than it was just a store."

We all came out of there with our lives changed. We all knew we could get something different there."

Raunch was started in 1984 in a funky old building underneath the Fourth South viaduct. It has since moved a couple of times and is now on Wilmington Avenue. "I'd say we're a hardcore store. We'll stock anything that's harder core than the norm. In terms of books, we were the first to do anything with the magazine Research. And now we're a hardcore skateboard store. I'd say we're doing more skates than music right now."

## **Smokey's Records** **1515 South 1500 East**

In addition to his years at the Cosmic, Smokey also hosted the radio show "Smokey's Blues Hour" for nearly fifteen years. It was first broadcast on the AM radio station KMOR, and then subsequently on KUER and KRCL. The Cosmic Aeroplane, when it was located at Ninth East and Ninth South, was the show's first sponsor.

After leaving the Cosmic Aeroplane, Smokey, of course, started his own record shop. Smokey's Records practically needs no introduction, being nearly as well-known a store as the Cosmic itself was. Started in 1981, it was the was one of the first major stores to spin off from the Cosmic. Since that time, it has become the foremost source for blues, bluegrass, folk, jazz and celtic music. And of course, he still has the used records.

"When I was opening the shop," he says. "I seriously considered naming it 'Dead Biker Records.' I was motivated by the fact that the money wouldn't have been there but for a dead biker, my brother. He was an intellectual rebel who was very mechanically inclined and who was a free spirit. But my partners talked me out of that real fast. And with the Cosmic and the radio show, 'Smokey's Records' was the continuum."

## **Wasatch Book Distribution** **268 South 200 East**

Bruce Roberts bought Wasatch Book Distribution in 1989, a wholesale company that distributes to retail. It has a regional emphasis, concentrating on such areas as recreation, natural history and Native American culture.

But the story doesn't end there. Just recently, Jeff Salt, the owner of Halcyon Square, was legally able to acquire the name Cosmic Aeroplane and use it in conjunction with his store. The reactions to this, needless to say, have been very mixed. "My view of the situation," says Salt, "is that the torch has been passed on for a new kind of look, a new approach. I think we have an idea of what we want to do and its just going to be a process where it's going to take some time to build it up. We're a grass roots effort, basically."

"One of the reasons I chose to bring the Cosmic Aeroplane back is because I personally felt that there was a need in the community to have that focal point. We want to be able to access all sectors of the cultures that are here in Salt Lake and in Utah."

"I've had quite a bit of positive response already and I've had a major increase in traffic compared with what Halcyon Square was doing. Basically, Cosmic Aeroplane is an entity at Halcyon Square and we've got some future ideas about how we're going to structure all of it so

that everything still maintains some kind of an identity. As time goes on, we'll be able to clarify the definition of what that is as we get a little bit further into what we want to do."

"We will try and make the Cosmic someplace where people will come in and actually learn something. We're also interested in trying to help sponsor more community oriented activities."

"I think it's important for people to understand that there is a disconnection with the original owners, which some people may rally around, some people may object to, that's okay. I don't want to claim that I'm coming up with something totally new, that's definitely not what I'm telling people."

I asked the owners of the original Cosmic Aeroplane what their reaction was to a new Cosmic. "It's been so long," says Ken Sanders, "that there's not any real emotion about the old Cosmic anymore. What I'd have to say, and I'm assuming that whoever's doing it is of a younger generation than I am, is that it kind of confirms all of my worst suspicions about the younger generation. Haven't they got anything original to say or to do? I'm not trying to be one of these people that say, hey man, the sixties is where it's happening. But I do think one should strive for originality and creativity in what one does."

Bruce Roberts wrote a letter to the Event which, out of space constraints, I'll need to condense here. "At first," he writes, "I was shocked that someone would use a name that became a part of Salt Lake History for personal gain. But after giving it some thought, I figured this guy might have a great idea here. Next he can buy Bob's Motel on Third West, clean up all the needles in the rooms and reopen it as 'Hotel Utah.' As long as he doesn't mind a few legalities, he could change his name to Bill Graham, rent out a portion of the old Salt Palace and call it the 'Fillmore Ballroom.' And if this guy ever learns to play guitar, just think of the names available to achieve instant stardom."

If the owner of Halcyon Square does change his name, I suggest he use 'Jack-ens.' If he thinks registering a name with the State of Utah will allow him clear sailing on his dream to recreate Cosmic Aeroplane, he is sadly mistaken. I know first hand what special energy that store exuded. That ener-

gy took an incredible amount of work, sacrifice, and money to create, and no one will ever be able to replace the unique conglomeration of talented employees that store was so fortunate to have.

"The owners weren't businessmen, we tube our chance when we had it, and we lost the store. More power to anyone who uses it as a model to start their own business. But to wander in on this scene and also appropriate the name of the role model becomes an avaricious act in my mind."

"Time will tell how people respond to this person's concept of a great marketing idea. I know for a fact, however, that, as all the employees used to say about someone who didn't get it about the store, 'He's not Cosmic.'"

And Steve Jones? "I'm pretty positive," he says. "I don't have any problem with him using the name. I came up with it in '67. 'I think a Cosmic could do that again, do a mix

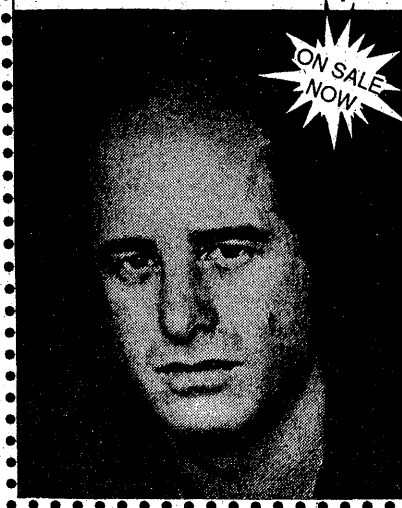
of things so that you get a variety of people coming in. The little small separate stores are good, but that means people get off in their own separate little groups. Part of the secret of the Aeroplane is that it mixed all those people together. And there's still a need for something like that, I think."

"I guess we're talking about a cycle. You have a big operation and all these things spring out from it. But that still leaves a need for another central operation and then more things can spring out from that. So, do it all over again. This time, I think, there should be even more of a mix. You could come up with a name and say, hey, it's just like the old Cosmic, but why not just say it's the Cosmic?"

By Joe Stohel

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## COMMUNITY

# History of the Cosmic Aeroplane

The previous (Dec 1, 1992) issue of The Event featured an article on the early history of the Cosmic Aeroplane. Here is the continuation of that story.

**After toughing it out for five** years on the west side, in 1974 Steve Jones decided to move the Cosmic Aeroplane to a small building near 400 South and West Temple. "When we moved there," he says, "things picked up immediately. There was more traffic since it was more convenient and closer to downtown. But space became a problem. It was small and I started to get popular. I mean, twenty people would fill the place up. It would get a little crowded."

With the sharp upswing in patronage, Jones knew he had tapped into something and when his soon-to-be partner, Bruce Roberts, came into an inheritance, they decided to expand the focus of the shop and move to a bigger location.

"Bruce Roberts and I had known each other since 1970 or so," says Jones, "maybe even before then. I had done the *Electric News* and he later did a paper called *The Street Paper*, a more political newspaper. Bruce and I had talked for a couple of years about doing something with the shop if money was somehow available. We were both agreed that we would expand into books. Music was not part of the formula at first. It was books and the head shop, the psychedelic shop and definitely an expansion of the jewelry end of it. When Bruce came into an inheritance, it gave us some capital to work with."

To get the bookstore aspect of the new venture started, Jones approached Sanders

**"We want a bigger place and we want a real bookstore."**



to see if he was interested in managing it. "Steve came to me at some point in 1975," recalls Sanders, "and asked, 'Would you be interested in managing a bookstore? I've got this silent partner who's willing to invest in it and turn it into a reality. We want a bigger place and we want a real bookstore.'"

"We kicked it back and forth and I finally said to him, 'Well, I'll do it but I don't want to work for you. I'll manage the bookstore, I'll run the bookstore, I'll create the bookstore, but you have to make me a partner.' Now, I had no money, but I insisted. I think I ended up having to scrounge up about \$1500 cash and then pledging some rare books and stuff as collateral."

"Really, in essence, I talked my way in to a one third partnership. I just refused to do it on an employee basis. So, in 1975, we were off and running, even though we had no store yet. I opened up a bank account and I had carte blanche to run it. Steve would put money in it and I started buying books and opening up accounts and getting ourselves established. I also hired the bookstore's first employee, Lucy Fairchild, [now an active artist in town] and she used to come to work in the attic of my old house on the West side. We had this attic crammed full of books, started an inventory control system and started everything going long before the store even had a location, let alone was open."

It was Jones who came up with the perfect location for the new and expanded Cosmic Aeroplane. "We found this spot open on First South which was right next to the Blue Mouse theater," said Jones. "It was a perfect location, although it did need a lot of work. The walls were all a weird combination of brick or stucco or paint. It was divided up into rooms to some extent inside and there were old partitions."

"It was originally a film distribution building, one of the old Film Row buildings," Jones continued. "The Blue Mouse

was a part of Film Row as well, which is why it was so small and cramped. It was just a screening room."

"We decided to go whole hog—put down a hardwood floor and sandblast the walls. It was an incredible amount of work. If we'd known how much, I don't know if we'd have done it. It kept on taking an incredible amount of time and money. I think Bruce probably took a loan out because he had more security than anybody else did."

"We got the hardwood floor from the gymnasium of the old mental hospital in Provo that

they were tearing down," said Jones. "We had to go down and tear up the floor, load it up on trucks, bring it back up here, lay it down and finish it. We had some people to do some of it, but it was still a hell of a lot of work. We had an old tin-ceiling that we got out the Mint Cafe, but we never did get that mounted. That's why all those weird strips of wood were up on the ceiling."

In 1976, the new Cosmic Aeroplane had its grand opening and it was immediately successful. The first year alone saw \$100,000 dollars in sales. By 1979, that figure

was up to \$1.1 million. "It just went right away," says Jones. "Everything was right. I don't think you could possibly plan out something like that or anticipate that something like that would be as successful as it was. We just happened

to be at the right place at the right time—for books, jewelry, incense, head shop stuff, music. Hell, when the music store really got going, that's just exactly when things were really starting to happen."

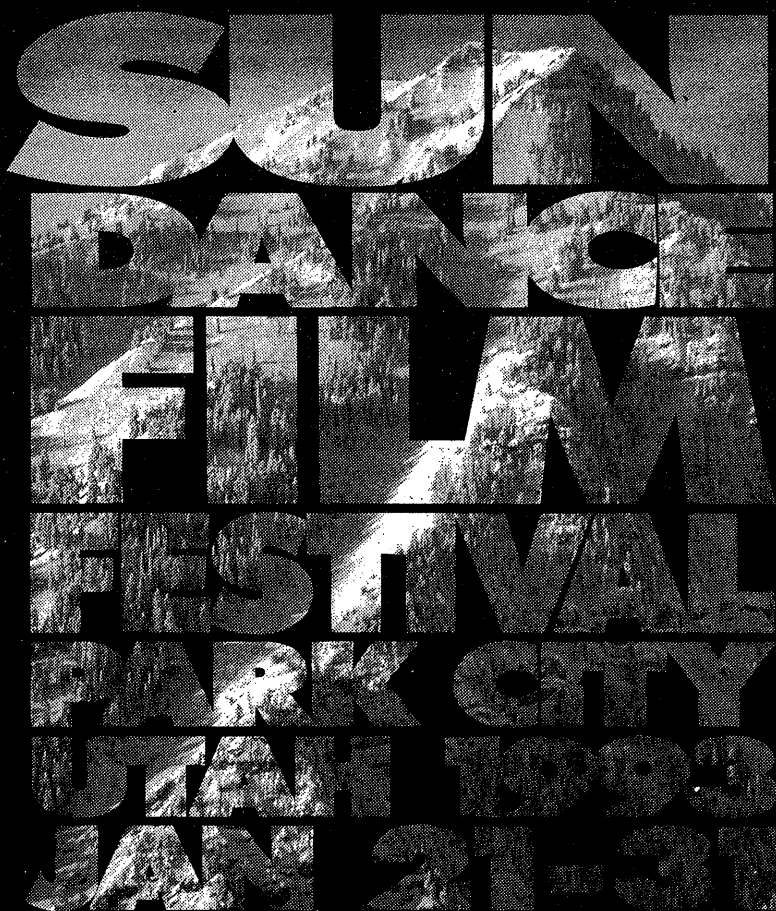
Smokey Koelsch was responsible for initiating the new music department. He recalls his time with the Cosmic Aeroplane: "When the store was on West Temple, I was out of work and rather desperate, so I asked Jones for work. He needed somebody to sit behind the counter and sell bongs and that sort of stuff, so he hired me for it. He was doing used records and he never had time for it."

"I was kind of digging on the used records and said, 'Hey, Steve, these people are wanting their used records bought and you never have time to look at them. How about teaching me to do it?' And so he painstakingly took the time over a period of a couple of weeks illustrating to me what to do and what not to do. It wasn't very long until I was doing it exclusively. When they moved over to the other store, I was still doing the used records. But I was still the head shop employee who sat behind the counter and taught people how to use a bong, even though I've yet to use a bong in my life. I liked doing the used records and I hated selling paraphernalia."

"And then, lo and behold," says Smokey, "my brother blows through town on his grand western state motor tour. He was a biker and he blew into town at the same time that the Cosmic had its grand opening on First South."

"At the termination of my brother's motorcycle trip, he was blown away by a drunk driving slob who ran a stop sign and ran into him. My brother was on the literal last leg of his trip, two blocks from home. And he had bought, unbeknownst to any of us, a double indemnity life insurance policy with my sister and myself as his beneficiaries. So, suddenly, there's all this money that came. My sister and I had these kind of shock waves, like, what are we going to do with all this money, and God, our brother's gone. I told my sister, 'Well if Charlie were here, he'd say take the money, dummy, and do something with it.'"

"And I thought, look at what's going on with the Cosmic. What a dynamic place. It's got the combination of all these



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## COMMUNITY

elements—the bookstore and the jewelry. Let's put a record store in there and not just do used records. Let's take some of this money and invest it by putting new records in there and building it. When I said, 'Let's do a record store,' Jones, Roberts and Sanders said, 'Wow, what a nice dynamic combination. Let's do it.' And we did."

"They took a good chunk of my money to pay existing debt and they left me with a few thousand dollars so that I was able to place some initial orders to cutout distributors. At that time the cutout distributors still had some really good stuff that the labels were dumping, so we got a nice inventory for cheap."

"From there," continues Smokey, "we started to build a new record department and I built it up. Well, it grew and grew, and in a couple of years, we were suddenly being chosen as the best record store by Utah Holiday magazine. That happened for two or three years. By this time, corporate differences became evident to me and it became evident that it was time for me to move on. That's when I wrote my formal request to sell my shares and pull myself out."

"When I was opening Smokey's Records, I seriously considered naming it 'Dead Biker Records.' I was motivated by the fact that the money wouldn't have been

**"...we were suddenly being chosen as the best record store by Utah Holiday magazine. That happened for two or three years."**

by the end of the 1980s, it started to wind down. Roberts set up a sale for the Cosmic Aeroplane in 1990, but that fell through and he ultimately liquidated the store to concentrate on his book distribution business.

The doors finally closed for the last time on February 1, 1991, ending nearly a quarter of a century of that unique institution's worthwhile contributions to the community. Richard Montague, a longtime bookkeeper for the Cosmic, bought the gift side of the shop in 1989 and named it Stargazer, but it only lasted until the end of 1991.

Why did the Cosmic Aeroplane finally go under? Everyone seems to have their own theory as to the reasons for its eventual demise, but the three principal owners each gave me the same single factor: the fact that they weren't businessmen. Through their ideas and their vision and through the enthusiastic energy of the people that worked there, the Cosmic was able to tap into a community need that made it incredibly successful. And although that success maintained itself for years by building up a base of loyal customers, in the end it wasn't enough.

Jose Knighton worked at the Cosmic for over twelve years before moving to Moab to manage Back of Beyond, a bookstore that still typifies the type of store that the Cos-

mic epitomized. In an interview with the *Deseret News* on the closing of the store, he said:

"The demise of the counterculture took the heart out of the bookstore. Everybody's turning into yuppies and their kids are growing up to be Republicans." On the financial side, Roberts notes the following contributing factors: "It really crippled the business when two of the partners wrote their way out of it. The business couldn't

afford that. It deprived us of being able to keep the stock up that we had.

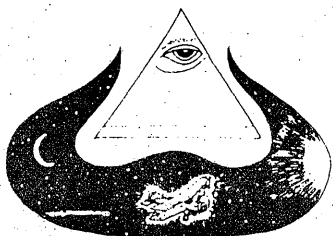
"The timing of that prevented us from getting much into CDs. We had an audiophile clientele in records and we didn't know whether they were going to go with CDs or continue to buy import digital audio records. We did a huge business in import records and trying to second guess that change in the market was very, very difficult."

Whatever the reasons, when the Cosmic Aeroplane closed in 1991, a chapter of local history ended with it. Knighton perhaps summed it up best when the *Deseret News* asked him if he was sad to see the Cosmic Aeroplane go. "Yeah," he said, "just like I would be sad to see someone bulldoze the Statue of Liberty. But we evolve. Nothing lasts forever."

By Joe Stohel



Response to this story has been profuse. Event readers are encouraged to send comments or contributions on their memories of the old Cosmic. What made it special? What is the response to a new Cosmic Aeroplane, and what should be in it? Send letters, photos, stories, or materials to Joe Stohel c/o The Event Newspaper, PO Box 510812, SLC, UT 84151.



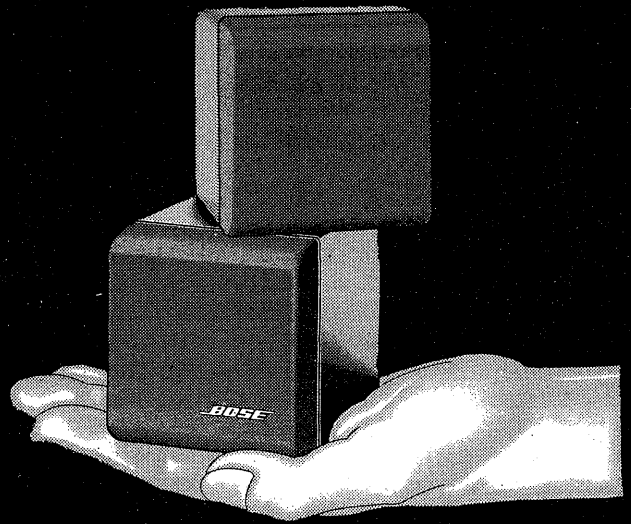
there but for a dead biker, my brother. He was an intellectual rebel who was very mechanically inclined and who was a free spirit. But my partners talked me out of that real fast. And with the Cosmic and the radio show [Smokey's Blues Hour], 'Smokey's Records' was the continuum."

The bookstore was also high doing extremely well. "The store was very successful," says Sanders. "I think it was because we offered books that no one had ever thought to offer in the greater Salt Lake area: metaphysics, eastern religions, alternative lifestyles, how-to books, solar energy, underground comics, comic books, collector's stuff, antiquarian books, rare Utah Mormon books, western Americana, science fiction and fantasy, art, film, photography, we had it."

But by 1981, Sanders was also ready to leave. "When I started the bookstore," he says, "I did everything. It was a challenge, it was creative and I had carte blanche from Steve and Bruce to do it as I saw fit. Over the years, it grew and grew and grew. Eventually, I hired people for all of the tasks that I had created, formalized and did. In essence, I replaced myself. With the exception of the old books and the antiquarian books, I got bored with it. It wasn't challenging or fun anymore. "On the other side of it, increasingly I wanted to go in different directions than the corporation wanted to go. Steve and Bruce wanted more and more control of the bookstore and I was unwilling to give it to them. We came to an impasse on it. So I took a leave of absence and we worked out a buy out."

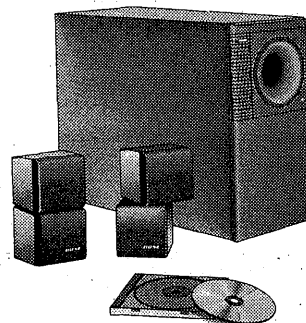
Less than a year later, Jones left as well. After fifteen years, he was burnt out and decided to take an extended vacation. Roberts was now the sole owner. The Cosmic Aeroplane continued to soar and in 1985, it had its biggest year, sales wise. But

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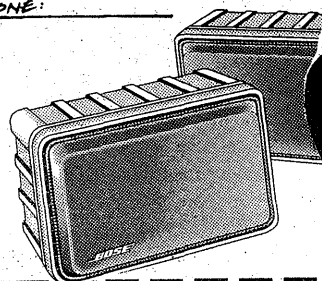
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NOTE: This is the front page of "The Event" in Late December 1992, with Part II of Joe Stohel's "History of the Cosmic Aeroplane."

## KRCL's Food Drive for the Holidays

In cooperation with the Crossroads Food Bank, food and personal care items are being collected at the studios of KRCL community radio for those in need in Salt Lake City. Donations (excluding perishables) can be brought to 208 West 800 South, Salt Lake City. For information call 363-1818.