



Vinyl record sales have jumped to 6 million



Nova Safo

Chicago's Dusty Groove record store, named by Rolling Stone magazine as one of the best in the country, is a well-known destination for vinyl record lovers.

by [Nova Safo \(/people/nova-safo\)](/people/nova-safo)

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If you think the debate over digital or analog has long been answered, then you probably have not stepped into an independent record store such as Dusty Groove in Chicago.

It is one of the nation's top independent sellers of vinyl records, which have experienced a sales boom in the last seven years — going from 1 million to 6 million sales in 2013. This year, vinyl is likely to surpass last year's total.



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Of course, vinyl sales are still dwarfed by digital downloads. Nielsen SoundScan, which measures point-of-sale of recorded music product, says there were almost 50 billion video and audio streaming downloads in 2013. But vinyl's resurgence has been dramatic enough in an industry of dwindling sales that record companies have begun to pay attention and, for the first time since the invention of the CD, to increase the number of titles they release on vinyl.

“What's great about the vinyl revival is seeing a generation that I think the music industry had written off 10 years ago as people that were only going to download and maybe only steal, seeing these people become very active, aggressive consumers of a physical item,” says Rick Wojcik, the owner of Dusty Groove.

Wojcik has been in the vinyl business for almost 20 years, having opened his store first as an online operation and then adding a physical store to appease customers who would show up at his address only to be disappointed by the lack of a physical retail space.

And that, Wojcik says, is the story of Chicago, a place where vinyl never lost its appeal and where more than 30 record stores cater to vinyl enthusiasts.

“Our vinyl sales were always high, and they haven't spiked, because we cared about vinyl,” Wojcik says. “What has happened in recent years is that this sort of activity is now taking place on a playing field that's being recognized in the larger business community, by the record industry itself.”

Even outside of the music industry, there is now a jumping on board of the vinyl bandwagon. Urban Outfitters is now one of the nation's largest vinyl record stores. Even the supermarket company Whole Foods has begun carrying vinyl records in certain markets.

Wojcik is cautiously optimistic, but he says there is a danger in the recent vinyl boom for the smaller independent stores that had up to this point differentiated themselves (and stayed in business) thanks to their vinyl offerings.

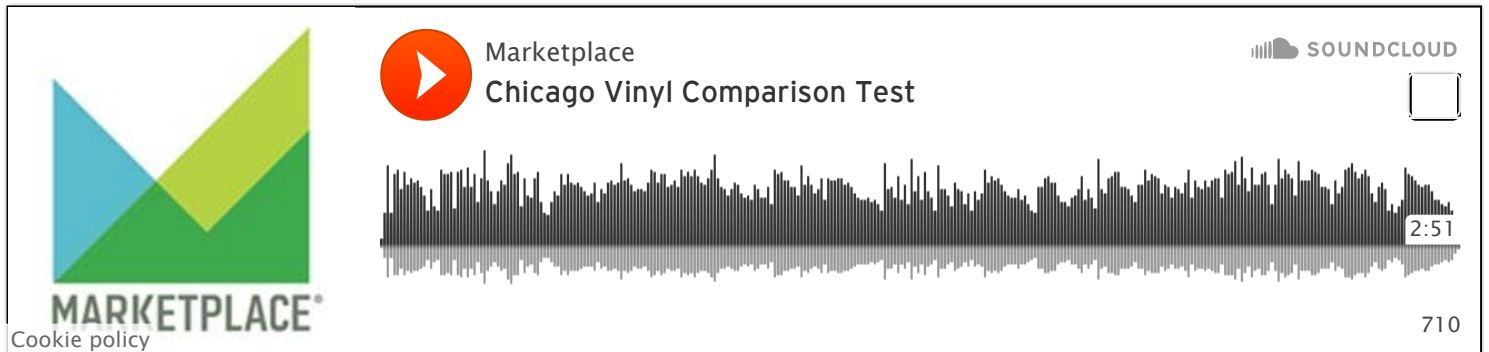


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“I know that a lot of stores that are small and struggling, like most record stores are always kinda dancing on a razor's edge of finances, are really worried that they're going to be overstuffed with vinyl, because the amount of production has just expanded greatly in 2014,” Wojcik says.

Much of the sales boom has been driven by people like Lindon McCarty, 27, who was shopping for a record at Dusty Groove. For him and his group of friends, the appeal of vinyl is obvious.

“It sounds clearer to me. It sounds like, close your eyes, and you’re in the actual room that it was recorded in,” McCarty says, adding that he is a musician and his friends are all “music snobs.”

An audio player interface for a SoundCloud track. On the left is the Marketplace logo, a stylized 'M' composed of blue, green, and yellow triangles, with the word 'MARKETPLACE' and a 'Cookie policy' link below it. To the right of the logo is a red play button icon, followed by the text 'Marketplace Chicago Vinyl Comparison Test'. Further right is the SoundCloud logo and a square icon. Below the text is a waveform visualization of the audio. At the bottom right of the waveform, there is a time indicator '2:51' and a number '710'.

Wojcik says in addition to the sound and the large album covers that CDs and MP3s can’t duplicate, vinyl — when holding original prints — offers a chance to have a piece of history.

“It’s like reading a hardcover book versus a paperback book, or an ebook” Wojcik says.

Yes, but does vinyl actually sound better? Wojcik gave a comparison demonstration to prove that it does. The results are in the web-extra audio clip on this page.

I’ll give you a hint: I went into the demonstration thinking one thing, and left thinking another.

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