

INTERVIEW

SLIFF 2019 Interview: Danielle Beverly – Director of DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION

By Tom Stockman | November 6, 2019



DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION will screen at The Stage at KDHX (3524 Washington Avenue St Louis) Saturday November 9th at 3pm as part of this year's St. Louis International Film Festival. Ticket information can be found [HERE](#). Director Danielle Beverly will be in attendance for a post-screening Q&A as well as Rick Wojcik and JP Schauer, co-founders of Dusty Groove.



Iconic Chicago record store Dusty Groove has been buying vinyl collections for 20 years. But how can you put a price tag on something so personal as another's music? Owner and record buyer Rick Wojcik walks into the homes — and stories — of strangers, digging through their jazz, soul, and hip-hop records, buying their once-prized possessions. Each seller shares a common reason: They face a major life transition. Forced to sell because of health crises, downsizing moves, financial woes, or deaths, these collectors (or, in some cases, their heirs) are highly vulnerable, reluctant to abandon the LPs that often have helped define their lives but desperate to convert their personal treasure to cold, hard cash. Their disappointment over the collections' true value is sometimes acute, and Wojcik is careful to be gentle in his assessments, apologetic about his inability to purchase more records or to increase the frequently modest payout. The buyer manages to establish surprising connections, and his interaction with an elderly, ill African American — a former musician who became a pharmacist for stability — is especially moving: When he discovers an old record that features the musician, Wojcik sits down with the grateful senior to listen to it together. "Dusty Groove" — a film about love, loss, and our deep connection to music — is a collection of intimate narratives, akin to a record album of songs.



Director Danielle Beverly took the time to talk to *We Are Movie Geeks* about her career and her documentary **DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION**.

Interview conducted by Tom Stockman November 6th, 2019

Tom Stockman: Your new documentary **DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION plays this Saturday at 3 PM at the stage at KDHX.**

Danielle Beverly: Yes, and that's a great place for it to play because there are some college radio archives in the film, so when I heard that it was playing at the local independent radio station, I thought that that could not be more perfect.

TS: Yes and it's a nice venue as well.

DB: That's what I hear.



TS: There are two documentaries about record stores playing at this year's St. Louis Film Festival.

DB: Yes, I know OTHER MUSIC is playing there. I know the filmmaker who made that.

TS: They are very different films.

DB: Yes they are and I'm glad you get the distinction. That film, from what I understand, has a lot of interviews. It's interview-driven, while my film is observational. Also, *Other Music*, the record store, is no longer around while *Dusty Groove* is doing very well.



TS: You have Rick Wojcik at the center of your film. He's a fascinating guy. How did you first meet Rick?

DB: I've known Rick for a long long time. We worked together at a store called *Reckless Records*. I worked there a long time ago and put myself through graduate film school by working as a clerk at a

record store. Rick taught me everything I knew about soul music and jazz music. It seemed like his destiny was to open his own store. He's a used vinyl record buyer but he's really one of the only people at his place of business that can go into someone's home and assess a collection just by looking at it. The guy is like an encyclopedia. He knows so much about music and he never tires of learning about it. He's really a remarkable man and an inspiring one. He will be at the screening this Saturday.

TS: Rick seems rather low-key, which I think makes a good subject for your documentary. He's clearly a hard worker and incredibly knowledgeable.

DB: Indeed. When I was trying to think of how to describe the film, I thought that he's kind of like the spindle of a record. All of these stories spin off of him, then we come back to that spindle. He's the center of the film, the locus of the film. He walks us, the audience, into all of the stories. He's going into people's homes and their private spaces and that kind of access is so rare for a documentary maker.

TS: Where does he find these people that have these collections?

DB: Oh, they find him! Often people will call him and say they have these collection of records. It's not in the film, but people will call him and say they have a lot of Beatles records, or Eagles records. Stuff that is really common, but he treats everybody with the same amount of curiosity and respect. I've heard him take these calls. He also has a pretty good nose and understands the history of what he's doing and knows if somebody has something that is worth his time to come out and look at.



TS: I deal in vintage toys and have for many years. What I think your film captures well is the 'thrill of the hunt'. I can remember, before eBay, going to dozens of rummage sales and garage sales and flea markets and digging through boxes. Sometimes you can get discouraged, but there is an excitement to finding things that you collect out in the wild. And I also recall the local record buyers. It seems there was a big box of records at every garage sale in the 80s and 90s and I would see the same guys jump out of their car, flip through the boxes, buy one or two, then run back to their cars to hit the next sale. Your film reminded me of those days. In DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION, you seem to meet some really interesting people just following Rick around.

DB: Yes, and not all of these people are just having a garage sale, though there are a couple of people in the film that have that sort of spirit. The film takes you into their storage spaces. These are all people who

are selling their records for very distinct reasons. They are in some sort of transition. They may be dying, they may be divorcing, they may be, like in the case of Ricks co-founder JP Chill, blossoming into a new person. JP was essentially cloaking himself with this persona and when he let go of all of that, he didn't need the records anymore.

TS: There's the one guy who had 30,000 records and he had a half million dollar figure in his mind that he wanted for them. I found that the negotiation scene between him and Rick was actually sort of suspenseful. There was real tension in that scene.

DB: I'm so glad to hear that. It was suspenseful for me too. It was definitely an interesting thing to film because there was a lot of posturing going on and a point-counterpoint type of discussion. I also felt the tension, which is really what is fun about being a documentary filmmaker. I just keep my mouth shut.



TS: And then there was the 92-year-old man. That was a real melancholy sort of sequence. He was fascinating.

DB: He was also a really underappreciated jazz musician. He had made the choice to be a pharmacist. He did both but he could have better known. When Lester Young calls you up and asked you to put a band together, that means he was really traveling with people in those circles. He could have really had that career, but he chose to be a pharmacist in Chicago for his children. He had a jazz career as well, but didn't travel as much as he might have.

TS: Were there other adventures with Rick that you filmed but left out of the final cut?

DB: Yes, the typical ratio of a documentary is that for every minute of screen time, there is an hour of footage that was filmed. The film is 84 minutes, so you can imagine that there was about 100 hours of other footage. You pick and choose. Certainly there is always what we call our "darlings". You try to put them in, and you move them around, and they just stop the flow of the movie. So, there were plenty of those.



TS: Let's talk about the music that you used in the film. Was it difficult making those choices, picking the songs you ended up using?

DB: It was for two reasons. One, just imagine how much music you could choose from. For some scenes it just makes sense. Like in the case of JP Chill, he's referencing hip-hop of the time. For me the most important thing was that for anytime there could be any sort of timestamp on the music, that the music was accurate for that time. There was one exception. For Grady Johnson, he's talking about being in the Army and his first forays into jazz. He recorded *Satin Doll* but that song is impossible to get the rights to so I had to substitute something that was from a few years later, a song I could get the rights to. The second part of my answer is that gaining the rights to this music was a real undertaking, but I was committed to having music that had been recorded. Several people suggested that I just have someone compose a score. That would have been a lot cheaper and is typically what is done for documentaries. I thought that would absolutely be in contrast to the spirit of the film. It's about these collective things that are passed down and is music that people know and that they have a relationship to.

TS: Did Rick help you pick some of the songs for the film?

DB: He did not.

TS: What is your filmmaking background?

DB: I'm a feature film documentarian. I primarily work as a one-person crew. In the case of *DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION*, I don't think it could have been made with a crew. That intimacy just does not happen when there is more than one crew member in the room. This is my third feature documentary as director, producer, sound person, and camera person. I teach documentary in the Master's Program at Northwestern University. I also teach at Northwestern University in Qatar in the middle east. I'm making another documentary there right now about a girls rhythmic gymnastics school. Very different topic.



TS: Have you taken DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION to other film fests?

DB: Yes, it premiered at SF Doc Fest in San Francisco. There's this thing called the Southern Circuit, actually all my films have been selected for this, and what is so special about it is that it takes a selection of perhaps 16 features on tours throughout the American south, in small towns with some very engaged conversation around the film. I took the film to Louisiana and showed it to 35 people, all record nerds who showed up and were very eager to talk about it. We had the local store playing the music in the audience for the screening. It was really great. DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION played in Sweden and will be touring throughout 2020.

TS: When you are in town with Rick this weekend try to stop by *Vintage Vinyl* on Delmar. That is probably the best known vintage record store in St. Louis.

DB: I'll bet Rick already knows about it. He knows about every record store. It's his business. He never gets sick of records.

Here's the trailer for DUSTY GROOVE: THE SOUND OF TRANSITION :

 **Dusty Groove: The Sound of Transition - documentary official trailer**
from [Danielle Beverly](#)

The Sound of Transition
a documentary by Danielle Beverly

02:11



[Dusty Groove: The Sound of Transition – documentary official trailer](#) from [Danielle Beverly](#) on [Vimeo](#).

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