

The Re-Emergence of Vinyl as a Medium

by John Roach

Vinyl has been long replaced by newer media forms. Tapes and compact disks have taken their turn in the spotlight as favorite methods of music transportation, and today even the internet offers a variety of readily available options by which to find and play music. The age of vinyl has passed, thought many—and for several decades it seemed that such a prediction was correct. However, over the last several years (past decade perhaps), the vinyl has reemerged as a viable form of listening to music.

Why is an outdated form of media so quickly returning? The answer to this is not simple—a variety of different reasons back the return, but several stand out.

1. Sound Quality

This is perhaps the largest reason to prompt a return to vinyl record use. Many who have become a part of this returning trend point to sound quality as the main reason for their vinyl acquisitions. While the argument between digital and analog sound has been sustained for several decades now, many vinyl enthusiasts point to the “warmer” sound generated by records as proof enough for their purchases.

2. Tangible Possession

Another influential reason behind the returning trend of vinyl record use is the fact that music has strayed away from hard copy. Even CDs have declined in popularity in recent years, giving rise to the purchases of online copies of songs. While there are many benefits to such copies, they remove the tangibility of owning a physical version of the albums or tracks enjoyed. A physical version of the work gives a much more personal feel to the music—possibly even the feel of a personal connection to the work.

3. Giving back to the Artists

A third reason that many (including myself) choose to purchase vinyls is that a larger amount of the profit created through record sale goes to the musical artist. Online music sources such as Spotify return only a fraction of the profit generated to the creators of the music, something that vinyl sales partially remedies. Also, the sale of vinyl alleviates the large issue of music piracy and provides a more lasting copy of the music—that can be legally passed along to friends or even children. This creates a longer lasting legacy for artists, keeping their musical creations alive through several generations. Anecdotally this has been a large factor in my own life, with my parents’ vinyl collections heavily influencing the music that I listen to.

A return to vinyl certainly is not for everyone, but supplemented with the variety of alternative forms of music media this growing trend can be an excellent way to dive deeper into different musical artists. Turntables and vinyl records are fairly cheap overall, and I’d recommend that everyone—with a small amount of time and money available—delve a bit deeper into their return.