

The Best Online Music Stores



YOU CAN SPEND HUNDREDS OF HOURS wading through countless online record stores of every conceivable genre and format. Even if you know what you're looking for and you tap in your request using a powerful search engine such as HotBot, you're likely to be confronted with seemingly limitless options. How to choose? If it's mainstream titles you're looking for, the answer is obvious. CD Now, Music Boulevard and Amazon.com all maintain exhaustive inventories of both new albums and back catalog; if it's still in print, chances are these three Web sites can get it for you. But what about used kraut-rock vinyl, rare Memphis-soul singles and obscure Japanese pop? Sure, you can troll your local record store for this stuff, but unless you live in a major city, you'll probably come up empty-handed. But now that some of the best indie record stores and mail-order companies in the country have posted their catalogs online, the phrase "hard to find" is fast becoming a quaint anachronism.

The following list contains the *crème de la crème* of online record retailers.

DUSTY GROOVE AMERICA: Be prepared to drop lots of cash upon entering this Web site, the cyber equivalent of Chicago's phenomenal Dusty Groove record store - it's bursting at the seams with discs you've never heard of but that somehow seem like must haves. Specializing in soul, rare funk, jazz and Latin music, Dusty Groove's exhaustive used-vinyl and -CD archive is an obscurantist's wet dream: French jazz from the Fifties, the complete Roy Ayers *oeuvre* or that K-Tel compilation you lost in fifth grade. Dusty Groove is also ground zero for rare and reasonably priced Brazilian imports. This is the gold standard for online indie record stores and should be your first stop to shop.

www.dustygroove.com



SHANGRI-LA: This renowned Memphis record store boasts one of the more eccentric and personable online music-store sites. Its home page provides thumbnail bios of Shangri-La's store employees, a list of their favorite albums of the year and dispatches regarding in-store performances. The label's catalog features a quirky cross section of vintage Memphis rock and soul sides from the region's great labels - Moon, Stax/Volt, Sun and others. Finding some-



thing worthwhile may take a little patience, but there are plenty of gems just waiting to be plucked from this site. I mean, where else can you find a seven-inch picture-sleeve copy of ex-Big Star member Chris Bell's "I Am the Cosmos" and a Tav Falco box set?

www.shangri.com

TIMEWARP: This U.K. Web site is targeted at both dance-floor gurus and navel gazers alike - there's plenty of break-beat vinyl, old-school funk, techno and sui generis ambient sounds to be found here. But buyer beware - because Timewarp is across the pond, exorbitant shipping and handling costs may prove a bit too steep for the curious onlooker. Still, when you've just gotta have that Sonic Subjunkies import, what's a few extra shekels?

www.tunes.co.uk/timewarp/index/index.html

