

FANS STAY TRUE TO VINYL RECORD FORMAT

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The combination of dust and mold keeps Sam Hopkins sneezing. In addition, his shins are hurting from leaning against a table for an extended period of time. This is the third thrift shop he's been to today, and so far he has found nothing. "You'd be amazed," says Hopkins. "I travel all over the country and still see the same records by the same artists." But all the physical ailments are worth it, because eventually he'll find a rare gem.

Since the age of 14, Hopkins has been passionately interested in collecting vinyl records from all over the world. He is constantly searching for treasures, hitting every used vinyl store he can in order to add to his self-described "moderate" collection of about 900 records.

Hopkins still has compact discs, but that's only because he couldn't find those albums on vinyl. Hopkins isn't alone. There are thousands out there just like him, and many of them are too young to remember hearing Huey Lewis and the News skipping on their parents' old record players. Those unfamiliar with vinyl records — commonly called LPs — should take a trip downtown to Love Garden, 936 Massachusetts St., where you can find a large quantity of new and used LPs and CDs.

Kelly Corcoran, a manager at the locally-owned store, says that while the store sells twice as many used CDs as LPs, buyers like LPs in a different way. "CDs have become more and more disposable," Corcoran says. "Vinyl records are permanent artifacts." Corcoran adds that CDs have an average life span of 20 years, while LPs, with proper care, can last considerably longer.

Corcoran says more bands are recognizing the importance of having their music pressed on vinyl records, despite the fact that CDs are less expensive to make. "I'd

say about 65 to 75 percent of albums on labels get pressed on LP at some point," says Corcoran. But it does cost more money than the average starving musician can afford.

Acme Vinyl, a vinyl pressing company in Ontario, Canada, charges \$1,045 to press and package 300 twelve-inch records. That price is average compared to the approximately 16 other vinyl-pressing companies in the United States and Canada. Dungeon Replication, a smaller pressing company, relies on CD replication as well as vinyl pressing. Mike Yake, manager of the company based in Portland, Ore., says that while the bulk of its business is with CDs, vinyl production has regained some popularity.

He says much of this has to do with a growing hip-hop and DJ culture. "DJing is a growing art form," says Yake, "so I think vinyl is just going to get more popular." Justin Riley is a big part of that hip-hop and DJ culture. He has been a DJ for five years and has competed in several DJ competitions. "Back when I started out, you had to buy vinyl if you wanted to be a DJ." Now, Riley mainly enjoys the analog sound of vinyl. Riley says digital recordings don't get the full wavelength in the frequency of sound like vinyl records do.

He says that new technology, such as DVD-Audio, is close, but it's not affordable. Chris Knudsen, El Dorado junior, is not big on mixing and scratching records, but he has recently become infatuated with vinyl. Most of his collection of about 200 records consists of albums from garage and punk bands, and most of them are new. "I'll buy a new LP the day it's released," says Knudsen. "Whereas, if I want a new CD, I can wait months after it comes out because I know it'll still be out there."

Knudsen says there are three reasons why he buys vinyl. First, it's usually cheaper, unless you want to buy new imported records. Another reason is the artwork that comes with vinyl records is bigger. But the most important reason, Knudsen says, is it forces him to listen to the whole album. "I like to punish myself," says Knudsen. "With a CD, I can always easily skip tracks with the click of a remote. With vinyl, I have to manually lift the needle to change songs, and I'm just too lazy to do that." People like Knudsen, Riley and Hopkins were raised on CDs. Everyone in their generation had to learn for themselves about vinyl records. Perhaps that's why

they're the most die-hard fans.

These record fans see vinyl in a different light. "Vinyl records are lasting works of art," says Hopkins. "The people who sold their old records back in the early '90s are kicking themselves for it now." Playing a record is more than just listening to music for Corcoran, who has a collection of about 1,500 records. "For me, playing a record is like a ceremony," says Corcoran. "You can see the grooves and spaces where the needle hits the record.

You experience a better-quality analog sound. You can watch the record spin in front of you. You can sit down and listen to the record, and do absolutely nothing else." Soon Hopkins will return to the thrift shops and used music stores, hoping to find some new records that people have carelessly left behind. No amount of sneezing or shin pain can detract him from his search for a diamond in the rough — a once-discarded record that a new generation is growing to appreciate and treasure.

By Matt Beat posted by www.vinylrecords.co.uk