

Brainwashed - Vinyl Thoughts for Record Store Day

Written by Windy Weber

Thursday, 11 April 2019 12:01 - Last Updated Thursday, 11 April 2019 18:40



It's time for record store day again and I want to talk about the need for better mastering and cutting and manufacturing on the new vinyl being created today.

So many of the new records I buy, whether reissues or brand new recordings by current bands, are noisy. Surface noise. Yes, sometimes it is caused by the COLOR of the vinyl, because different colors have different chemical makeups and therefore give differing playback ability (white is actually much closer to plastic and tends to sound the noisiest because it is really not the correct medium to be retaining sound) (and multi-colored can have issues due to the different colors not melting at the same temps and then not taking the information from the stampers as well as they should due to temp differences).

However, a lot of the issues with newly manufactured vinyl come from a lack of knowledge in the mastering and plating phases, and from how quickly records are being turned out. Handling them too quickly means mistakes - scratches happening before the albums are sleeved, vinyl not cooling slowly enough and then warping but still being sleeved and sold.....

But for the very basics of manufacture - many of the old masters of this knowledge have passed, and unfortunately not passed on the information in a way that is being used by today's cutters.

So when you go out to a shop on RSD, and you see an expensive reissue and ASSUME it will sound better than a used original copy, you may be sorely disappointed. It won't happen on everything, but it will happen on more than you would want to realize.

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Before you write off buying older, used copies of records because THE MEDIA is telling you a light scratch or sleeve scuff is going to ruin your playback enjoyment (and how many of your new LPs came with scratches and scuffs already due to poor handling?), TRY buying a few old records in really nice condition and see how great they sound. Listen to how well pressed Pink Floyd and Brian Eno records sound - the depth and width of their sound, how there is no surface noise. how they were manufactured with such care that you hear what the artists wanted you to hear, and how they wanted you to hear it. THE MUSIC, not the surface noise.

I am thankful people are still listening to records. Selling records is the only job I've ever had, and I've done it for 31 years now. and I bought a first time on vinyl expensive reissue last week of a modern classical composition and found it nearly unlistenable due to the incredible surface noise. And then I had the chance to sit and listen to a Talk Talk LP manufactured by EMI in the mid '80s, and it had loud music and intensely quiet passages, and the only surface noise at all was at the end of each side as the needle approached the label in the run off groove. there was no surface noise. My ECM records are all quiet. It used to be the standard in the industry to manufacture records with no surface noise, with extra care and compassion for the music contained on them, for the ultimate pleasure of the at home listener.

I hope that with the continuing passion for records the old standards of manufacture come back into play. Listeners deserve to hear the music. Here's to everyone who gets out on Saturday to support the brick and mortar stores that are still in existence - the local community centers of music and concerts and fun talks about album art. Store owners live off that vibrancy, off the energy our customers bring in and share with us. And we live by helping people find and listen to the music that improves their lives.

Supporting your local record store is a really big deal, and I'm thankful for all the people who have helped us through the years. I'm looking forward to seeing your smiling faces this Saturday!!

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