Room, among whose 8,000 titles bourne has specialist bookshops. Two of the best are side by side classical music shops these days it's there isn't one record - like most in the Town Hall Arcade, under specialist record shops as Mel­ $20 and CDs were only $25, no-one up the prices for LP titles. By the new recordings on LP and pushed off the LP. They stopped releasing that the recording companies killed did go off records, she also believes that they could no longer justify the space. While the classical music fans did go off records, she also believes that the recording companies killed off. His CDs cost about $26 on average, while the LPs have crept up to $19.

The Prices Surveillance Authority (PSA) is currently investi­ gating Australian record and CD prices and, inevitably, some people are arguing that a complete deregulation of imports would bring down prices.

None of the specialist shops like the idea. Much of their range is too specialised to be in direct competi­ tion with cheap imports. A shop like Ava and Susan's earns it's bread and butter from the big selling soundtrack hits, like *Les Miserables* and *Chess*. If the mainstream chain stores all have cut-price import copies on sale, they'll take a lot of the specialist's turnover.

Barry Stahl is certainly not panicking, but he's not overjoyed by the prospect of deregulation. If it does come, he's concerned that no specialist will be able to match the clout wielded by the big chains, who will undercut the independent shops on most top-selling titles. While it might mean cheap best­ sellers for the mass market, the specialist shops may gradually disappear and with them, the range of music they sell.

Ava and Susan's is absolutely unbeatable in its field and the shop's atmosphere is terrific. It's phone number is (02) 264 3179, or you can fax your mail order requirements on (02) 264 3177.

Sydney's ultimate specialist music shop would have to be Folkways, at 282 Oxford Street, Paddington. They have over 40,000 titles in stock and offer a mail order service that covers the globe.

Folkways was built on the belief that "there's more to music than the Top 40" - especially when the Top 40 was dominated by British and US music. Australian music of every kind is their speciality and they'll sell it to you seven days a week, up until 9pm on weekdays, or 6pm at weekends.

Their stock also covers every­ thing from Brecht to the blues, Inti­ illimani to songs of the Spanish Civil War, Woody Guthrie to the Watergate hearings.

Warren Fahey, who gives his job title as "chief larrkin", reckons that the stock is now about 50% LPs, with the remainder being half CDs and half cassettes. But he also feels that CDs are gradually taking over and has noticed that more and more of the more obscure titles they stock are now being released (or re­ released) only on CD and cassette.

Fahey is deeply sceptical of the PSA's investigation into record prices. He shares Barry Stahl's concerns about keeping the inde­ pendent retailers afloat but - since Folkways is also the home of the Lar­ rkin recording label - he's also wor­ ried about how independent Australian labels and wholesalers will survive deregulation. A small company like Larrinkin may not be able to keep up in an import­based price­cutting war with the multina­ tional major labels. While Fahey has no doubt that cheaper records would be better for everyone he's certain that they'd mean fewer Australian records and fewer specialist shops.

Folkways' policy has always been to refuse to stock sexist or racist material and they've even given up plastic bags in favor of paper ones. Wrap up warm when you shop at there - its customers are so cool you may catch a chill while shopping, but the staff are eager to help. Their phone number is (02) 361 3980.

- Jim Endersby