



field trip

POP CULTURE HEAVEN A STRIP-MALL GEM OFFERS OBSCURE AND IRRESISTIBLE BARGAINS IN THE 'BURBS.

BY MORGAN HALASKA

In the seconds it takes to walk past the gumball machine and '80s banana-seat bike outside and enter Mr. Zero's pop culture memorabilia store in Roseville, the senses experience something akin to mixing Pop Rocks and soda. My friend and I barely make it a foot in the door before coming face to face with a life-size cardboard cutout of Whitney Houston, and soon find ourselves poring over a bookcase filled with vintage titles like *365 Ways to Cook Hamburger* and *The Phantom Tollbooth*.

Mr. Zero's is a self-proclaimed and veritable pop culture heaven: The walls are plastered in album covers, including the original "butcher" version of the Beatles' *Yesterday and Today* (the Fab Four draped in butcher smocks and cradling dismembered dolls, later replaced by a tamer image); at \$679, it's the most expensive item in the store. The floor is neatly packed with boxes of bargain vinyl LPs (many \$3 and under); the back wall is devoted to toys ranging from Care Bears to Pulp Fiction action figures—complete with blood spatter.

"My house looks exactly like this," says owner Rik Schwinden. "People ask me, 'What are you going to do with all this stuff?' And I say, 'Why do I have to do anything with it?'"

Schwinden says the store has been largely sustained by regu-

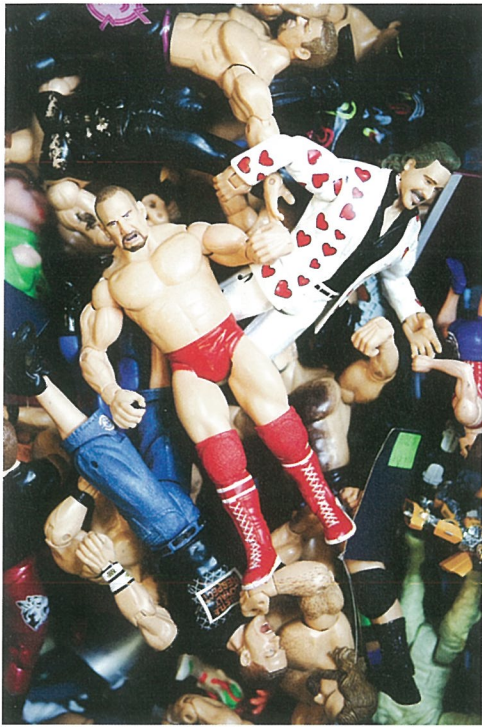
lars, whom he knows by names like "Paul the Book Man" and "Drummer Dave," since opening in 2009. He buys, trades and consigns items people bring in; with a background in the entertainment and music industries, Schwinden (who says his favorite items are music and packaged toys) has an inherent and a learned knack for knowing what sells and what doesn't.

Roaming the indeterminate yet organized aisles of the store while Frankie Goes to Hollywood's



Top: Stars memorabilia, both *Trek* and *Wars*.

Left: Mr. Zero's owner Rik Schwinden. Right: Piles and piles of pop culture.



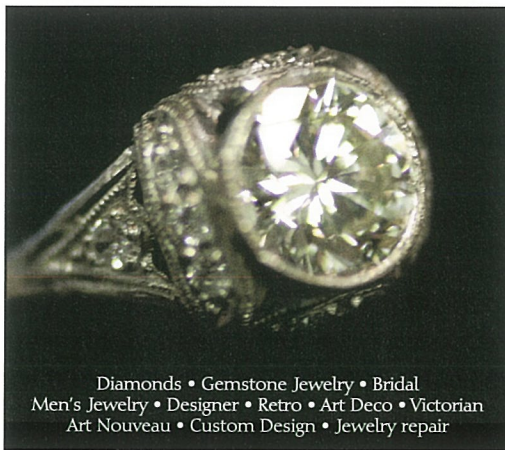
“Relax” plays on a loop, I’m not sure what to touch—or even what to lay eyes upon. Nuzzled alongside the cash register, I spot an original Super Mario Bros. arcade machine with a disclaimer taped to it: “Mr. Zero’s is not responsible for addiction.” Taking my chances, I jettison my bag and jacket, rummage for a quarter and, with adroit muscle memory, play through Mario’s three lives. Exterminating a slew of pesky turtles then falling to my death, I wonder aloud to my friend what time it is. She answers, trancelike, “I have no idea. I’ve lost track of all time.”

We drop \$26 and walk out with an overflowing bag of pop culture goodness: records by Tom Jones, Heart, America and the Everly Brothers, a gummy-worm coin bank (a steal at \$2), *How to Give Successful Parties* (copyright 1957 and containing meatloaf recipes a-plenty) and the 1984 Weekly Reader Children’s Book Club version of *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, plus a few other vintage gems.

We could have easily forked over double—or even triple—that amount with the wide, irresistible selection of records and tchotchkes in the store. “I didn’t want just guys shopping here,” Schwinden makes sure to point out, noting the handmade soaps and jewelry display next to the Garbage Pail Kids trading cards. “We carry stuff for gals, too.” Truly, Mr. Zero’s has something for everyone. +



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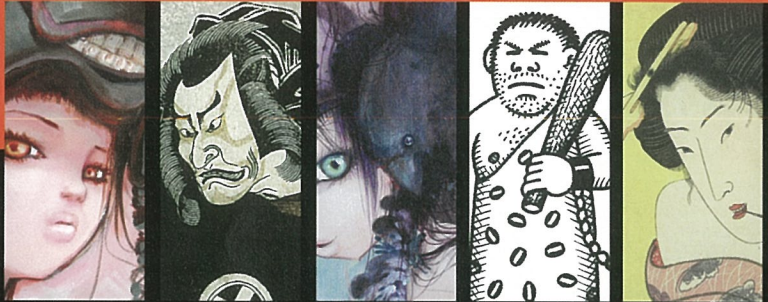
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Top, from left: Camilla D’Errico,
Katsukawa Shunshō, Camilla D’Errico,
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