

The Miami Herald

By HOWARD COHEN UPDATED DECEMBER 23, 2015 11:14 AM

Rich Ulloa turned a teenage fascination with the Beatles into a career in music – first as founder of Yesterday & Today Records in Miami and then as an artist manager. Acts he worked with included The Mavericks, Mary Karlzen and For Squirrels. Courtesy Rich Ulloa Before he became a postman in Miami, Rich Ulloa delivered some of the best local talent with regularity as owner of the Y&T label and as an artist manager. The Mavericks, Mary Karlzen, Amanda Green and For Squirrels – familiar names in South Florida’s live music scene of the ’90s – all benefited from Ulloa’s keen ears. For him, and for many of his generation, “the day anybody alive would remember,” The Beatles provided his arts awakening. “Like millions of young baby boomers, I was glued to our family TV set to watch The Beatles first appear on The Ed Sullivan Show back in February of 1964,” Ulloa, 60, said. “Although I was only 9 years old, my lifelong obsession with The Beatles began on that night.” TOP VIDEOS × Born at Jackson Memorial, Ulloa, a Miami Senior High graduate, stood fast as a Fab Four fanboy. “Clearly, this was an awakening moment for me, but people made fun of me because I was a boy who loved The Beatles.” Nonplussed, at 15, Ulloa built up a collection of Beatles memorabilia, including bootleg records, 45s and books, and made connections with collectors and dealers at national Beatles conventions. In early 1978, he started his first mail-order business, Top Of The Pops, specializing in music collectibles. Three years later, he opened his first record store on Bird Road in Miami and named it for a Beatles album, Yesterday & Today Records. The store, with its savvy staff, alternative and local music section, was a fixture for 17 years under Ulloa’s operation. Get unlimited digital access Subscribe now for just \$2 for 2 months. CLAIM OFFER Ulloa sold the store in 1998. By then, his artist management activities and running the independent Y&T label commanded much of his time. (Yesterday & Today still operates as a used record store in a storefront on Bird Road.) Ulloa’s second arts awakening happened about 25 years after the first and led him into artist management. Pal John Tovar, a fellow South Florida music manager who guided a fledgling Marilyn Manson, tried to turn Ulloa onto another act he was managing. He handed over a cassette and an invitation to a gig in the Grove. Ulloa, a husband and a father by that time, almost begged off. “It was the summer of 1989, and I rarely went out to see local artists,” Ulloa said. “I was focusing on the store and my family with two young daughters. John has great taste and I really liked the two song demo he played for me at the store.” Live, the band – Vesper Sparrow – didn’t initially leave a strong impression. Ulloa headed toward the door after the first set. But then the lead singer and the bass player swapped spots. Ulloa’s life changed again. “I freaked out,” he said. “I could not believe what I was seeing and I was instantly taken by their sound. Vesper Sparrow became my favorite local band at that very moment. I stayed for the entire set and before I left, John introduced me to the bass player, Mary Karlzen, whose voice made such an impression on me. I soon became far more engaged in the local music scene, eventually hosting local band shows every weekend.” By 1990, Ulloa released the Mavericks’ first album on Y&T, signed on as Karlzen’s personal manager and oversaw the release of her 1995 Atlantic Records debut, Yelling at Mary. No one was yelling with more glee than Ulloa. Ulloa eventually stepped aside and took a job as a postman, a position he’s held for 12 years. “During my time as a manager, I look back in amazement at our successes and the many great relationships we developed with some of the most talented musicians, agents, journalists, and executives from New York, Los Angeles, Nashville and the rest of the country,” he said. “And I can trace it all back to that one moment I saw Mary sing Come November as a member of Vesper Sparrow.” Don’t rule out a musical comeback, either. “Music and the friendships in the music industry have kept me going,” Ulloa says. “Age is an attitude, it really is, and so I try to stay engaged in as many ways as I can.”

Howard Cohen: 305-376-3619, @HowardCohen This story was originally published December 23, 2015 6:09 AM.