



The allure of analog

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More and more twenty- and thirtysomethings are buying vinyl records over CDs in stores like Smash! Records in Georgetown and Crooked Beat Records in Adams Morgan.

Photos by Andrew Harnik/Examiner

Vinyl making a comeback with younger buyers

BY KELSEY VOLKMAN

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Forget MP3s.

More and more music lovers, especially teenagers and twentysomethings, are queuing up their music with vinyl records, say local record vendors.

Both customers and suppliers have their own reasons as to why records — a form predating eight-tracks, cassette tapes and compact discs — are making such a comeback among younger audiences.

"The sound of records is richer [than CDs], kind of like you're there instead of just listening to a recording," said Brian Green, 17, of McLean, while looking at Anthrax and AC/DC albums.

Green, was among the youthful buyers perusing the record stacks at Smash! Records on M Street NW in Georgetown one recent Wednesday afternoon.

Alec Budd, the tattooed manager of Smash!, said music recorded with analog technology has a sound fuller, richer and is truer to the original atmosphere in which it was created.

"It's like reading Dostoevsky in English instead of Russian," added Bobby Polsky, who opened Smash!



Part-time employee Ryan Hicks listens to a record at Crooked Beat Records on Tuesday in Adams Morgan.

in 1984 as a store for punk music and other counterculture genres.

Budd, who also works as a bartender, said he manages Smash! as a way to feed his record addiction — he estimated his collection at around 5,000 records

Feels like the first time

Some, including a small, loyal following of DJs and record collec-

tors, never stopped buying LPs, Budd told *The Examiner*. But it's the younger generation that is falling in love with records for the first time, he said.

While statistics on exactly how many of the under-30 set are buying vinyl records are hard to find, Budd said he has seen a spike in the number of younger customers.

Green said his twentysomething friends introduced him to the beauty of records about a year ago, and since then he has collected 150 LPs (long-playing formats that are 12 inches in diameter and spin at 33 1/3 revolutions per minute) and 60 EPs and singles. Singles and extended-play formats are seven inches in diameter and spin at 45 rpm.

The price is usually right, too, Green added, noting he doesn't pay more than \$15 for an LP or \$10 for a seven-inch.

Prices at Crooked Beat Records on 18th Street NW in Adams Morgan range from \$1 in the dollar bins and \$5-\$15 for regularly priced records to \$60-\$70 for rare items and musical treasures. Crooked Beat specializes in hard-to-find new and used LPs of independent music labels and obscure releases by larger music houses.

Aesthetic appeal

Neal Becton, co-owner of Crooked Beat, is one of the DJs who never forsook the benefits of vinyl. His collection of about 40,000 records now occupies two storage units as well as portions of his house.

Like books, Becton believes, records will never go away completely despite changes and updates in music-listening technology. One reason he said is the aesthetic appeal of the artwork featured on the much larger album jackets and liner notes.

Becton lifted a CD case and held it next to a record jacket. "There's no comparison," he said.

"It's an art object," said 24-year-old Holly Tegeler, a Crooked Beat clerk who has amassed about 70 or 80 albums since she started collecting about a year ago. "And there's nothing like finding limited pressings, like New Order's 'Blue Monday.'"