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FINLAND

(Continued from page S-3)

The music retail scene in Finland these days seems to be in a state of minor turmoil, the main reason being the hotting-up battle between vinyl and CD, with the former clearly not prepared to submit without a good fight. Vinyl and cassette formats still lead CD in unit sales.

But consumers still query the pricing of the three configurations with CDs costing the equivalent of \$26 and LPs and cassettes set at \$18, especially in the light of media stories here that CDs are actually cheaper to make than vinyl disks.

Erkki Puumalainen, of Base Beat Studios, a manufacturer/rackjobbing operation, has criticized the Finnish industry for being over-organized to "a point where nothing seems to work properly." He adds the domestic industry needs more internal

competition and improved efficiency, plus a new pricing structure and changes in production and marketing, "otherwise it won't have much chance in the upcoming Euro-market scene."

In overall terms, the Finnish marketplace is dominated by local retail chains, such as Fazer Music, Mega Epe's, Valintatalo, Anttila and City-Sokos, and the individual outlets are experiencing hard times, even in Helsinki. Some survive by specializing in rock or soul/disco, handling direct imports or selling at rock-bottom prices (especially in the CD sector).

Finland, a nation of long distances, is obviously ideal for the mail-order business, which is handled successfully by firms like Fazer Music Club and Unitor Oy. But Posti-Tele plans to shut down around 2,000 post offices in the next year or so, which means that the now prosperous mail-order business could falter unless somebody comes up with an alternative.

Independent record labels, and there are dozens and dozens of them, now have their own non-profit organization, rather similar to the U.K. "Cartel," and this takes care of various marketing and promotional duties and finds suitable outlets for various indie labels and their artists and demo tapes.

The role of independent radio stations and the newly-launched nationwide rock channel "Rockmafia," by Yleisradio (YLE) brings forth artists old and new as never before—a development blamed by some industry parties for the heavy in-home taping epidemic and subsequent loss in record sales.

DENMARK

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twice by Denmark Radio/TV, so virtually eliminating the need for extra promotion for either the album or the video.

DAD, a major success story in Denmark, has a new studio album due some time next year. They sold 400,000-plus copies of the debut album, "No Fuel Left For The Pilgrims," for Warner Bros., including 100,000 in Denmark and 35,000 in each of Japan, Australia and West Germany, touring heavily in support.

Danish girl duo One Two, signed direct by EMI in London have been working on a new album and the new package from local rock group Skagarack is "Slides Of Heaven," on Polydor.

U.S. based Left Bank Management signed Danish band Michael Learns To Rock for Allan Kovac's new joint-venture label for the MCA group, and an album is due early in 1991.

The dance scene is strong, and growing fast, in Denmark, Medley's new dance label Soul Power Production has released re-mixes by the groups Soul Shock and Cut Father, and have also remixed material from the big-selling Queen Latifah, Vanessa Williams and London's Yazz. A new Danish girl jazz/dance singer Yasmin is also out with product for the new label.

With the main venues predictably in the Copenhagen area, the big names still visit Denmark regularly, among them Janet Jackson, Prince, Billy Idol, Tina Turner, and Ian Gillan. The concert scene is dominated by the Arne Worsoe International Concert Organization and DKB, though E.T. Concerts has the big reputation in the heavy and new rock sector.

Danish acts are increasingly on the road nationwide—notably Gnags, TV2, Thomas Helmig, Kim Larsen and Anne Linnet, their tour generally touching between 10 and 20 cities. Few Danish acts sing in English, though the durable Helmig is considering an English-language attack on international charts.

SWEDEN

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product.

Stockholm-sited department store Ahlens, with one of the country's biggest music departments, has just opened up "CD City," increasing its CD display space roughly five-fold, and carrying at least 20,000 titles in stock.

And this fall Sweden finally got its first megastore for records when major chain Skivakademin opened up the biggest venue so far, right in the center of Stockholm.

The record industry is now, along with the rest of Swedish society, facing rough and tough financial times. Even before the Gulf crisis hit the world economy, the Swedish situation was in difficulty, with high inflation running rife in an overheated marketplace.

The government's planned new tax system is set to come into operation in 1991 and was expected to leave Swedes with more money in their pockets.

But the consumer has been hard hit in recent times by tax and price rises, and Sweden has at the time of writing the highest tax in the world on petrol, and the theory is that there could be yet higher imports and inflation, not least from a raised Value Added Tax on all kinds of entertainment, such as ticket prices for concerts and the cinema. Add in the increased VAT rates on restaurant prices, and the club, disco and dance scene also looks like it's being handed a spell of negative and decidedly unhelpful pressure in the year coming.

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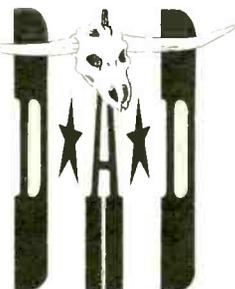
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