



Great Saves

For the Record

A new generation of music collectors is learning the virtues of vinyl.

YOU COULD HAVE A TREASURE SITTING IN A DAMP CARDBOARD BOX IN YOUR BASEMENT. Once the preferred medium of aging rockers and Luddite dinosaurs, **records are hip again**—and valuable. “Rock music can be an extremely cheap genre to collect ... but if you’re interested in more obscure psychedelia, tiny local bands, and subgenres like that, then the cost can be astronomical,” says Rick Wojcik of dustygroove.com. In fact, according to Jim Dawson’s and Steve Propes’ book **45 RPM**, the most expensive 45 single will run you about \$23,000. That’s about \$8,000 per minute of music. Invented by Emile Berliner in 1888, vinyl mapped out the earliest jazz and blues recordings, ushered in rock ’n’ roll, and gave listeners disco beats. But an ’80s disco backlash and a new technology called the cassette tape **threatened to bury the record permanently**. A generation later, hip-hop DJs, jazz purists, and hipster musicians respect vinyl not only for its classic, sensual aesthetics but also for the quality of the sound. And collecting records is an affordable way to bone up on your music. “It can still be one of the cheapest ways to acquire music,” Wojcik says. “Both classic albums and rare treasures can be found cheaply.”

A good site to visit when you’re ready to start buying, selling, or trading rare and collectible albums is audiophileusa.com.

EBay and other Internet sites, while great places to browse, should be used only if you’re buying from a reputable source, because you can’t **inspect records in person**. Finding quality records is a lot like purchasing fruit: You want them to be shiny, with no marks, scratches, or flaws. As with most collecting, “the important thing is to find music that you like,” says Rick Morey of thelaughingpapillon.com. “If you don’t get the return you’re expecting, you still have a great collection that you like.” **■**—Damon Brown

Take a Turn

You can get a decent **new turntable for less than \$200**. Popular brands include **Gemini, Numark, and Technics**. There are basically two types available: belt drive (the cheaper of the two) and direct drive. Belt drive is fine, unless you plan on scratching records like a hip-hop DJ. Make sure it comes with at least one stylus (record needle) and cartridge (needle holder). There are even players available that can **convert your music into MP3 files**. Buying a **used record player** is a good option if you go to a reputable seller. Ask your local record store owner for suggestions. “Here in Chicago, we routinely send customers to a few



outlets because they’ll get a great turntable for a good price, usually all refurbished and repaired,” says Rick Wojcik of **dustygroove.com**. And you might want to ditch that “classic” player needing repairs. “Unless it’s a real gem,” Wojcik says, “the costs of repairs to turntables often can be as much as the cost of a new one.”