

BEST OF CHICAGO

Best Record Shops In Chicago

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If you're really going to get into music, eventually one finds the limits of online music players and stores. Where's the hidden gems, the dusty diamonds in the rough, the good stuff? Just as your tastes start to dig a little deeper, you'll also need to find a place that has long-lost finds, or maybe an exceptionally curated collection of so-new-it-hurts local tunes. Maybe you just like the feel of vinyl, the ritual of pulling out that big disc encoded with beautiful music data, and holding it over your head like Tron. Or maybe you want to show that jerk DJing the bar last night how to really work a turntable. Whatever your reason, we've compiled a list of some of the best local record shops to satisfy your music tooth.

Permanent Records

1914 W. Chicago Ave.
Chicago, IL
(773) 278-1744
www.permanentrecordschicago.com



A little space with a lot of heart, Permanent packs as much as they can into two narrow aisles. What they can fit is exceptionally curated – CDs, vinyl, and a small collection of DVDs. The glass case at the front has some of the real gems – local label Plustapes shows off their releases on cassette tape only (with digital download for those of you whose nostalgia runs directly to the 80's). And the giant Nixon-masked mannequin is as good a shopping buddy as you can ever ask for (actually he creeps us out a little, but gotta love their sense of decor).



(credit: permanentrecordschicago.com)

Transistor

5045 N. Clark
Chicago, IL
(773) 880-7420
transistorchicago.com



One of the cooler concepts in the record store world, Transistor is a little bit of everything. While they carry CDs and records, they also keep a stock of books, artwork, and even electronics. Amps, turntables, and even microphones are available to perfect your audiophile listening experience.



(credit: transistorchicago.com)

Reckless Records

3126 N. Broadway
Chicago, IL
(773) 404-5080
www.reckless.com



With three locations in Chicago, (the second is in Wicker Park, the third downtown) Reckless is the heavy hitter of the indie record world in Chicago. Don't for a moment think that this makes them anything like a chain music store – they've just done the indie record store so nice, they decided to do it thrice. The shop adds hand-written descriptions to a large number of their new CD and vinyl releases, and keeps the tone playful. The shop also employs plenty of clerks with vinyl grading experience, so those looking to unload their classic collections can sell them back with confidence. And that same fact means their used stock is chock-full of gems old and new.

Dusty Groove

1120 N. Ashland Ave.
Chicago, IL
(773) 342-5800
www.dustygroove.com



(credit: dusty groove .com)

There's plenty of places to find records from the latest indie darling, but where do you go when you want the stuff that's old as dirt? If you're looking for jazz, funk, or soul, you could do much worse than Dusty Groove. Specializing in the aforementioned fields, the shop will only go modern for neo-soul, odd foreign compilations, and very left-field hip-hop. Otherwise, get ready to head back at least two decades, to any number of picture-perfect dance parties.

Val's Halla Records

239 W. Harrison
Oak Park, IL
(708) 524-1004
www.valshalla.com



(credit: valshalla.com)

The best find at Val's Halla might just be Val herself. Having been in the industry for longer than most of her shoppers have been born, she definitely knows the stock, and can talk as easily about long-lost soul singers as she can French synth-pop. Just off the Blue Line in Oak Park, Val's deep collection is worth making the trip for – less city traffic means more rare finds for you.

Jazz Record Mart

27 E. Illinois St.
Chicago, IL
(312) 222-1467
www.jazzmart.com



The end-all, be-all for jazz and blues in Chicago. Directly connected to the legendary Delmark Records, Jazz Record Mart not only carries all of their releases, but has tens of thousands of records piled high in their shop. Surprisingly located downtown in the loop, Bob Koester bought the shop in 1959, shortly after starting Delmark Records. Releasing such hits as Buddy Guy and Junior Wells' "Hoodoo Man Blues", the Delmark label is a treasure in its own right – when you add that to the several lifetimes of rare and classic blues and jazz records they carry from other labels, Jazz Record Mart is a must-visit for any record shopper.

[Dan Morgridge](#) is a writer in Chicago's Ukrainian Village. He enjoys eating and drinking above his means, finding new music, and socially conscious hedonism.



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