

## The best record stores in Chicago

Expand your collection at Chicago's best record stores, where you'll find vinyl, CDs, cassettes and more

By Zach Long

Posted: Thursday March 24 2016



Photograph: Samantha Tadelman

Reckless Records in the Loop is one of the best record stores in Chicago.

The vinyl revolution is nothing new to Chicago. In fact, vinyl never went away. DJs from our city and around the world would comb through the stacks in South Side shops, digging for buried vintage treasures, hoping to find rare wax to drop at the [dance club](#). Unfortunately, that means a lot of really obscure and valuable stuff is long gone. That doesn't mean the well is dry.

Chicago's top record stores are great for finding used LPs, freshly pressed new releases, CDs and even some cassettes. We have genre-specific stores catering to metal, world and electronic heads. The big-box retailers like Tower and Virgin are history, but we hardly miss 'em thanks to record-hunting hubs like [Wicker Park](#). Here's where to discover the best music, including the [greatest Chicago albums](#).

1



## Reckless Records

With three locations in the Loop, Lakeview and Wicker Park, Reckless is the big daddy record retailer in town. Some things still drive us nuts—having to flip through all those little plastic-wrapped CD booklets, the fact that it can be sometimes hard to pop in and pick up a popular new release—but the used selection is wonderful and the vinyl keeps proliferating.

[READ MORE](#)

○ Wicker Park



2



## Dusty Groove

The funny thing about Dusty Groove is just how pleasantly bright and clean it is. It's like an interior design store or artisanal coffee shop. The "dusty grooves" of course refer to the obscure and wondrous global rhythms found in the smartly curated bins, sorted into Tropicalia, Afrobeat, reggae, vintage soul, French pop, blues, jazz, etc. It's the kind of place you'd have to hit if you were soundtracking a Tarantino film.

[READ MORE](#)

o East Village



## Logan Hardware

In spite of its name, you won't find saw blades or power drills at this Logan Square shop, though you might be able to pick up records from Tool or Nine Inch Nails. Retaining the name of its former location (which now houses the Logan Arcade), Logan Hardware stocks new and used records in addition to refurbished turntables and stereo receivers. Make a purchase and your receipt will include a code that unlocks a nondescript door at the back of the store, giving you access to a room filled with vintage pinball machines and arcade cabinets, all set to free play.

[READ MORE](#)



4



## Laurie's Planet of Sound

Nineties nostalgists, this is your classic indie record shop, the place to hit when you Shazam a nifty new band on NPR, an Apple ad or college radio (still a thing, promise!) and want to own the physical product. Apart from the usual records and CDs, Laurie's sells pop-culture items such as Johnny Cash action figures, Alf stuffed animals and even a little Social Distortion skeleton guy.

[READ MORE](#)

o Lincoln Square



## Dave's Records

**n** Recommended

On a crowded, zig-zaggy stretch of Clark, a seven-inch record with a piece of paper taped across it hangs in a shop's front window. It makes owner Dave Crain's position quite clear. It reads: "NO CD'S NEVER HAD 'EM!!! NEVER WILL!!!" Lest you think this is some modern vinyl revival, keep in mind that Dave has been selling wax here for years and years. It's a charming, friendly shop run by an omnivorous music addict. New releases from Tame Impala, EDM 12-inches, used jazz, Lady Gaga, rare garage and so much more sit in stacks from floor to ceiling.

[READ MORE](#)

Lincoln Park \$\$\$\$





## Permanent Records

The mood is mellow and trendy in the über-friendly West Town record shop, which also boasts a satellite location in Los Angeles. Pitchfork readers will delight in one of the city's best collections of underground cassette tapes, but CDs and LPs of bands du jour can be found as well. Browse through 45s from local labels like Trouble in Mind and Numero Group or admire that pristine original Hawkwind LP on the wall. If you're lucky, you may see a noisy guitar band popping in for a cozy gig.

[READ MORE](#)

7



## 606 Records

Located directly across the street from Thalia Hall, Dusek's and Punch House, Pilsen's latest record store focuses on vinyl from small, international labels like Blackest Ever Black (London) and Exiles (Buenos Aires) as well as albums released by local favorites like Thrill Jockey and Numero Group. Stop by the slickly designed space to catch a DJ set or browse the selection of turntables, slipmats and other record supplies.

[READ MORE](#)

o Lower West Side    \$\$\$





## Bric-A-Brac Records and Collectibles

Stepping into Bric-A-Brac's brightly colored storefront is like entering the bedroom of every '80s kid's dreams. The yellow walls are covered with shelves of toys, ranging from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle action figures to vintage Transformers. It's one of the only stores in town where you can pick up a Combat Rock cassette, a VHS copy of Blade Runner and some E.T. earrings in one fell swoop. All of this supplements a highly curated selection of punk and garage rock records, including a healthy number of releases from local bands. Stop in to bask in the overwhelming sense of nostalgia and don't forget to say hi to Dandelo, the store's resident corgi.

[READ MORE](#)



## Gramophone Records

This small vinyl shop has long been a hub for professional and amateur electronic experts. It's like stepping into the bottomless record bag of a cool Berlin DJ. Gramophone stocks loads of bleeding-edge 12-inches from microlabels across the pond, stocking disco, bass, dubstep, microhouse, techno, trance... and whatever else producers are dreaming up in Ableton.

[READ MORE](#)

o Lake View





## Shuga Records

Shuga Records is doing its part to establish Wicker Park as Chicago's destination for vinyl. After three years of searching for the perfect neighborhood space, owner Adam "DJ Shuga Rose" Rosen recently opened his new location down the street from Reckless Records and Dusty Groove. The store houses close to 20,000 records exclusively available at the shop, plus turntables, vintage posters and hundreds of thousands more titles online. If you're searching for an obscure album, chances are you'll find it here. The shop also offers local delivery for orders over \$100.

[READ MORE](#)

○ Wicker Park    \$\$\$\$



## Pinwheel Records

Just steps away from the 18th Street Pink Line station, Pinwheel Records was the first record store to open up shop in Pilsen. The interior of the shop looks a bit like the living room of your dreams, boasting a couch, coffee table and an arcade cabinet. Of course, there are plenty of records (and turntables to listen to them on) neatly arranged throughout the brightly colored space. Stop in for some listening material while you digest those carnitas.

[READ MORE](#)



12

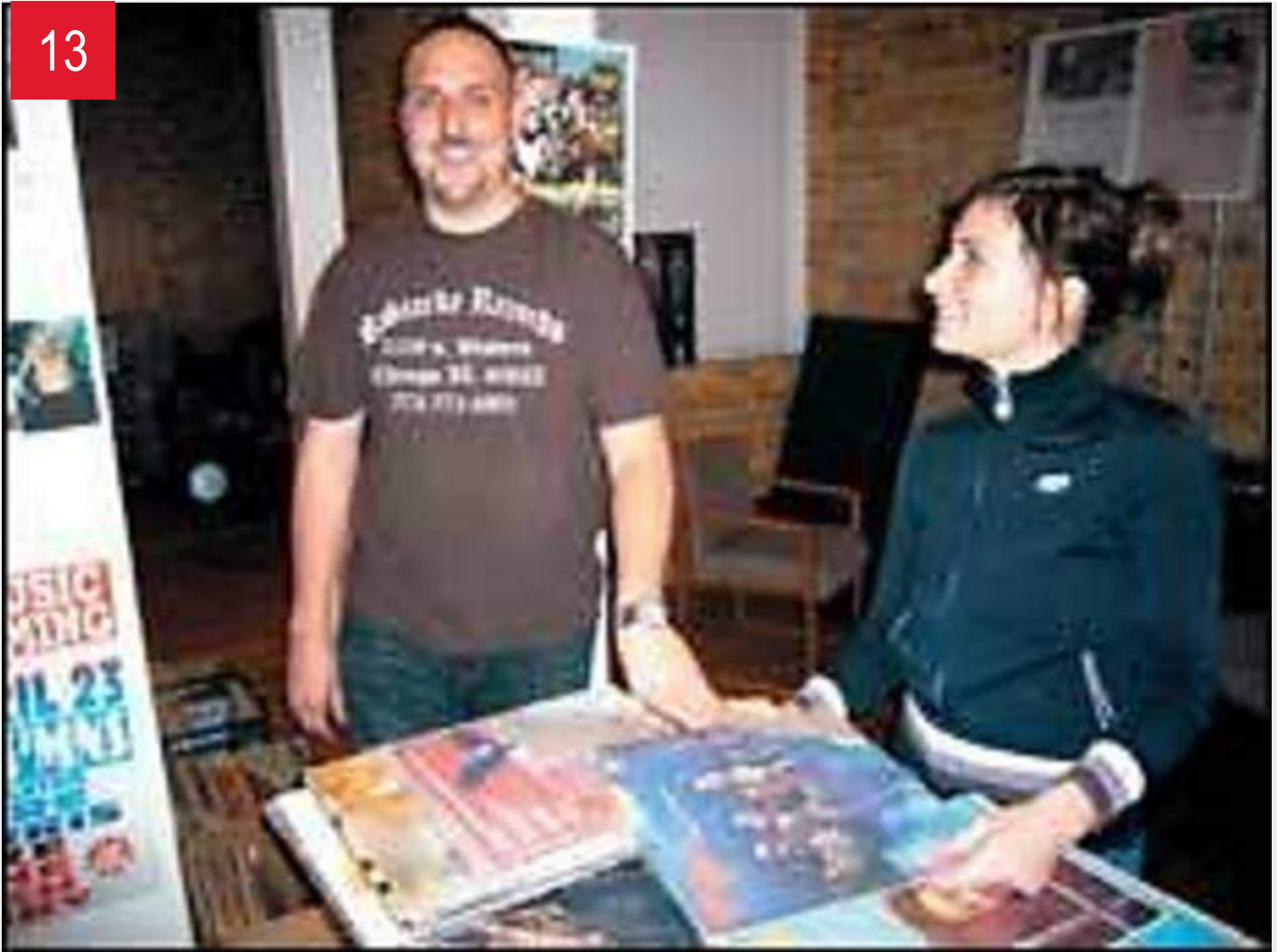


## Bucket O' Blood Books and Records

Opened in 2010, Bucket O' Blood Books and Records hawks low-priced books in the varieties of horror, science fiction, fantasy, literary fiction, popular science, creative nonfiction and biographies, as well as rock, punk and metal vinyl alongside used science fiction and horror DVDs. Its new location is just down the street from Kuma's Corner, which means you can finally eat a Slayer burger and then go buy a copy of Reign in Blood.

[READ MORE](#)

○ Avondale    \$\$\$\$



## Kstarke Records

Specializing in rare vinyl and hard-to-find 45s, this off-the-beaten-path shop draws hunter-gatherer DJs with its selection of obscure house, jazz, soul, reggae, Italo disco and punk wax. If what you're looking for is underground, it may well be available here. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff are on hand to help.

[READ MORE](#)

○ Ukrainian Village