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Jaffee, Larry. *Record Store Day: The Most Improbable Comeback of the 21st Century*. Los Angeles, CA: Rare Bird Books, 2022, 216 pp. \$20.00 (Paperback) ISBN: 9781644282557. Reviewed by Sonya DiPalma, Department of Mass Communication, University of North Carolina at Asheville, sdipalma@unca.edu

If you long for the days of the hiss from a turntable or placing a coin on top of the needle to keep it from jumping when hitting a scratch, then *Record Store Day: The Most Improbable Comeback of the 21st-Century* by Larry Jaffee is for you.

Depending on your age, this book may be a nostalgic reminder of your teen years or a media history lesson on the personal experience of walking into a record store to purchase an album by a new artist you watched on a legacy network show or adding to your collection of albums from a favorite artist or group. The book is also a fine example of technological determinism – once created, technology rarely disappears altogether.

The forward by Kosmo Vinyl, former consigliere to *The Clash*, tees up the book by juxtaposing the convenience and access to music in the 21st century—think Spotify—with the experience of your local record store, with limited numbers of new albums and storekeepers who served as a guide to the sounds of the day.

Record Store Day includes commentary from various Record Store Day ambassadors and musicians, including Jack White, Lars Ulrich of Metallica, Iggy Pop, David Grohl, Chuck D., and Brandi Carlisle. The artists provide insights on the annual event, their favorite artists and albums, and the trade-offs of 21st-century technology. The testimonials help us come to terms with the trade-off of face-to-face interaction for the convenience of streaming and downloading content from the Internet.

The book helps the reader to understand the origins of Record Store Day, which began in

2007 to celebrate independent record stores across the globe, thereby increasing interest in the sale of vinyl and interaction with fellow musicologists. To enhance your appreciation of the book, the author could have steered the reader early on to visit recordstoreday.com to learn about this annual event. Here's an excerpt from the website explaining Record Store Day, to be held on April 20, 2024. "Special vinyl and CD releases and various promotional products are made exclusively for the day. Festivities include performances, cook-outs, body painting, meet & greets with artists, parades, DJs spinning records, and on and on." (*About, recordstoreday.com*). You can conveniently find all the participating independent record stores in your area through the website.

However, the book isn't simply a vehicle to market the annual event. It combines history, an examination of the recording conglomerates Universal, Sony, and Warner, and the impact of the Internet on the electronic distribution of music over the past three decades.

Organized into 13 chapters with an epilogue, the chapter titles pull the reader into the story. Starting with chapter one, "The Report of My Death Was an Exaggeration," the reader learns tidbits that perhaps aren't so well known. For instance, many may not know that the demise of vinyl had more to do with the major labels orchestrating the sale of CDs by refusing to accept returns on unsold vinyl from record stores.

Record Store Day is told through accounts by artists and music pioneers, such as Sam Phillips of Sun Records, and the originators of the now international event. Chapter Five, Message to Love, provides testimonials from

musicians who reflect on the prominence of record stores in their lives. A glossary titled *The Cast of Characters* pays homage to those who made Record Store Day possible.

The book evoked much nostalgia in this reader and had me reliving my first album purchase, Shaun Cassidy's Da Doo Run Run (which I still own), and visiting Tower Records in New York City with its wall-to-wall vinyl representing every genre imaginable.

Record Store Day could be helpful in a variety of 300-level classes. For instance, a media history class would be well served by music history, notably the transition from vinyl to CDs to streaming and the resurrection of vinyl. A public relations class could learn firsthand how an event becomes an international success for vinyl enthusiasts and independent record store owners. Better yet, a popular culture course could dedicate a unit to the resurgence of the popularity of vinyl among our students.

Larry Jaffe is an accomplished journalist and part-time lecturer who has written about the music industry for over 25 years. *Record Store Day* is an entertaining and essential read

because it captures a significant shift in media and our music culture while simultaneously renewing our faith in the joy of sharing music not through pirating but through conversations at our local independent record store.

Reference:

"Record Store Day." About. Accessed April 3, 2024. <https://recordstoreday.com/>.