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RVINYL



Photo by Tracy Warrton



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RVINYL

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Richmond is a mid-size city with a big heart and it's full of vinyl records. So where did they come from? Why do we have so many? The stories and guide on these pages will clue you in to RVA's vinyl culture and what keeps record collectors spinning.

RECORD CITY USA

Demographics and psychographics combine to make Richmond fertile ground for vinyl collectors **BY CRAIG BELCHER**



very few months, there's another story about the resurgence of vinyl records. It's a narrative that's worn out but keeps on playing, because someone wants to hear it. The real story is that vinyl records never went anywhere. They might've been tucked into attics, basements, storage units and hi-fi cabinets when the compact disc arrived, but they never truly left. It is true that record labels are pressing more records these days, and now they can be found at exclusive boutiques like Target, Urban Outfitters and Whole Foods, and young people do love the shiny black discs. Richmond is a good place to find them. Most major cities have a handful of record stores, but Richmond boasts 11 independent shops that sell records. Some, like Barky's Spiritual Stores and Plan 9 Music, have been around for decades, while others, such as Records & Relics and Small Friend Records and Books, are new to the game. So why does Richmond have so many independent record stores? Where are the records coming from?

Katie Gilstrap, assistant professor of marketing at Virginia Commonwealth University, doesn't own a single record. But Gilstrap, the former chief marketing



Record enthusiast Aaron Bushman peruses the stock at Steady Sounds on a regular basis.

officer for a local bank and daughter of a bluegrass musician, thinks she knows why there are so many record stores in Richmond.

"I think that what you see around this issue and other related issues is that Richmond is the perfect storm of the psychographic profile of hipsters," she says. "I know that's not a scientific term, but it does have meaning in marketing in terms of personas of audiences."

So Richmond has a lot of hipsters — you may not have needed a college professor to tell you that. To some, the term "hipster" conjures an image of a

bearded white dude in a plaid shirt holding a plastic cup of craft beer. But this doesn't encompass everyone Gilstrap is referring to.

"It's a lifestyle and a point of view," she says. "I don't see it tied to gender, age or ethnicity."

But back to that perfect storm that's raining records on River City.

"We are also such a young city, demographic-wise with the four universities, that we have this constant influx of young people here, and we are a nostalgic city that's steeped in a love of all things vintage," Gilstrap says. "That's manifest-



Top left: Barksdale "Barky" Haggins of Barky's Spiritual Stores; Top right: Records & Relics; Bottom: Record Store Day at Plan 9 Music



ing itself in things like record stores, tattoos, you see it in craft beer, you see it in artisanal coffee, so it's not surprising to me that we're over-indexing in vinyl records, because we over-index in related categories that speak to that young hipster, vintage, psychographic profile."

Not a bad analysis from someone who streams her music exclusively. It should be noted that record stores aren't the only places selling records. Thrift stores such as Diversity Thrift, Goodwill, FanTastic Thrift, The Love of Jesus and many others typically have a healthy record selection with varying degrees of quality. Of the chain stores with records in their inventory, Urban Outfitters, which has a shop in Short Pump, is one of the largest sellers of records in the country, while 2nd & Charles, with two locations in the region, has an immense selection of records and books. You'll also find records in a few places where you wouldn't expect to see them, such as Carytown Pack & Ship, which has a rack of dance music for sale. Though these other places sell records, they don't have that indie record store vibe.

"In my day, when we used to go to record stores, it was about a community," says John Glaser, vice president of sales for Alliance Entertainment, the country's largest distributor of vinyl records. "You can walk in there and talk about music with someone. You knew they were going to turn you on to something new and fresh and maybe something that you weren't exactly coming in for."

"That's a big number," he says, when



told about the amount of retailers in Richmond selling vinyl, almost double the tally you'll find in Miami, near Alliance's headquarters in Sunrise, Florida. "There's probably fewer pure record stores in your town," he says. "I assume the majority of those guys are diversifying into different products." Indeed, most of the "guys" are peddling something besides music. At Barky's, you can buy a choir robe; the records at Steady Sounds share space with vintage clothing; Plan 9 has posters, turntables and 8-track tapes; Oregon Hill's Vinyl Conflict offers vintage band T-shirts; and Records & Relics has, well, relics.

Despite the popularity of vinyl, making a living selling records is still tough. Local store Monument City Coffee & Records closed in 2015. Retail mainstay

Plan 9 Music sought protection under Chapter 11 of the federal Bankruptcy Code in 2011, after closing most of its satellite locations. Small Friend Records & Books turned to a crowdfunding site for help several months after opening last year.

Chicago resident Quinn Cunningham closed his brick and mortar store Funk Trunk a few years ago. Now he buys records for Reverb, an online marketplace for audio gear that has added records to its repertoire. Cunningham recently made his first visit to Richmond as a buyer. He spent approximately \$70,000 on records, buying them at stores and storage units and through house calls over a week.

Does this mean he might return?

"It means that I might move there," he says, and laughs. **1**

INDEPENDENTS DAY

COMPILED BY GRADY TREXLER, OLIVIA DIAZ, ADAM CHEEK AND CRAIG BELCHER // ILLUSTRATIONS BY MELISSA DUFFY

THESE 11 INDEPENDENT

stores aren't the only shops where you can buy records in the city, but they are your best bets for finding something you have to own that you never knew existed before you stopped by. The shops are curated by seasoned collectors, musicians, veteran retailers and just plain music nuts. If you're looking for that rare pressing of an obscure import or getting started with the whole vinyl thing, here are the places to go. —CB



6131 RECORDS 5710 PATTERSON AVE.

BACKSPIN: An indie record label that started 13 years ago in California opened a storefront in the Near West End last summer. Open Fridays and Saturdays.

FEATURING: Current releases on their label, of course, as well as classic titles. The store doesn't carry used records, but they've got T-shirts, buttons and tote bags in stock.



BARKY'S 18 E. BROAD ST.

BACKSPIN: Richmonders have been buying music from Barky's since 1954. The business has survived a fire and sweeping changes in the music industry and consumer habits.

FEATURING: Gospel music in almost every format. You'll also find minister robes, hymnals, DVDs, bibles, white gloves and other church supplies.



PLAN 9 MUSIC 3017 W. CARY ST.

BACKSPIN: Opened 37 years ago, this is the prototype of the modern record store in Richmond. (Former employees own two of Richmond's other shops — Deep Groove and Steady Sounds.) One of Prince's final tweets was a shout-out to the Carytown store.

FEATURING: Rock, jazz, pop, soul, hip-hop, R&B and almost everything else. Besides records, there are CDs, cassettes, turntables, T-shirts, posters and DVDs.



RECORDS & RELICS 2704 E. MARSHALL ST.

BACKSPIN: Open less than a year, the shop is among the newest in Richmond and the only record store in the city's East End.

FEATURING: Used records, only. Along with the blues, jazz, soundtracks, hip-hop and rock records, the shop has a small selection of books, home décor items and pop culture memorabilia.



SMALL FRIEND 105 N. 17TH ST.

BACKSPIN: The year-old Shockoe Bottom store takes its name from a dog, Peluga Lee, who is the smallest friend of the couple who own the store.

FEATURING: An eclectic assortment of books and records, both new and used. There's also a healthy assortment of zines. The store hosts a lecture series called "Small Talk" on the last Thursday of each month.



BK MUSIC

2833-A HATHAWAY RD.

BACKSPIN: Celebrating 20 years in business next year, BK Music survived being pushed out of its former location to make way for Starbucks and Chipotle.

FEATURING: Lots of new and used records and CDs, with rock, soul, blues and jazz staples that any store should stock. There's also sell T-shirts, DVDs, turntables and CBD products.



DEEP GROOVE

317 N. ROBINSON ST.

BACKSPIN: Started by a former Plan 9 employee in 2009, this is a smaller store that makes good use of its footprint, with a quality selection of popular and pivotal releases.

FEATURING: A mix of rock, jazz, R&B and reggae records, along with other genres, plus a small collection of used turntables and a variety of postcards.



MEMORY LANE

8609 SANFORD DR.

BACKSPIN: More like a warehouse that sells records than a typical record shop, Memory Lane opened in 1979. If you have the time, digging through the shelves, racks and crates can be fruitful.

FEATURING: Just about anything. There is an emphasis on antiquated recordings, with music dating back to the early 1900s among the tremendous selection.



STEADY SOUNDS

322 W. BROAD ST.

BACKSPIN: Founded by two Plan 9 expatriates eight years ago, the store now shares space with Blue Bones, a vintage clothing retailer.

FEATURING: Lots of dollar records and a well-curated inventory of rock, soul, pop, hip-hop and jazz discs both old and new, along with new and vintage stereo equipment and music memorabilia.



VINYL CONFLICT

324 S. PINE ST.

BACKSPIN: This midsize shop caters to customers who like a certain type of music and doesn't try to be anything else. Opened in 2008, the store is a hub for the hardcore scene.

FEATURING: Punk, metal, hardcore and hip-hop records. There's also a curated collection of T-shirts, cassettes and zines.



WAX MOON

1310 ALTAMONT AVE.

BACKSPIN: A post-punk and extreme-metal shop that opened three years ago in Scott's Addition. The black-walled store is usually overseen by a shadowy cat named Miho.

FEATURING: Since its opening, the store has expanded its inventory to include less extreme genres. There's also a healthy selection of VHS tapes, posters, badges, pins, cassette tapes, retro video games and T-shirts.

SOUND CINEMA

This month, the Byrd Theatre is wagering that record store owners know a few things about films, too, and letting five of them pick the Wednesday night movie.

5/1 "THE LOST BOYS" VINYL CONFLICT

A 1987 horror-comedy about a gang of vampires, featuring Keifer Sutherland and the two Coreys, Haim and Feldman.

5/8 "WILD STYLE" RECORDS & RELICS

1983's "Wild Style" details the genesis of hip-hop through the life of a graffiti artist.

5/15 "I CALLED HIM MORGAN" PLAN 9

A 2016 film about Lee Morgan, a brilliant trumpeter who was murdered in 1972 by his common-law wife at a New York nightclub.

5/22 "SPACE IS THE PLACE" STEADY SOUNDS

Starring pianist and composer Sun Ra as a musician attempting to resettle African-Americans on a new planet he discovered (1974).

5/29 "THE HARDER THEY COME" DEEP GROOVE

Features reggae icon Jimmy Cliff as a fugitive and reggae singer in 1970s Jamaica. Directed by Perry Henzell. -CB

THE COLLECTORS

How many records are enough? These people probably don't know.

PHOTOS BY JAY PAUL



UNHEARD OF

After accumulating some 6,000 records, this collector seeks new sounds

BY CRAIG BELCHER

➡ When you're a record collector and you share a home with a person who isn't, it's important that everyone knows their place—especially the records. For Jermain "JayQuan" Hartsfield, "it's a very contained thing," he says of the part of his Chesterfield home known as the "throwback" room, with shelves of records, compact discs, action figures, musical instruments and more records. The 48-year-old says his wife, Kara, understands.

"She knew when she met me what she was getting into," he says. "She knew that I was into music, she knew that I had a record collection."

It's a collection that has grown since he started with a record by the Archies when he was 8 years old. Since that time, he says he has only parted with a few of the estimated

6,000 records he has accumulated.

"I have 95 percent of the records that I ever purchased," he says.

Among those are his own recordings as part of the pioneering Richmond-based rap group known as the Too-Def Crew and later as the First Sons. While he still records music, these days he's making his mark as an expert in the history of his chosen genre. He recently inducted several rap luminaries (Big Daddy Kane, the Sugar Hill Gang, Melle Mel, Biz Markie) into the Hip-Hop Hall of Fame and serves as a historian for the organization that supports it. He's also working on a documentary that looks at the seminal hip-hop record label Sugar Hill Records. As his role in the music industry has evolved, so have

his preferences.

"I listen with a different ear now," he says. "I was looking for loops and drums—now as a more adult person that's not looking to sample the record, I can enjoy."

There's a lot of music to appreciate in a collection that includes rare and classic rock, jazz, and hip-hop. At this point, there's a particular kind of record he looks for, and he knows them when he sees them.

"Today, because I have so much already, I'm looking for stuff I've never heard of," he says.

Surprisingly, JayQuan wasn't aware there were so many record stores operating in the city. "Now I'm going to spend more money. I might not have needed to know that [laughs]."

THE COUPLE THAT COLLECTS TOGETHER

Their voluminous vinyl collection's true value is in the joy it brings

BY GENEVELYN STEELE

Tracy Wilson has turntables in every room of the midcentury ranch home that she shares with her husband and fellow discophile Kenneth Close, including a child's playroom with disco lights on their screened porch. On warm evenings, they mix drinks and whirl through boxes of 45s. Audiophiles might cringe at the portable's sound quality, but for Wilson and Close, who hunger for music rather than acquisition, listening satiates.

Wilson and Close play together in Positive No, a band that distills hard-riffing guitar and heartfelt pauses, mixed with pop grooves – a sound that defined the indie '90s, an era Wilson knows well. A collector since her teens, Wilson owns over 8,000 albums, which cover the walls and fill the record room of their Maymont home, chosen for its lack of windows and radiators, two things that can devastate vinyl.



"My first purchase was a Go-Go's album in 1982. It was a ritual to take my allowance and buy a new record. After that purchase, an employee gave me a list on the back of a paper bag. I learned about a world outside of Top 40 – alternative music, English New Wave, The Smiths, Siouxsie and the Banshees," says Wilson, who grew up in New Jersey.

Wilson and Close visit record stores when they travel, spending hours combing through bins. They cull from the 1950s to now, covering primarily punk, rock, soul and funk.

It's been said that music saves lives, and Wilson has a story to tell. After she was struck by a car in 2011, her medical bills piled up, and unable to work, she turned to her record collection for help.

"I owned the very first Jack White 7-inch [45], pre-White Stripes. A bidding war broke out [on eBay], and the record sold for \$1,200. That saved my life. It paid my rent, which superseded any attachment to the record... I don't fetishize my collection – its value isn't dollars."

THE PIED PIPER OF PLATTERS

Richmond's original crate digger still collects

BY DON HARRISON

Richmond native John Wood is surrounded by vinyl and assorted music memorabilia at his Chester home – he even built a separate guest cottage for his 45s. "I guess I have a half million records," he says. "It's really hard to say." Looking for a singular piece of rare psychedelia, some hard-to-find jazz or a scarce Broadway cast album? Chances are, if it's not here in Chester, it

passed through at some point.

The 58-year-old collector, who has worked for years in concert security, most recently at The National, traces the foundation of his massive assemblage to a handful of 45s his mom bought at a church flea market when he was 5 years old. "It was everything from the Beatles to Johnny Cash to Walter Brennan, the actor," he recalls.

In his teens, Wood began purchasing large collections and dealing discs out of his house. In the early '80s, he organized the first Richmond record conventions and helped to sell the initial discs (on consignment) at a scrappy little Carytown curio shop called Plan 9. Later, he set up his wares at the now-departed Super Flea in Midlothian, helping to bring music legends such as Richmond's Rock-a-Teens and The Jarmels and Gene Vincent's Blue Caps to perform at the market.

"I'm still more into the old school music than the newer stuff," the Santa-bearded Wood says. "But I do have a few current artists that I love. Cults, Delta Rae, Devendra Banhart, to name a few."

Wood says he's been in "hibernation" lately, not making his usual appearances at area record shows. But as he speaks, he's finishing up a sale to a traveling dealer who is setting up at a North Carolina show but is light on stock. "Oh, I have people coming through here almost every day looking at records," he says. You believe him. **R**



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Rare Richmond Records

Obscure and valuable recordings linked to RVA

by Craig Belcher, Don Harrison

May 17, 2019 8:57 AM

RSS Print

There are numerous rare records with Richmond connections; we've compiled some noteworthy selections below. Most were pressed in small quantities and didn't become desirable to collectors until years after their release. They range from early hip-hop to soul sides and offbeat rockabilly. These aren't the rarest or the most expensive, but if you see them in a record rack near you and you have the scratch, don't sleep.

Robert William, Cranberry Blues



Robert Williams, "Cranberry Blues" b/w "Loud Mufflers" (Tip Top, 1959)

One of rockabilly's greasiest, and oddest, discs, waxed in the back of a Richmond furniture store by a wild and wooly Fredericksburg rocker. The A-side is about a cranberry-related food scare (?), while the flip details the legal ramifications of having loud exhaust pipes on your hot rod.

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THE FERGUSON BROTHERS - DO YOU MY FUNK ... 🎵🎵🎵 !!! PEACE.



Ferguson Brothers, "Here to Stay" (Ambient Records, 1979)

Despite the name of their debut, these brothers, who look like runners-up in a "Saturday Night Fever" lookalike contest, wouldn't release another album. This one-shot is an enjoyable slice of blue-eyed soul, with touches of disco, pop rock and even a respectable attempt at rapping. Not a masterpiece, but worth a listen.

Honey Bees - It Happen On A Tuesday (Attack 1128-B) 196x



The Honey Bees, "Love, Love I Can't Get Over It" b/w "It Happen on a Tuesday" (Attack!, 1963)

A soulful girl group record that makes up in coolness what it lacks in grammatical accuracy. Attack! was an ambitious local label run by homespun producer Charles E. Scott, who released a few quixotic sides and advertised that the label had a "Virginia Sound."

The Edge Of Daybreak - Our Love



Edge of Daybreak, Eyes of Love (Bohannon's, 1979)

The groove-laden soul/funk record was recorded in, of all places, Powhatan Correctional Center, and the band itself was made up of prisoners at the jail. Issued by the famed Grace Street music store and head shop, Bohannon's, this rare-as-hell LP was reissued in 2015 by Numero Group.

Serious Tripp - Gotta Keep Movin



Serious Tripp, "Seriously Speaking" (Serious Records, 1991)

There's a category on record auction sites known as "random rap," a reference to the small labels that upstart rappers found themselves on in the early 1990s, and that's where you'll find this release listed. Serious Tripp didn't become famous, but the beats on this EP are serviceable and his flow is above average for the era.

William Cummings Make my love a hurting thing



William Cummings, "Make My Love a Hurting Thing" (Bang Bang, 1969)

The trombonist and lead vocalist for famed Central Virginia party band Zeke and the Soul Setters steps out front with an epic, angst-ridden paeon to love. According to some collectors, this is the rarest of all Richmond-related soul discs.

Richmond in Full Effect (Force Records, 1989)

Another in the random rap category, this hip-hop EP features three artists, C. Love, Devastatin D and Shrlock and the JVC Rocks, all produced by Dr. Mix. A low-budget affair, it comes with a pasted-on cover and a typewritten letter.

Happy Pal Stomp



Johnson's Happy Pals, "Savoy Rhythm" b/w "Happy Pal Stomp" (Okeh, 1929)

These two songs are the only recordings that we have of Richmond's hottest early jazz band, mainstays of the Jackson Ward scene in the '20s and '30s. These jumpy

selections are not believed to have been recorded at the field session that the Okeh label held in Richmond the same year, but in New York City.

The Trouble With Larry - "Otto Messmer"/"The Rodent Song" [1990]



The Trouble with Larry, "Otto Messmer" b/w "The Rodent Song" (Good Kitty Records, 1990)

This outsider Richmond punk rock trio put out a slew of infectious singles in the 1990s, preoccupied by sci-fi movies, urban decay and conspiracy theories. This was one of the best, recorded at Richmond's once-prolific Studio Nico.

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