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MOVIES AND TV ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURE MUSIC

‘Dusty Groove’ film sifts through the emotions of giving up your vinyl

Chicago music store owners buy stranger’s collections and hear their stories in the engrossing documentary.

By Richard Roeper | Nov 17, 2020, 11:00am CDT



Chicago record store owner Rick Wojcik looks over a vinyl collection in the documentary “Dusty Groove.” | Danielle Beverly

Rick Wojcik and J.P. Schauer are the co-founders of the **Dusty Groove** record store in

Wicker Park, and they've been at this a long time. If you caught up with John Cusack's Rob Gordon and Jack Black's Barry Judd from the fictional Championship Vinyl record store in Wicker Park from "High Fidelity" (2000) some 20 years down the road, well, that's Wojcik and Schauer in a nutshell.

'Dusty Groove: The Sound of
Transition'



Petunia Productions presents a documentary directed by Danielle Beverly. No MPAA rating. Running time: 85 minutes.

One key difference: Whereas Rob and Barry were unapologetic music snobs who regarded the vast majority of their customers as a necessary nuisance to keep the lights on, Wojcik and Schauer have a genuine respect for their fellow music aficionados — especially those who have decided to part with their beloved, lifelong collections for one reason or another. In Danielle Beverly's engrossing and warmhearted documentary "Dusty Groove: The Sound of Transition," the customers aren't treated as human props for the proprietors, as is often the case on shows such as "Pawn Stars" and "American Pickers." Beverly is clearly as interested in the record lovers as the record store owners, and the result is a verité slice of American life shining a light on a disparate group of individuals who have one thing in common: They love their vinyl.

And sometimes their CDs. And occasionally even a few boxes of VHS tapes, maybe a few dozen comic books and some T-shirts and posters as well. They're not hoarders because they're far too meticulous about their stash — but they ARE hardcore collectors.

Beverly, an assistant professor at Northwestern University who worked the counter at a number of record stores (including Dusty Groove) in the 1990s, implements the

classic fly-on-the-wall documentary style and lets the storytellers tell the story. We marvel at Wojcik's dexterity as he flips through album collections like a jazz keyboardist, instantly determining which ones he'll buy and which ones might as well be melted down. ("He's a maniac," says a manager at Dusty Groove, in the most admiring of tones.) Rifling through one collection, Wojcik cracks, "Didn't this guy buy anything other than Nina Simone?" but he never stops stacking.



"Hearing people's stories is so rewarding and rich," says Wojcik. "A lot of time, they're at a key transitional point in their lives ... moving, downsizing, someone has died."

One such collector is Grady Johnson, 93, a jazz sax player who was one of Chicago's first Black pharmacists and figured out a way to balance his day job and his nighttime passion. Johnson has Stage 4 cancer and has decided to part with his collection to help out his family. (Mr. Johnson has passed away since his scenes were filmed.) As Johnson tells his life story (augmented by a treasure trove of family photos), Wojcik is attentive and kind and considerate — but as Wojcik later acknowledges, "I'm very much the white guy walking into their house with money. It's a business relationship."

True. But it's also a labor of love.

“Dusty Groove” is available as part of the Chicago Underground Film Festival, presenting virtual screenings of offbeat films through Sunday. To view it online, go to cuff.eventive.org between 7 p.m. Friday and 7 p.m. Saturday.

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