



For young collectors, LPs capture a less-commercialized, and maybe better, time

Vinyl fans at the show were as young as 8-year-old Wells Bryant of Portland, who hunted down Dylan bootlegs for his 15-year-old sister.

Vinyl gets you closer, his sister, Hannah Wilken, explained. "I don't know, they have an old-timey effect. It's like you're really back there."

Dolores Erickson really was back there, so a vinyl fan could be forgiven for the momentary time warp you saw at her table.

Set up on the room's small stage, the former Ford model with the dramatic black hat sweeping down over one eye sat beneath a handwritten sign advertising autographs.

Turns out Erickson, now a Longview, Wash., painter, was the cover model for a 1965 album by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, "the most famous album cover in the world," which featured her, at 25, covered in whipped cream.

No one quite knew what she was doing there. Berkman, who runs the online record store Jump Jump Music, said she just showed up.

"If it wasn't the world's most famous cover, I wouldn't be sitting here," Erickson said. But the closest anyone got was a teenage boy who stopped about four feet away, pulled out his camera phone, snapped a picture and walked away.

Maybe Erickson just needed that one record collector, the one who couldn't stop looking at the album cover or playing that record back in 1965, to show up. Like a lot of collectors, vinyl lovers tend to have their own, very specific obsessions.

Yep, said vendor Eric Klein of Portland, a Pabst Blue Ribbon in hand and his entire collection to sell, "there's the whole geek thing, where everyone's excited to show off their albums. There's a lot of geek factor in (collecting.)"

Record collectors love the music, but they love the hunt, too.

Douglas O'Leary managed to find more than 300,000 records in the past 35 years.

The 69-year-old collected most of the records for his store, Doug's Records, in Yakima.

He shut down the store after more than 20 years, but he couldn't give up his collection. So he built them three free-standing buildings on his property and now travels to a dozen record shows a year.

"I sure cherish 'em, but I'm still looking for more," O'Leary said.



The Night Owl show drew younger collectors such as Jeff DeGreef (from left) along with longtime aficionados such as James Farmer and Roy Fredericks, all of Portland.

BENJAMIN BRINK/THE OREGONIAN

Vinyl: Fans prefer to find their own music

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"It's more than just a piece of music," Loverdi explained reverentially. "It's the whole package. There's an organic quality of the needle in the groove sound. You listen to an old Josh White record. He's an old blues guy. It sounds warmer coming from a turntable. That crackle adds a little character."

America fell in love with vinyl before Loverdi's generation was even born, but records and turntables are part of youth culture today the same way that knitting, zines and Pabst Blue Ribbon are. None of it's new, none of it's high tech or glossy, and that's the point. They all appeal to a younger, money-conscious, pretension-resistant audience that likes the idea of doing things themselves.

"People want to go out and find their own music and not be told by the giant music companies what to listen to," Berkman said. "Plus, you get this old-fashioned thing where you get to hold this big platter and you get to see physically how the music's made, how the needle vibrates, instead of this mysterious CD you put inside a box and have no idea what it's doing in there."

He's certainly not the only one. Klein, who's been collecting records for a dozen years, brought nearly his entire collection to sell at the show. "Because of bills," he said ruefully.

His first album? "Maybe a religious Bee Gees album my grandmother sent me. Yeah, it wasn't good."

Saturday night, O'Leary marveled at the young people in the crowd — the thirtysomething DJs looking for records to spin at local clubs, and the teenagers who recognized vinyl's special, scratchy language.

"I often wonder if I was a young person today if I would even fool with records," he admitted. Still, with a few bands still putting music out on LPs and turntables still in production, he's confident the appeal will last.

"I've let people down and other people have let me down, but that's the thing about music," he said. "It never lets you down."

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