

Across the world record collectors exist. There are many Web sites like the Record Collectors Guild to find and converse with fellow collectors. A record collector can also discover local ways to meet other collectors face to face.

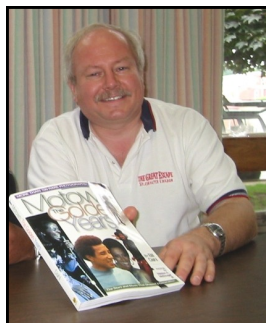
KEYSTONE RECORD COLLECTORS

...in our third decade of service to the music collector

In Pennsylvania a group called the Keystone Record Collectors brings people together with the *Pennsylvania Music Expo* that is held the second Sunday of every month in Lancaster. The Keystone Record Collectors are a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and advancement of the hobby of music collecting.

B. Derek Shaw is the editor and communications officer of the Keystone Record Collectors organization.

Shaw started collecting records after his parents bought him a transistor radio in the fall of 1963 when he turned eight. "That opened up a whole new world to me of listening to Top 40 radio. The next spring, when the Beatles came to America is when I started buying 45 RPM records. Twenty thousand 45s later, I'm still collecting." Shaw also owns 5,000 LPs, the collection takes up several rooms in his house, picture an almost entire house worth of music.



The Music Expo can best be described as a "huge flea market of music." Price can range from 10 cents to hundreds of dollars for vinyl. The show is run "by collectors for collectors". Admission is free and all levels of music collectors are invited, whether you are a novice or a seasoned collector, there is a great group of music lovers that attend the show.

The Keystone Record Collectors members vary in age from the youngest member who is 21 all the way up to the oldest member who is 80. Collecting records is for any age group but it's making a comeback with the younger music audience.



Chuck seems more than pleased when he tells me that he sells most vinyl from Chuck's R.I.P. Records to people under the age of 25. According to an article by Kevin Voigt on CNN.com sales of vinyl are spiking. The sales of the 7-inch single are at the highest seen since 1979. Voigt also says that retailer HMV predicts sales will reach \$1.5 million annually. Popular bands like the Arctic Monkeys and Keane are releasing singles in the UK on vinyl. This is enticing a younger audience to buy vinyl again.

This new found affection seems to be creating a shockwave in the music industry. Digital download sales are on the way up, while the physical format of the CD is heading toward the graveyard.

Amazon.com has launched an all vinyl section on its Web site to stay ahead of the trend. The selection of classic rock is on the lean side but the alternative and punk selection is in the thousands. Amazon is also offering deals on new record players and accessories to fix record players. The venture of including a vinyl section is more evidence that the format is making a comeback in a huge way.

Like Sam in the Record Collectors Guild said, Chuck agrees that vinyl is a link, like an antique or an artifact of the past for younger people. There are better quality pressings available on 180-gram vinyl and the Internet is making vinyl easier to find. Small record shops like Chuck's R.I.P. Records will be standing strong as long as this vinyl trend continues. Thanks to the small record shops and even collector's music expos, collectors will still be able to have that sensory explosion and pure adrenaline rush as they look through boxes and crates of vinyl records. So whether you classify yourself as a music collector or as a music fan, whether you collect for sound quality or album artwork, or any other reason, the physical format of music is not allowing that final nail to be driven into the coffin by the age of digital downloads.

- Jacquie Derr

To visit the Record Collectors Guild website:
www.recordcollectorsguild.org/

KEYSTONE RECORD COLLECTORS / PA MUSIC EXPO

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KEYNOTES

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SPECIAL REPORT

The Record Collector By Jacquie Derr

Editor's Note: Jacquie recently graduated from Shippensburg University with a degree in Journalism/Communications. As a class assignment, she developed a feature story about collecting records and CDs. This is the fruit of her effort.



There is a certain feeling, a certain smell that flirts with your senses when you stand in a room that holds vinyl records. A musty, mildew type of aroma floods your nasal passages - like climbing into an old attic. A smell that you can almost taste and it brings a feeling of warmth and excitement over your entire body. As you thumb through stacks of vinyl, that musty smell hits your face in slight puffs. The first time I walked into Chuck's R.I.P. Records in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, all of these exhilarating senses came flooding through my body. As a music collector, this kind of sensory explosion only happens when you know you have found something special.

A beauty parlor used to occupy the space that is now full, basically floor to ceiling, with music. It has been four years now that R.I.P. Records invaded and has kept the record collectors dream cloud floating on high. The store is swarming with vinyl. There is a \$2 bin on your left as soon as you walk through the door, along the floor there are boxes and boxes of vinyl that stretch to the back of the store and reach around to the far left corner of the store. The vinyl in this corner is on tabletops in crates and is mostly new condition items. An almost store-length shelving unit sits in the dead middle of the store. Here are rare and unique gems of CDs. The selection varies in garage, psychedelic and classic rock from the '60s and '70s for the most part. You can also find some rare punk, collectible blues and many other nifty genres mingling among all the rows of rock. To sweeten the deal even more, the store stocks various books and DVDs about music. This is truly a music collector's dream room... or a music fan's.



Two younger looking guys come into the store. "Hey! Long time no see guys." Chuck greets them and they talk for a minute and then the guys go to the left corner for vinyl.

"I say there is a difference even though my wife would say I'm splitting hairs." Chuck Breininger explains to me. He is the owner and one of the only two people who work at Chuck's R.I.P. Records. "My wife (Peggy) is only here on Fridays, from noon until about 5:30 when I get here from work."



Chuck calls himself a music fan. "A fan will own albums for the songs on it because they like to listen to the music. A collector is like a completist," Chuck smiles as he talks, deep crow's feet appearing beside his eyes. His whole face lights up when he laughs. He has tight curly hair that bounces along the collar line of his pumpkin orange T-shirt. The print on the front is black; it is a Bob Marley shirt.

I ponder this new concept of a collector and a fan and I decide quickly in my head that I am definitely more of a collector but with a strong base of being a fan. I wander around the shop as Chuck talks to one of his regular customers. They discuss music in great detail, dropping names of guitarists and bands that I realize that I have a whole lot to learn about music. They talk about the music that is playing throughout the store. It is the new Govt. Mule album *Mighty High*. They are a blues rock band and the new album is produced in a reggae-dub fashion. They also comment on the new release of the album *Raising Sand*. This is a duet album with Alison Krauss and Robert Plant from Led Zeppelin.

I scour my way through all the records in the store, picking up the copy of *The Velvet Underground & Nico* on 180-gram vinyl. I admire the album and then place it back in its alphabetized spot. I turn my attention to the CD rack in the middle of the store and walk the entire way around it, in awe of the obscure titles that are not usually found in stores.

I talk to Chuck some more about himself and the store. The shop has limited hours because he needs to keep his full-time job as an inventory specialist at Robinwood Medical Center. "I'm in really good health now but I don't want to give up the health benefits." Chuck's R.I.P. Records is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 6 until 8:30pm. On Fridays the store is open from noon until 8 and Saturdays, 12 until 5.

Chuck has been collecting records since he was a kid but his personal collection is not as big as one would expect. Chuck only has about 1,200 vinyl and between 800 and 900 CDs. He is constantly selling and re-buying pieces of his collection. He explains that sometimes you think you are ready to move on from



an album, but then you realize and change your mind and end up re-buying it.

As Chuck talks to me he watches the two other guys in the store.

He makes comments to them about what they are buying. A Mad River album, a 13th Floor Elevators album, a Blue Cheer album, Chuck describes to them about the band and which albums he prefers. Chuck is definitely the music fan.

At some point Iggy Pop is brought up. Chuck tells us about his first time hearing the 'Raw Power' album. "It was my ninth-grade year when I read about the album in Circus magazine. I bought it right away and



it completely captured me. I was so captivated by this album. I remember it being the last day of school, and it was a day that nothing really goes on. I brought the album in to play for everyone and they all hated it. I was devastated." He laughs and then said that he loved this album because of the energy and intensity of the thing.

He relates his experience with the Raw Power album to the Burnside Exploration. The band is made up of two family members of blues singer R.L. Burnside, the youngest son, Garry Burnside and the nephew, Cedric Burnside. Chuck puts the CD in and bobs his head, jamming with the pounding beat of guitar and drums.

Chuck is grateful for the people who still go to stores to buy their albums. He says it's fine to go online and pick up the hard to find albums that way. Chuck is the type of person who likes to hold something and look at it before he buys it. "Plus it's those kind of people that keep people like me in business."

We discuss more about record collecting and why people still do it. "The sound quality is much warmer with a good system; good pressing of an album, the sound quality will be far better than any CD would produce."

Most record collectors say the exact same thing. What are some of the other reasons people collect vinyl?

- You own a vintage collectible
- Nice graphics and oversized artwork you can actually see and appreciate
- It's cool to see the music in action and not hidden in a CD player
- While listening to certain albums, old memories re-surface
- Records look mega-cool all gathered together and displayed
- Given proper care they seem to survive longer



This is according to a member of the Record Collectors Guild Web site. There are 17,370 registered users on the Web site. It serves mainly as a chat forum to bring record collectors together from across the world.

The reasons to collect vinyl were provided by a 42-year-old collector named Sam. He has been collecting records since the age of 14, but became a serious collector when he turned 18.

Sam owns a large farmhouse in the southeast United States. He is able to dedicate an entire room in his house to the record collection. The walls of the room are consumed with posters and framed albums. Sam collects records mainly because he appreciates the artwork on a 12x12 surface.

"I especially like the detailed and intricate art. You just don't get much to look at or admire on a dinky CD."

Sam owns around 4,000 LPs and he says maybe 1,000 45s. Like some other collectors I know, he has not listened to everything in the massive collection. He admits that some of the albums he owns he bought strictly for the cover artwork.

Kathy, a 37 year old from north central Ohio, has a different reason for collecting records. She collects for the sensory stimulation, nostalgia and the sound quality. Her collection is now based on "high-dollar collecting." She enjoys having the music because she loves it. She describes it as having "immense enjoyment value." Kathy's collection manages to consume most of her house. "It's scattered around. I have a four-shelf bookcase-type stand that holds about 1,800 and another that holds about 300, four crates and a bunch on the floor. The kitchen and the bathroom are the only rooms that don't have vinyl in them."



In St. Augustine Florida lives a retired professor who has been collecting records for more than 55 years. Martin McKay collected because it was tied to his job. He used to be a music educator and used records a great deal in his job. His special genres were jazz and Dixieland but he owned more than 10,000 records in his lifetime. He explained that he had state championship jazz bands because the kids knew what jazz should sound like.

"I had an extensive solo and ensemble programs and records to support that. I taught both music history and humanities and used them in that. Mostly I just played them. I don't really give a damn what others think about it. I like it. At least I'm not drinking the money away or something like that."

McKay says he is past the point of buying much more vinyl. He has actually been working on selling off pieces of his collection. Some of it is going on EBay, more valuable pieces are going to his daughter who lives in New York, and he gave away three to four thousand to Goodwill in Ohio when he retired and moved.

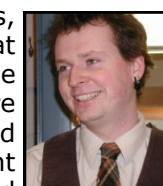
His condo in Florida still contains a large amount of vinyl. "It takes up a full wall of my living room, about 18 feet or so. The EBay takes one bedroom, and it is stacked everywhere." There is more kept in a storage facility and he says what is left will have to go to a "jobber" (a collection buyer).

McKay faces the reality that an assisted living home is in the near future for him and his wife who suffers from dementia. McKay also has been in failing health which often happens when you get older. He was deathly ill in 2000-2001, spending 16 weeks in a hospital and nine months in a hospital bed that was set up in his living room. His hearing also has gone bad, which forced him to change careers in 1980.

I was surprised that this man in his 70s owns about 450 CDs. He does not have an extensive collection but appreciates the portability of the format. The CDs are generally "more modern stuff that isn't available on LPs or items that I want to play in the car. Chrysler had an in-car phonograph, but it never worked."

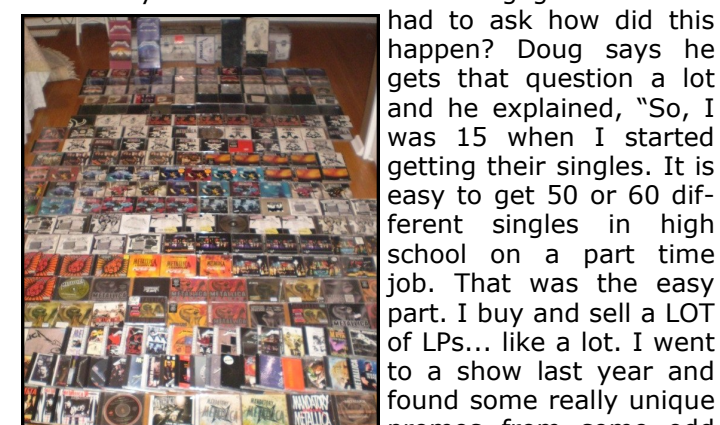
On the other extreme of the record collecting age bracket is a 24 year old from Ontario, Canada. Doug Brown is in college to become a teacher. He shares a lot of similarities with McKay, but they are over 1,600 miles apart. The biggest difference between the two is one is ending his lifetime of collecting and love for music and the other is just at the beginning.

Doug, who owns about 4,500 records, says, "I find that collecting is a great way to collect a snap shot into the history of any said topic... LPs are pressed, and if something is pressed that means if there are different pressings of a specific value is allotted to each pressing. That being said, the learning of all these pressings can be tons of fun, and a great way to learn about the history of your items. Being a collector doesn't mean you spend all of your money on it, but rather you love to spend your time on it."



Doug and McKay both have a musical background. Doug hangs out with musicians, plays music, writes music and as you can guess, collects music as well. He also has a permanent impression of his love for collecting records. Doug has a tattoo of a 45 center adapter on his right calf; the adapter is a yellow piece of plastic that fits into the center of a 45 so it would fit properly on the record player.

Doug and McKay also share the interest of a specialty collector's genre. McKay has his jazz and Dixieland, Doug Brown has the band, Metallica. He has one of the largest, if not the largest, Metallica collection in Canada. I received a link from Doug with a note that said, "If you are interested in seeing something intense... check out my website. www.deathbydigital.com. I have not updated it in a bit...but you will see when collecting goes bad."



I had to ask how did this happen? Doug says he gets that question a lot and he explained, "So, I was 15 when I started getting their singles. It is easy to get 50 or 60 different singles in high school on a part time job. That was the easy part. I buy and sell a LOT of LPs... like a lot. I went to a show last year and found some really unique promos from some odd ball bands. I turned 100 bucks into a little over \$3,000 in two days. That \$3,000...well, all went back into Metallica. I do this all the time. I buy full collections, keep what I want, sell the rest for more, and the extra cash buys Metallica collectables."

Obsession might be a weak term to describe Doug's collection. He even named his brand new kitten, RTL. That is the title of a Metallica album, *Ride the Lightning*.