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In the Groove: A Documentary about Vinyl

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In the Groove: A Documentary About Vinyl

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism

by

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University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, 2016

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis project, 'In the Groove' is to tell the story of why vinyl records, a music format written off as a casualty to the digital age is experiencing a cultural resurgence. In the last several years vinyl records have been the only musical format to record positive sales growth.

For many musicians today, pressing their music to vinyl records yields the greatest return on investment. However, vinyl remains a niche market, supported by a devoted fan base. This film focuses on a group of artists and vinyl enthusiasts as they navigate this new marketplace.

Table of Contents

Pre-Production and Research - - - P. 1

Production - - - P. 4

Script - - - P. 5

Post-Production - - - P. 6

Conclusion - - - P. 6

Script, "In the Groove" - - - P. 9-26

Works Cited - - - P. 27

Appendices - - - P. 28-29

Production Narrative

Pre-Production and Research

My interest in this topic first began in 2015 as my personal record collection began to grow, and I was introduced to this unique community that existed around the idea of listening to music on vinyl. When granted the opportunity to pursue this topic further, I took it without hesitation.

My original intent with this project was to conduct a profile of one successful record store in Fayetteville, AR and compare it to the previous record store that had occupied the same space and closed down. The intent of the story would have been to understand why in a period where records seem to be a popular medium once again, one store failed when it should've been seeing a swing towards success (Hendricks, 2016). The following is an excerpt from my research proposal for the Research Methods course:

There is currently no concrete explanation among researchers to explain the sudden resurgence of vinyl sales (Resnikoff, 2017). But, what many authors do analyze is the consumer environment that may have led to this resurgence. Schweitzer writes that the internet has created a new environment for record sales to thrive and that now rather than in stores, "the main market is on the internet" (2016, 86). The largest amount of online sales and trading occurring online through sites such as Ebay and Amazon, as well as dedicated vinyl sales websites such as Discogs. Schweitzer also theorizes that it was the digital revolution and its impact on the consumer environment that allowed for the opportunity for vinyl sales to thrive. He describes how with the cheaper production of digital music files and declining CD sales, record labels were, "Desperate for sales, companies produced more vinyl and branched out to other categories...As the number grew, the production increased, which brings us to today," (Schweitzer, 2016, 86). Schweitzer's article helps to set the stage for the current vinyl market and will be used to help me form interview questions regarding the question of what has led to the resurgence in vinyl record sales. However, what this article fails to properly address is the reasons consumers are purchasing vinyl records.

As I began to further research this topic, I realized that there was no concrete answer for the resurgence of the vinyl format in the music market. In fact, this was a trend that baffled researchers, in the relatively short lifespan of recorded music, no format has ever regained consumer popularity after a new format was introduced and began outselling the previous format. Yet, there was something about vinyl records that attracted a unique audience to continue buying this format for decades and a cultural shift of sorts that led to younger audiences, myself included, to gain interest in the format (Hayes, 2006). As this became more clear my research focus shifted away from the economics of the music market, towards a need to understand who the audience for this format is and how it has changed. Per my research:

Giles, Pietrzykowski and Clark, (2006) looked at the psychological meaning of record collecting to consumers. Their research concluded that one of the reasons some consumers prefer vinyl to digital music is the physicality and tangibility of the format. "Having a particular piece of music on an iPod tells the world nothing about how the iPod owner came to acquire it," (Giles, Pietrzykowski and Clark, 2006, 439). This study also analyzes several other conclusions reached by their research, however I question the complete validity of their results given their small sample size of only 20 people... An article by Schmutz (2016), analyzes what the specific elements of vinyl records could be that attracts consumers to the format. Schmutz suggests that vinyl is a return to the physicality of music that is lost in the digital age (2016). This conclusion supports the conclusions of Giles, Pietrzykowski and Clark and reinforces the idea that perhaps there is a tangible reason consumers to be reverting in large numbers to a previously though obsolete format.

As I further dove not only into the research of this topic, but also began to make connections with individuals within the vinyl and music community, my focus shifted from the music marketplace itself to identifying individuals across multiple generations, and finding any common threads between them that gave any further explanation as to why vinyl records have stuck around for so long. Therefore, my topic narrowed to more understanding the culture behind this community. One of my focuses was on the Northwest Arkansas community of vinyl

collectors. I began with Wade Ogle, the owner of Fayetteville's Block Street Records. Wade introduced me to the popularity of the format by allowing me to document one of his store's biggest days of the year, Record Store Day. From there I was introduced to Leigh Wood, host of the KUAF Vinyl Hour radio show. Leigh then put me in touch with several collectors including, Phil Eubanks, Sam Houser and Scott Flanagan who are all profiled in my film.

One day, I was browsing the YouTube channel for the company Vox, a new media news channel. Vox video productions cover everything from politics to popular culture. One day, they posted a video about music cognition, how people listen to music. An interview conducted for this piece was with Dr. Elizabeth Margulis of the University of Arkansas. After listening to her interview, I had a feeling Dr. Margulis could be a potential interview subject for my film. I researched the Music Cognition Lab (MCL) at the U of A, which Dr. Margulis serves as the director. I found a study the MCL conducted, that suggests there are inherent biases that can directly affect how people perceive the music they listen to. In this study, researchers had subjects listen to two different pieces of music. The subjects were told that the music they were listening to were performed by either a notable composer or a music student. However, what the participants were unaware of were that in some cases they were listening to the exact same recording twice. Researchers found that their subjects were more critical of the music under the impression it was recorded by a student, and were more likely to praise the piece when under the impression it was recorded by a more experienced composer (Kroger & Margulis, 2017). I found the results of this study relevant to my projects, and that perhaps Dr. Margulis' input on the subject, may shed light on determining whether or not vinyl is truly the superior audio format, as many audiophiles suggest.

I knew that I would at some point have to address vinyl records' role in the music industry and for that topic my focus shifted to the music scene of North Texas. I met with Matt Farmer, a member of the band Levi Cobb and the Big Smoke, from Denton, TX. Matt explained to me the logistics and cost of vinyl records for rising independent artists like their band. I also visited Hand Drawn Pressing, one of the newest vinyl record pressing plants in the world. I spoke with the founder Dustin Blocker and Alex Cushing as well as the VP of business development, John Snodgrass.

I found a common thread among nearly all of the interviews conducted for my project that reflected conclusions cited in my research, that in an age where music is invisible and digital, vinyl records and the physicality of the format are appealing to those who are seeking to feel as if they truly, "own," their music.

Production

For the purpose of this story, I knew that perhaps the most important element of this film would be the use of natural sound and music. This is a story about how and why people listen to music. This was tricky as I had to find a good balance between conveying the feeling of listening to a record to an audience, while doing my best to avoid the misuse of copyrighted material. My interviews were recorded on a Zoom H4N sound recorder through a lavalier microphone kit. I also used the H4N as well as a Rode shotgun microphone to record natural sounds and background music of the environments. My camera equipment for this shoot included two Canon DSLRs, a 70D and a 5D mk.II. These camera record full-frame 1080p Quicktime movie files.

I approached this story from my personal point-of-view. As I learned more about this topic, this knowledge crossed over into every new element as production continued. Principal shooting lasted nearly a year, from April 2017 to March 2018. I approached filming and

interviews in a variety of manners. As I covered what I deemed event recordings, such as Record Store Day at Block Street Records, the recording process of the KUAF Vinyl Hour, and the production line at Hand Drawn Pressing, I used a fly-on-the-wall approach to each of these events. I recorded audio and video at these locations for at least three hours at a time, as I made it known to the individuals involved that I was there to simply observe them during this specific process. Whereas in my interactions with the record collectors and musicians were more curated. I told these individuals to use this as an opportunity to physically show off as well as discuss their own unique collections.

My interview techniques for each character was curated relatively the same way all around. The interviews maintained a conversational framework. Each interviewee was asked the same final questions. As a one-man crew on this production, I scheduled, set-up, recorded and broke down each interview shoot myself. In total I conducted ten interviews for this project.

Script

The scriptwriting for this project was one of the more challenging aspects for me. As I formed the story and reviewed each piece of new footage I received, the story began to form for me, but very sporadically. I began to write sequences that could be edited together in post-production, but I realized I needed to find a common thread to bring these sequences together to tell one cohesive story rather than several vaguely connected vignettes. This realization, while I was still in the production phase of this project allowed me to tailor several interviews to better connect the various story threads.

The best example of this as seen in the film, is that Scott Flanagin was originally seen as a brief character, but as I saw his name and image pop up in more footage and interviews I realized before I conducted a formal on-camera interview with him, that he could be the missing

story link between several characters. My original script had a few spots for narration that in the final product have been omitted entirely or converted to on-screen text graphics.

Post-Production

My camera equipment for this shoot included two Canon DSLRs, a 70D and a 5D mk.II. These camera record full-frame 1080p QuickTime movie files. This reflects the final output quality of the film which is an HD 1080p .MOV file.

My interviews were recorded on a Zoom H4N sound recorder through a lavalier microphone kit. I also used the H4N as well as a Rode shotgun microphone to record natural sounds and background music of the environments. Apart from the cameras, these microphones were the most crucial pieces of equipment for this project, because apart from the soundtrack for the film itself, all music heard in the film is recorded natural sound straight from a record on a turntable. As far as the music used in the soundtrack of the film, these include songs by the band Levi Cobb and the Big Smoke, used with permission by the artist. The film also uses the composition In the Hall of the Mountain King, which as a piece of music that exists in the public domain.

The editing process itself was fairly straightforward once an assembly script was produced. However the sheer amount of footage, over 200 GB, meant that the hardest aspect of the post-production phase, was simply keeping track and meticulously organizing footage and other elements such as audio files and graphic elements, to keep the already tedious process from lasting too long.

Conclusion

Overall, I am proud of the film I produced. That being said, there were some elements that I wished could have been expanded. In the beginning I wanted to focus more exclusively on

independent record shops in the Northwest Arkansas area. However, in this aspect I found that one store whose owner I'd been in touch with had closed and another store owner never replied to any of my attempts to get in touch. This is one element I'd like to have focused more specifically on to create a more historical context for what are the physical and non-physical signs that allow people to recognize a record store and what is the difference between a good and bad record store. Basically, I wanted to touch on the, "market" aspect of the music market. Those are the hazards of documentary production though and I believe that where necessary I course-corrected in the best possible manner that I could.

The production of this project would not have been possible were it not for the closeness of the vinyl collecting community within the Northwest Arkansas area and the music scene of North Texas. Many collectors who I interviewed were more than happy to give me names of people who they thought I should talk to, and where most of those names overlapped were the main subjects of my film. I would have also never been led to Hand Drawn Pressing in Addison, TX had Matt Farmer not mentioned the company to me in passing as I was preparing to conduct his on-camera interview. Because of this change in my story I had to adjust my shooting schedule and story outline to reflect this change. This allowed me to fulfill the technical elements of my story in how exactly vinyl records are made and how they work. However, this adjustment may have cost me other valuable resources, as I decided I would be unable to reach out to audio engineers, who came recommended by a former member of my thesis committee, whose insight into this project I unfortunately lost as a result of this and several other production decisions. While I can only think at what my film might have been, I am comfortable letting the final piece speak for itself.

In the beginning my objective was to understand why people seem to prefer this specific form of music. And in the end I found that there is no inherent reason, everyone does it for different reasons. Some want to have as many as they can, some want to hear something they've never heard before, but in the end many seem to agree that in an era where all the music you could ever want exists as an invisible file that appears only on your phone, where's the fun in that?

Script – “In The Groove- The Art of Records”

Italics: Video Descriptions & Nats

Regular: Dialogue

Bold: Graphics

Fade up from black

Up nats full

Camera pans up to reveal a shelf full of records.

Med. Shot

A hand grabs a record from the shelf, rolls it out of its cover and places it on the turntable.

The speakers are turned on and the volume adjusted ever so slightly.

The arm of the turntable is set on the record as a faint hiss is heard.

Nats down,

A song begins to play

Cross-dissolve back in time

A band is seen recording music in a studio

Cross dissolve forward in time

A vat of pellets, and a host of machinery are shown on an assembly line.

Once a record is pulled off the machine. This is the process of how records go from the studio to the turntable.

Cross dissolve

Inside a record store as new and old records are shown on the shelves.

Extreme Close-up

Needle the needle and arm from before continue dancing along the record.

Fade up title

In The Groove: The Art of Records

Fade to black

Fade up from black

Ext. Block Street Records

Graphic appears

BLOCK STREET RECORDS FAYETTEVILLE, AR

Interior of record store

A guitar plays and Wade Ogle Looks up from his computer

Wade (singing, on-camera)

Record Store Day! Records on limited Edition! Record Store Day!

(talking)

Nice of you all to join in there.

Wade (Interview):

Record Store Day is a once a year special event. All the records that come out, all the new records that come out on Record Store Day, only come out that day and they come out in extremely limited editions.

B-roll footage of Record Store Day displays and releases within Block Street Records

The overwhelming majority is stuff that's never come out before. So it might be say, a Johnny Cash or Grateful Dead concert that no one's ever heard or has ever been on vinyl. And they'll print a thousand of them worldwide on marbled vinyl or special packaging and let's say it retails for forty dollars, those records end up being two- to three-hundred dollar records because everybody wants 'em but there's only a thousand of them.

And the whole thing is meant to motivate you to go to a real record store. Not a big chain, but just more like these little mom and pop shops like I have those are the only ones that can get those records. By the time we opened the line was already curled around the block.

Exterior: A line of customers begins to form out the door and down the street from Block Street Records.

WADE (on-camera): Got rid of all the donuts man! That was like fifty donuts!

Music begins to play over the scene

song: In the Hall of the Mountain King

Wade goes outside to tell the crowd of the store rules for Record Store Day.

Wade (on-camera): That happens so if you see it just put it back.

Customer (on-camera): In essence be respectful.

Wade (on-camera): That's right. Hey guys sorry for the delay, just have a couple quick rules please don't take record store day records from the rack area. If you pick one up and decide oh better not, just put it back in that area so we don't find it a week later in the bargain section.

Wade repeats these rules three more times to the crowd as he works his way to meet every customer up the block.

Music Intensifies

Wade takes a photo of the crowd as the chaos prepares to descend.

Wade (on-camera) 1...2...3! Let's do it!

Block Street Records Opens

Insane shopping.

The space becomes more and more crowded as the shoppers move through.

Wade removes glasses, looks around his store packed to the brim with a slight grin.

Fade to black

Fade up from black

B-roll of various shoppers and stores with vinyl records on their shelves.

Footage rolls out of focus.

Graphic

FROM 2009-2017 VINYL RECORDS WERE THE ONLY PHYSICAL MUSIC FORMAT TO RECORD POSITIVE SALES GROWTH

Graphic fades out.

New graphic fades in

WHILE GROWING, VINYL REMAINS A NICHE MARKET. SUPPORTED BY A DEVOTED FANBASE.

Footage rolls into focus.

Phil Eubanks is organizing his record collection.

Phil Eubanks(off-camera): Not surprising that it's hung on but it's surprising to me that it's gained popularity the way that it has

Phil Eubanks (interview): The artwork on a record is bigger obviously than on a CD or cassette tape. And so that's why I kinda started collecting records instead of cassettes.

B-roll of Phil showing off record artwork.

Footage of Phil's sound system playing music on a turntable.

Phil (Interview): Me and my old roommate one time went and counted like fifty of them. And made a marker for that and went through and measured it that way, but I've never y'know counted them out. I think in the living room we estimated it to be about maybe 12,000.

Transition from Phil's living room to shoppers at Block Street Records.

Scott Flanagin is shown shopping at Block Street.

Scott (Interview): I say I've got around 4,000 records. Of course I've been saying that for a while, but I think that's about right, because when I can I try to keep a record of everything that I have so that I don't buy twelve copies of the same album. Although, I do have multiple copies of the same album. Yeah, wait was that question again?

Scott is shown at his home looking over and organizing his collection.

Extreme close-up of a turntable arm being set onto Scott's turntable. The green and yellow colored vinyl begins playing as Scott is shown curating his collection.

Scott (Interview): I have the first two records I ever bought and I still own them. And I'm not really sure how I've been able to keep them but I was ten years old and the very first record I bought was the New Mickey Mouse Club. This was in 1977?

Scott pulls the New Mickey Mouse Club from his shelf and examines the record.

Scott (Interview): What I've discovered is that in searching for vinyl a lot of musical genres open up to you. And so what I've done is listen to things that I was never listening to before.

Close-Up of Scott's sound system,

Up nats full as the music begins to fade into a repeating loop of a children's choir.

Cut to Sam Houser at his dual-turntable set-up.

Sam Houser (VO): I've been to Brazil and I did some digging there. And I've been to Argentina and Buenos Aires probably about three times.

Sam Houser (Interview): And there i've found records from other countries there, and then just like here in the United States I've found a lot of just random records from around the world.

Shots of Sam's shelved collection literally taking up and entire wall, floor to ceiling, of his home.

Sam (Interview) My first record I remember, that was a 45 of Nitty Gritty Dirtband's Have You Heard of the Lonesome Loser, which is an absolutely horrible record.

Cut to- Sams's dual-turntables

Up nats full- playing freeform jazz.

Sam (VO): With records it's pretty cool because you can find things, that will never be released on CD and never going to be on the iTunes store or Spotify or whatever, so that's pretty magical.

Shots of Sam going through stacks of his records in his living room.

Transition to- Interior of an unfinished basement where Franklin Evarts is shown entering the room where he keeps his large collection of records.

Franklin Evarts (Interview): I was such a junkie, that I would get my paycheck, and this was for like 25 years. I'd put my paycheck in the bank and I'd go right to the record store. And I'd buy 2, 3, 4 albums every Friday, every Friday.

Franklin is shown sorting through his crates of records, as well as his printed inventory of his collection.

Franklin (Interview): I thought I would give it to our son, and my wife said you're not going to burden our son with that record collection.

Scott (Interview): So I had a friend who was a mutual friend of Franklin's who said y'know I know a guy who has a massive and beautiful vinyl collection and he's thinking about selling it and he's not really sure what to do with it. And I said, I would like to meet him.

Franklin (Interview): He came and looked at the collection and I think he was impressed. He said wow, this is a nice collection.

Scott (Interview): Wow, I've never seen anything that was really collected in that way and that was kept that clean and beautiful. The thing that I was amazed about most was that every single one is sleeved in a plastic sleeve, it's not a cheap thing to do.

Footage of Franklin's collection. The settings for the dehumidifier are shown. Each crate has been meticulously curated, sleeved and cataloged.

Franklin (Interview): When I had to move them back home I was concerned for the best care for them. I researched vinyl storage, what's the optimum humidity, what's the optimum temperature range to store records for long periods of time. I think it was around 55% humidity. So I just bought a dehumidifier, put it down there set it in the 50s and it runs pretty much every day at some point.

Cut to- Exterior KUAF Radio Station

Graphic: KUAF RADIO STATION Fayetteville, AR

Leigh Wood (VO): By Diana Ross, and you're listening to it on the KUAF Vinyl Hour, good evening thank you for joining me my name is Leigh Wood

Leigh Wood is shown editing an episode of her radio show the KUAF Vinyl Hour in her office.

Leigh (Interview): I'm not a collector on the level where like how valuable certain records or like an original pressing versus a reissue or any of that stuff. I'm not really into that stuff that much.

B-roll of Leigh in her office spinning records for the Vinyl Hour. The record begins with the opening to Beethoven's Fifth.

Up nats full

Leigh (on-camera): Ok, that was Beethoven's Fifth by a band called Exception and this is the KUAF Vinyl Hour, thank you for joining me this evening. I'm sitting here with Scott Flanagin.

Leigh and Scott are shown in the KUAF studio, recording their discussion for the KUAF Vinyl Hour.

Scott (On camera): Hello

Leigh (On Camera)Welcome Scott

Scott (On camera): Thank you for having me

Leigh (On camera): You're welcome and thank you for coming we've been kind of talking about this for a while.

Scott (On camera): Yes we have.

Leigh (On camera): But we're busy people.

Scott (On camera): Very Busy

Leigh (On camera): And it takes a while. And It was almost, it was meant to be I think...

B-roll of KUAF studio. Microphones, turntables, records and audio mixers.

Leigh (interview): It's a weekly program, and it's a music program but it's all vinyl. Often we ask people that we know have vinyl collections in the community to come in and pick eight to ten records that they want to play. And then they come and play their songs and we talk about it.

Up nats full

Leigh and Scott are further seen discussing an artist and album for Leigh's show.

Leigh (On camera): And I was like, y'know maybe we don't know about him maybe he only did the one album because he was kind of a drug guy.

Scott (On camera): Right but, no.

Leigh (On camera): No.

Scott (On camera): He's way too focused

Leigh (On camera): Prolific, like

Scott (On camera): In many ways

Leigh (On camera): Yeah, and he's a marathon runner?

Scott (On camera): Yes that's right a marathon runner.

Scott (Interview): Because a lot of people within the community who collect vinyl were on that show and I knew them, I think they kept mentioning my name to Leigh to say you really ought to get Scott Flanagin on, he's got a big collection. So Leigh said do you want to do a show? AND I said yes i'd love to do a show what do we do? And she's like I don't know let's give it some thought and I thought let's do cover songs. I love cover songs I love hearing one band do something in a completely different way than it was originally done.

Up nats full

Leigh in the KUAF studio

Leigh(On-camera): And that's going to begin our night of cover songs. Ok, we've got a stack here and we intentionally decided to choose as we're going along, which I think is the right decision to make. So I think that we should go next, and I'm just going to jump in and take control. Ooh! I want to listen to this!

Scott (On camera): This is one of my favorites.

Up nats full

Leigh sets the needle onto the chosen records. She then lowers the mic volume and begins recording the music for the show. As the song plays Leigh and Scott discuss the artist off the air.

Leigh (On camera): There's so much to it and I fill in these spaces which is part of the fun for me. He's a record producer, he only puts out one records. This is what he chooses for his track 1 side 1

Scott (On camera): So he did a lot of recording engineering and he just, oh it's so cool! And I'm a sucker for drums.

Leigh (On-camera): That was Savoy Truffle, bluh my mind's been exploded, by Terry Manning, just incredible, incredible.

Scott (On Camera): Blew me away the first time I heard it and I've listened to it so many times since then.

Leigh (interview): The show's more fun for me because I like to talk to people about music. Like, probably more than the average person. So it's really fun because I get to learn about people through the music that they listen to and also because records are so tangible they have such a physical presence there's a story usually around where you bought it or why you got it, or if you inherited it or if a friend gave it to you. So it usually has a story that comes with it and there's a lot that you can talk about while you're listening to this music that you love. So it's not just the story of the song, t's the story of how you got the song.

Up Nats full

Leigh and Scott discussing an album on the air for the Vinyl Hour.

Leigh (On camera): So when you were saying that you didn't remember buying it or hadn't maybe listened to it before. My thought was okay, so the cover must've gotten you.

Scott (On camera): And that's what I think because when I look at it I think what turned me on to this album. The cover which is really interesting and orange and green.

Scott (Interview): I had so much fun doing that, it was a blast and in fact I've done it again since then with another show. I will continue to do the vinyl hour as long as they'll let me.

Leigh and Scott laughing in the KUAF Studio

Fade to black

Fade up from black.

Interview shot- Wade Ogle

Wade (Interview): I think vinyl is the superior format. I'm saying if you've got a clean record and a high res stream or file and you play them back to back on the same quality system. And we do this all the time, you pick the vinyl every time.

The computer and the turntable inside Block Street Records are shown in close proximity to one another.

Cut to: Interior Phil Eubank's home, his living room record collection

Phil (Interview): It's a more relaxed frequency spread. CD's and Mp3's are compressed and LP's are uncompressed and so it's a more natural sound.

Close-up of needle dancing along a record.

Sam (Interview): Eh, I don't know. It sounds pretty good, the people that insist on it always find it pretty obnoxious. I do like listening to records a whole lot, it's just sort of a rhythm.

Cut to: Exterior- Stone House at the University of Arkansas

Up nats full

graphic: **MUSIC COGNITION LAB, University of Arkansas**

Elizabeth Margulis (Interview): A music cognition lab is a group of faculty and students who work together using various kinds of behavioral methodologies and other kinds of techniques to try to understand how people make sense of music.

Footage of the whisper room, computers, and hallways of the Music Cognition Lab

Elizabeth (Interview): We had one study that actually started out as an Honors thesis. And what she did is just brought people in and played them pairs of performances of the same piano piece. Then she'd tell them now you're going to hear a world renowned concert pianist play this piece

and they'd hear it. And now you're going to hear a conservatory student of piano play this piece and then they'd hear it. And they'd be asked things like which one did you like better? And unbeknownst to them sometimes they were just the same exact performance of the same piece. And overall people preferred the ones that they'd been told were professional regardless of their actual, who actually performed them.

Footage of records playing on turntables.

People listening to music on headphones.

Elizabeth (Interview): So there's been a lot of work there that might shed more direct light on this, because it's sort of about how much of the perception comes from the sound itself and how much comes from your expectations and the kind of setting. I think when people think about vinyl they think about a whole different place and way of listening to music.

Cut to: Archive footage of a band performing in an intimate venue for a small crowd.

Up nats full

Graphic: LEVI COBB & THE BIG SMOKE, of Denton, TX.

Shot hangs on the guitarist, Matt Farmer.

Matt Farmer (VO): There are basically two different, really standard ways people go about recording music.

Matt (Interview): Both take a lot of work and time just in completely different ways. So you can either do individual tracking. Every single person goes into a booth does the part a million times until it's perfect, you know and that does end up sounding often times a little more manufactured, but it gives you the ability to start over.

Archive footage of Levi Cobb and the Big Smoke in the recording studio

Matt (Interview): So that takes longer, it'll always take longer to do individual tracking because you got to spend sometimes ten hours just on drums, and depending on how long you're recording and how much you're recording. Versus, being able to go in full band, knock out five songs together on one day. But the other side of that is you have to practice so much to be able to go into a recording studio and get something live that you're happy with.

Archive footage: Levi Cobb and the Big Smoke Performance

Archive Footage: Levi Cobb and the Big Smoke in the recording studio

Matt (VO): We don't even get a check from Spotify until we hit a certain amount of plays. Even then it'll be like twenty bucks. Which is still less than the price of a record, especially a new record.

Matt (Interview): It's an investment, it's an investment that a lot of bands that aren't quite there yet, can't make.

Cut to an assembly line as records are shown moving down the conveyor belts.

Up nats full

Graphic: **HAND DRAWN PRESSING Addison, TX**

Music is playing as the scope of the facility is shown

Dustin Blocker (Interview) There is kind of a set fixed cost across the entire industry that everyone's kind of beholden to.

B-roll of Dustin boxing and discussing logistics on the factory floor.

Dustin (Interview): We're manufacturing, we're one step of ten steps. So in those other nine, everybody has a separate business that relies on it. So most of the plants today and over the last few years. Four months, six months, nine months, a year to get a record in your hands. So, if

you're an independent artist the thought of I can't get my records for six months from the time I need to have the record out, it's unbelievable. So they just check it off the list I can't do it. So we eliminate of course the speed, we're doing everything in sometimes about five to six weeks.

Thousands of records are shown unboxed, various colors, within the Hand Drawn facility.

Dustin (Interview): The smaller guys like me right, or my band would be is 300 unit guys, 500 unit guys. We very actively everyday say yes, we'll take these 300 unit 500 unit jobs. Which in all honesty if it was the bottom line, dollars and cents, you really wouldn't want to take anything under 1000 units.

Workers continuing to package and box record shipments.

Dustin (Interview): CDs are basically business cards at this point, they're freebies. But a T-shirt costs about five to six bucks and a vinyl record costs about five to six bucks, that's the bottom line.

Screen capture of a Digital Wave audio file on a computer screen.

Microscope footage of a record being cut and mastered.

Dustin (Interview): if you saw what a digital wave file looked like on a computer and the picture of it. It goes like this, it goes up and down. If you look at the actual grooves on the turntable through the microscope like the cutting engineer, the mastering engineer, that's what mastering is, he's cutting in real time those grooves. So it's cutting those squiggly lines, Highs, lows mids.

Up nats full

B-roll of Hand Drawn's pressing machines as the suction arm grabs a vinyl off the machine.

John Snodgrass (Interview): The machines are amazing. They are automated they do have a brain, but we want to make sure people know that the process itself, still lends itself to human

interaction.

John's hand is shown grabbing a handful of plastic pellets from a container.

John (VO): You take a vinyl pellet, and those are obviously room temperature. We buy them a ton at a time.

Vinyl pellets are shown in their containers.

The hoses are shown sucking up the pellets into the hopper.

John (VO): And you feed those into a hopper and from that hopper they're heated into almost a goo, a toothpaste if you will. So, an extruder does that work. We send them through a little mold to make what looks a bit like a hockey puck, it's basically a baby record.

A sample hockey puck mold is shown.

John (VO): That is fed into the actual press itself. You talk about pressing records. So it's obviously a very heavy press, it's very hot.

The trimming station and recycle stations are shown.

The machine applies a label as the press begins.

John (VO): And at that point the hockey puck gets an a-label and b-label applied, the press happens and just imagine that stuff squishing out until you have this flat record. The record is not perfectly round at this point, it's got jagged edges. So there's obviously a bit of extra plastic used to make that and we trim that off and then that extra can go into the recycle where we can use it again for certain things.

The mechanical arm picks up the record and sets it on a cooling station.

John (VO): So at that point the record is smooth, it's gone through what we call the trimming station. And it gets picked up by a suction arm and it goes to one of the two cooling stations or spindles and it sits there and continues to dry a little bit or cool off and continues to get as flat as

it's going to eventually be. And then ouila, you have the finished product, at that point you can actually take it off and put it on a turntable immediately.

Hundreds of finished records are shown wheeled to the packing line

John (VO): So the next thing is putting these dry records, these spindles of records, they're usually about a hundred at a time onto these carts.

Workers hand package every record and are shown inserting extra materials.

John (VO): The carts are rolled over to the packing line. And the packing line assembles them. There might be a sleeve into a jacket and maybe there's something a little fancier. Maybe there's some download cards a lot of different things can happen there but eventually they're shrink wrapped.

Records are shrink wrapped and workers stack them in boxes.

John (VO): All that is done, they're put into some custom boxes we developed that holds the record just perfectly and protect them if they're going to be shipped. Because, records are a bit fragile and they're heavy by the way.

John does one final quality check before sealing the final product for shipping.

John (VO): And at that point you're done you're packed up and the last piece of that is shipping.

Fade to black

Fade up from black

(music begins to play and steadily build throughout this sequence)

Leigh (Interview): In the last ten years, I think people are really drawn to it because it is tangible and people put work into the artwork and the packaging and it can be really beautiful.

Footage of records and their artwork are shown

Records spinning on a turntable

Dustin (Interview): I really think that vinyl records and the analog signal is not a perfect thing. And music shouldn't be perfect, I don't like perfect music. So, I'd rather hear it live and breathe like a human in a room.

Phil (Interview): And I'm just kind of a super fan, I never really intended for it to get this big.

Scott (Interview): When you start collecting vinyl and people know that you collect vinyl, all of a sudden people are like, Hey my dad had some old records would you want those, and the answer is always yes.

Sam (Interview): I don't know about the sound so much, for me it's just about finding things that I haven't heard before.

Franklin (Interview): Also, not sure if you'd be interested but I probably have I don't know, maybe about ten thousand CDs.

Footage of Block Street Records as Wade closes the film out and brings us full circle.

Wade (Interview): The same reasons it was fun to do in the 60s and 70s is the same reasons it's fun now. It's fun to dig for records. It's fun to take the time. It's fun to look at your collection that you've curated. Whereas if you have a thousand downloads or if you only stream. You've got music and that's good. But you don't really have a collection of anything.

Extreme Close-up of needle from the beginning of the film, continuing to dance along the record as it keeps spinning, forever if it could...

Fade to black

END

Credits

Directed, Produced, Written and Edited by Jared Endsley

Faculty Advisers: Dale Carpenter, Larry Foley, Thomas Rosteck, Rob Wells

Special Thanks to Jesse Thompson, Alex Cushing and Megan Noonan

Archive Footage Provided by: Diagonal View

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Appendix A



To: Jared Reed Endsley
BELL 4188

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee

Date: 04/12/2018

Action: **Expedited Approval**

Action Date: 04/12/2018

Protocol #: 1710078094

Study Title: In The Groove: A Documentary About Vinyl

Expiration Date: 11/02/2019

Last Approval Date:

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Dale Carpenter, Investigator

Appendix B

Documentary Film Materials

This thesis project includes an audio/visual documentary film portion. The official documentary of this project, *In The Groove: The Art of Records*, may be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxNRCjeBqns>