

Vinyl Revival

Vinyl record sales are on the rise and college-aged students are the biggest buyers.

By Austen Erblat

On the little-known fifth floor of FAU's S.E. Wimberly Library on the Boca campus sits a room with grayed-out glass walls that run the height of the ceiling. What lies behind them would make any vinyl junkie spin out of control with joy.

"We have 100,000 recordings in the archives, and that's 78 RPMs, 45 RPMs, LPs, cassettes, reel-to-reel and CDs," said Maxine Schackman, director of the Recorded Sound Archives at FAU's library. "And I would say over 80 percent are LPs."

The Recorded Sound Archives is a department within the library on campus that collects, restores, preserves and digitizes old records from the 20th and 21st century, according to Schackman.

"It started off as a Judaica cultural rescue project, and that's how we got into finding recordings, bringing them to FAU, cleaning them up and digitizing them to restore them to their cultural heritage," Schackman said. Now, the record room on the fifth floor boasts over 100,000 records of Jewish, American, jazz, classical and pop/rock albums. And, every year, they give away duplicates to students, staff, local record stores and anyone else interested in expanding their collection.

On the other side of Boca, junior film major Luke Lehner gets back to his apartment from class around 6 o'clock, takes "Give Up" by The Postal Service out of its sleeve, places it on his turntable, hits "start" and puts needle to wax.

Lehner recalls cleaning out his grandmother's house in New York after Hurricane Sandy and finding a few dozen vinyl records of bands from the '60s and '70s, mostly Jimi Hendrix, Cream and Weather Report. So he took them home, along with an old record player, and a new passion was sparked.



Luke Lehner has "Give Up" by The Postal Service on heavy rotation. Photo by Austen Erblat.

Music Movies and More

West Palm Beach, (561) 969-0002

Music Movies and More is home to a huge selection of different forms of music, movies and other media, including a sizable selection of vinyl records. Located just off I-95 on Okechobee Boulevard and North Florida Mango Road.

Top Five Records

Lake Worth, (561) 313-9387

Located right next door to concert venue Propaganda, Top Five has a huge collection of almost exclusively older records with styles ranging from classic rock, jazz, and R&B, but also have a section for local artists. The walls are also covered with tons of memorabilia, including guitars, posters, and signed record covers.

Record Rack

Pompano Beach, (954) 783-5004

The Record Rack has a great selection of newer records from independent rock, hip-hop and pop artists, as well as a large selection of metal albums. But most of the store's real estate is dedicated to used records, many of which are classics from the '60s and '70s from artists such as The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Presley and more.

Radio-Active Records

Fort Lauderdale, (954) 762-9488

Radio-Active Records is THE spot in Fort Lauderdale to get records, with a massive collection of modern rock and pop albums. Radio-Active does its best to stay current with all vinyl releases, stocking plenty of local bands' records and even hosting events and concerts from time to time.

Sweat Records

Miami, (786) 693-9309

Sweat Records is right next door to Churchill's Pub in Little Haiti. It has an extensive collection of classic rock, R&B, soul and hip-hop records, but have plenty of other genres as well. Sweat Records also hosts concerts on a small stage in the back of the store and even sells vegan-friendly food, snacks and beverages.

Yesterday and Today Records

Miami, (305) 554-1020

Yesterday and Today has stacks of records in their store and was voted "best record store in Miami" in 2012 by the Miami New Times. They carry import and domestic records, most of which are from "yesterday," and is located in between Hialeah and South Miami.

Where to Get Vinyl:

"A lot of bands I listen to now are coming out with vinyl, so I got an album by Say Anything," Lehner said. "Then I went down to The Record Rack in Pompano and got The Black Keys' 'El Camino.'"

After visiting Radio-Active Records in Fort Lauderdale, he started actively collecting anything he could get his hands on: classic, re-press, modern.

And it was at that point that he discovered a love for a music format long considered extinct.

"I prefer vinyl over MP3 wholeheartedly," Lehner said. "It's \$8-10 to buy a full album off iTunes, about \$12 for a CD and about \$15 for a vinyl record. You're paying an extra \$3 for something that's visually appealing and unique. CDs, you put them on your computer, and you put the MP3s on your iPod. I like the album art. It always adds something special, sometimes the record itself is a different color."

But there are also differences in sound quality between vinyl and MP3.

"When the sound is digitized, a brittle, mechanical sound that doesn't sound good is there. There's a robotic quality to it," Schackman said. "There's a warmth and a live sound vibe that comes through when you're listening to a vinyl record being played. And people who are attuned to that can definitely hear it."

Senior commercial music major Angi Fontenot has been listening to vinyl since she was in 7th grade and says her parents got her into it. "We would listen to them sometimes on weekend mornings when nothing was on TV or during spring cleaning. We would all jam out."

Fontenot described the nostalgic effect vinyl records have. "It sounds like the past. Sometimes I feel like I was born in the wrong era and when listening to vinyls, it just seems to fit."

When we asked how she feels about college students revisiting this form of music, Dr. Schackman couldn't be happier. "It's so exciting and wonderful!" she said. "We have this vinyl record giveaway every year and we're amazed at the turn out. We're amazed that people want to come and take boxes of vinyl records away to listen to them."