



Old Records Never Die: One Man's Quest for His Vinyl and His Past

Eric Spitznagel

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A Hudson Booksellers Best Non-Fiction Book of the Year, with foreword by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy

High Fidelity meets *Killing Yourself to Live* when one man searches for his lost record collection.

As he finds himself within spitting distance of middle-age, journalist Eric Spitznagel feels acutely the loss of... something. Freedom? Maybe. Coolness? Could be. The records he sold in a financial pinch? Definitely. To find out for sure, he sets out on a quest to find the original vinyl artifacts from his past. Not just copies. The exact same records: The Bon Jovi record with his first girlfriend's phone number scrawled on the front sleeve. The *KISS Alive II* he once shared with his little brother. The Replacements *Let It Be* he's pretty sure, 20 years later, would still smell like weed.

As he embarks on his hero's journey, he reminisces about the actual records, the music, and the people he listened to it with--old girlfriends, his high school pals, and, most poignantly, his father and his young son. He explores the magic of music and memory as he interweaves his adventures in record-culture with questions about our connection to our past, the possibility of ever recapturing it, and whether we would want to if we could.

"Memories are far more indelible when married to the physical world, and Spitznagel proves the point in this vivid book. We love vinyl records because they combine the tactile, the visual, the seeable effects of age and care and carelessness. When he searches for the records he lost and sold, Spitznagel is trying to return to a tangible past, and he details that process with great sensitivity and impact."--**Dave Eggers, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Circle***

Old Records Never Die: One Man's Quest for His Vinyl and His Past Details

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From Reader Review **Old Records Never Die: One Man's Quest for His Vinyl and His Past** for online ebook

Dr. Detroit says

It all sounds like a hoot on paper – Eric Spitznagel sets out to track down some of the vinyl he used to own – not just copies, but the exact same records he sold to pay bills, replaced with CD's, etc. It's unfathomable why anyone would want to own a Tom Waits or Liz Phair album once. But twice? It triggers my acid reflux just thinking about it. I started trying to figure it out and my nose started bleeding. I took this as a sign to stop.

While there's plenty here to recommend, it's obvious Spitznagel has a much different relationship with music than me, not that there's anything wrong with that. His standard of excellence is something "to make me tremble while I'm falling in love in a car during a rainstorm." I just want to check my brain at the door, howl at the moon, drink, dance, celebrate life instead of regret, stop just short of playing air guitar, and curse a lot. Life's too short for anything else. Thank God the 90's are over. I can't handle any more angst and hand wringing over something as pure and simple as writing or listening to pop music. When I snap my fingers, please move on.

Along the way, Spitznagel dials the wayback machine to high school, reuniting with an ex-lover and reminiscing about old Billy Joel and Bon Jovi records over a couple of bottles of wine, brings a used copy of "Let It Be" to a rainy, muddy Replacements reunion show, tries with his wife to figure out whether their son's first exposure to music should be Soul Coughing, Ani DiFranco, or Foo Fighters (I say the kid has three strikes against him already), and confesses to listening to the first New York Dolls album only because he wanted to have sex with a girl with purple dreadlocks. Somewhere Arthur "Killer" Kane, Johnny Thunders, and Jerry Nolan are spinning in their graves.

Jana says

4.5*

This made me feel so much wonderful nostalgia. Which I know might sound weird coming from a 22-year-old girl born in the 90s while talking about a book by a 40-something man who grew up with some of the most legendary music out there being in its prime. But I felt the love for music on so many levels. Before booktube, I was this obsessed with music. I still am obsessed with music, even though books have taken the slight lead in my list of obsessions. I am the kind of person who loves vinyl more than any other form of music. But I could also relate to so much he describes. I too download music off iTunes most of the time and listen through my iPod, but still love vinyl more. This story felt so real, along with all the problems and the feelings and the sheer reality of life that it brought with it that I couldn't help but feel nostalgic. It is wonderful, and any fan of especially classic rock should be able to appreciate this a lot.

Diane says

if you love music read this book. more on <http://bookwinked.wordpress.com>

Tabitha Lord says

For those of us who came of age in the '70s or '80s, the thrill of purchasing that first record, or the memory of locking ourselves in our rooms to listen to one song over and over again, trying desperately not to scratch the delicate surface of the turning disk, is scored into our psyche. The connection between music and memories, especially in our youth, is a powerful one.

“There in the car, driving down Lake Shore and listening to ‘Livin’ on a Prayer,’ I had a moment of intense clarity. It was suddenly so obvious what I had to do. I needed to find that record. Not just any record. The record. The one with Heather’s phone number written on it. The exact copy I once owned, that represented something hugely important to me, some rite of passage into adulthood...And why stop with one record? Why not get all of them?...I wanted my records. My exact records. My literal exact records. I wanted them back. All of them. Or at least as many as I could find.”

And so begins Eric Spitznagel’s odyssey to recover his lost vinyl. Searching for his records, Eric revisits moments from his past, connects with old friends and lovers, and meets strange and wonderful new characters along the way. With laugh out loud humor and moments of brilliant insight, Eric pulls us along on the journey with him. We discover that some memories may have been rewritten, youth can be gracefully surrendered, and the future is wonderful in its unpredictability.

You can read my interview with Eric Spitznagel - Music, Memories, and A Modern Odyssey on BookClubBabble here: <http://bookclubbabble.com/music-memor...>

P.e. lolu says

For me this book touched home because of two things, one I enjoy collecting and listening to music, and second because of some water damage I lost about 50 or so records that I have been collecting since the 70’s, 80’ and 90’s. Some I don’t think I will be able to replace because they were hard to find back then and now there is a new generation getting into vinyl. This is good and bad for someone like me who has been with the help of my wife lugging my albums, stereo equipment from one move to another since 1978. That in itself is scree. I enjoyed parts of this book and could relate to some of it. I am at a point now where my wife and family have accepted my records, to the point that now people give me some. Which I take with much thanks because you don’t know what you will find in the stack. For each person it is something different and unique. This book has moments where there are funny times and time that make you think back to a move and where some people left or gave away their records I took mine, and my wife would make a face but after are 5th move she just knew I was taking them. We never argued and for us it is memories of high school and dances and of course the parents saying turn down that noise and how can you listen to that. It is not music. For me that is what I got out of this book memories that I am still making and hopefully will pass on to my

grandchildren. A good book. I got this book from netgalley. I gave it 4 stars. Follow us at www.1rad-readerreviews.com

Jennifer Taylor says

I loved loved loved this book. Not only did part of it take place in my home state but as someone who is in the same age bracket and situation, I could completely relate to this search. If you are or were ever a true music lover, you live and breathed it then this book is for you!

Melki says

"Memory isn't about reality, and neither is music. It's about the comforting reflections we want to hold on to, even if they're mostly bullshit."

~ Eric Spitznagel

**I brought them into my mother's house
during the wars of puberty
and played them when she wasn't home --
I had to listen alone.
Boxed sets of LPs gathering dust,
long-playing records long unplayed --
I heard them so many times back then
their grooves got etched into my brain.**

Vinyl.

It was certainly a big part of *my* past. Oh, those lonely teenage nights, spent clutching my hairbrush/microphone, singing along with Bonnie Raitt, Debbie Harry, and Chrissie Hynde. (I even listened to some women whose names didn't end in "ie.") It sounds sort of pathetic now, but honestly . . . I wouldn't trade those nights for anything.

**Through the flowering of fertility
coming in waves of panic and shame,
the boxed LPs accompanied me
from dorm to dorm to grungy room
in working-girl apartment, and
from home to home to better home.
I married a man who came with a son.
I still listened, and listened alone.**

I'm lucky. I still have the albums that meant the most to me. Many have been sold along the way. Several crates full went bye-bye a few years ago, sold to pay the mortgage one month. (The fact that I had *Cheech*

and Chong's *Big Bambú* with the rolling paper still intact caused quite a stir in the record shop, and it sold for more than a pretty penny.)

But I managed to hold on to my favorites.

**Sound got reduced to zeros and ones
stored in a cloud, played on a phone.
Vinyl's been gone so long it's back,
but the turntable went two moves ago.
Shrinking our lives to apartment size.
I've come to love discarding things.
If it hasn't been used in the past two years,
out it goes! But not the LPs.**

Journalist Eric Spitznagel watched his treasured vinyl collection dwindle over the years, sold for those nagging living expenses. But one day, after interviewing Questlove, Eric decided he wanted to revisit the past via the music that he played in his youth. Replacement albums would not do, huh-uh. He wanted *the same exact records* he used to own. And so began the quest - days spent searching the few remaining record stores, basements, and attics. Would he be able to find his cherished platters . . . all while keeping an eye on his rambunctious three-year-old?

This was a fun ride, tagging along on the search. I enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, and especially the poignant moments near the end of the book where (view spoiler) I'd recommend this to anyone wanting to recapture their youth, if only for the length of a special song.

**A woman once sang at a microphone.
Her voice cut grooves that caught the sound
and the sound got knitted into my bones.
It held me up. I knew it for truth.
The records sit on a shelf so high.
It takes a real ladder to get them down.
I glance upward as I walk by
and there she is. And here I am.***

***LONG-PLAYING RECORDS by Marcia Menter**

Christine Edwards says

I was very disappointed in this book. The synopsis read so well, but the content did not live up to the expectations. It basically boiled down to a memoir of a man's mid-life crisis and his desire to relive his youth (mostly his sexual exploits) through recovering the records, or songs, that he attached to those moments in time. It could have been good, but I'm afraid it just wasn't.

Mike Balsom says

For me, reading this book was like eating my favourite dessert. Full disclosure - I am a long-time music collector who has never thrown out a record, cassette, CD, music magazine, concert t-shirt or hard drive in the 40+ years I've been collecting. This through many arguments with my mother growing up, and with successive girlfriends, and even two wives (not at the same time, of course!) who have never understood or appreciated my obsessive habit. So it's hard for me to understand why Eric Spitznagel allowed himself to sell off his vinyl collection. But it's completely understandable that to me that he would desire to track down every exact piece of vinyl he gave up in a quest to relive his past.

Spitznagel takes the reader through a quest that many would find ridiculous. His sense of humor, though, is such that you can understand the emotion involved in the search and discovery of these precious mementos of his youth. The reader makes a mistake, though, thinking from the start that this book is about vinyl. Spitznagel's story is about life itself, how it progresses from childhood to adulthood, and how many of us periodically long for those easier, more carefree days of our youth, when the most important thing to us may have been that new Replacements album or getting noticed by the cute girl in Chem class.

His journey fittingly winds up in the house in which he grew up, with some great friends from his youth sharing stories while spinning some of their favourite tunes from the time, on vinyl, of course. It made me long for my own days in my basement bedroom, listening to Pink Floyd with my buddy Colin, or sneaking into my friend Rob's brother's room to listen to Captain Beyond on his quadraphonic stereo system. Colin has passed away, tragically, and Rob lives thousands of miles away from me, and I know I can't go back physically, like Spitznagel did. But reading his book allowed me to go back mentally, and emotionally, to those great experiences that went a long way toward defining who I am today. Thank you, Eric!

Victoria (RedsCat) says

Old Records was a pleasure to read. For me, it was full of nostalgia for the good old days of the 1980s and record stores. As Spitznagel says, "...I want the old thrill back, the adrenaline rush of hunting for music the way it's supposed to be hunted."

In the 80s, I worked in 3 different records stores. And if I wasn't working, I was probably zooming to Portland with my friend Rees in his old VW...so we could go to record stores. That's how you made friends back then; all about the music and the hunt for music. My first real relationship was based almost entirely around music (okay, and art).

So reading Old Records led me on my own trip down memory lane at the same time I journeyed with Spitznagel on his quest to recover all the old vinyl he'd sold or given away or lost over the years.

(And he totally GETS The Replacements, okay? And all you bastards of the young who love the Mats, you know who you are, and you know what I'm talkin' about.)

Did I enjoy this book? Hell, yes! (Do you see me throwing rocker horns? Because I totally am.) So read this and go on your own nostalgia trip. Because, yeah, those were the good old days.

(Thank you Plume and Penguin First-to-Read! You rock!)

Jason Paulios says

I'm old enough to have lived through a few different commercial music formats and am guilty of having had conversations in the last six months lamenting the change in how we find and experience music. I'm aware of how ridiculous it can sound to younger generations or those who just weren't into music growing up, but I was happy to discover a fellow believer in Eric Spitznagel and his nostalgic music memoir, "Old Records Never Die". Spitznagel relates his formative experiences purchasing LPs in a mostly suburban Midwestern setting, tying stories to particular albums (most involved attempts to sway a romantic interest). In typical midlife crisis mode amid the stress of a new child and new job opportunity he chooses to fall down the nostalgia wormhole. He makes a decision to recover these records, mere copies will not suffice, he needs the exact LPs complete with marker scrawl warnings to siblings on the cover art and, most importantly, with scratches in just the right places. We follow him to record swaps, his old college radio station, and a reunion concert by The Replacements on his quest to recover the more important few from his sold-off collection. Of the 581.2 million record units printed between 1983-1985 he's "pretty sure I could identify five of them from that period, assuming I'm ever in the same room with them." The basis for his quest isn't particularly novel but the journey is equal parts thoughtful and funny, Spitznagel is snooty but also self-aware and not afraid to criticize his actions. He spends time and resources far beyond what his family should tolerate and I'm curious to know what the companion book his wife could have written would look like. Still, this was a fun weekend read that I could easily see Cameron Crowe turning into a film.

Jeff says

Have to Spaz out here. As for me the book was transcendent. Capturing exactly the emotions and feelings of fandom to a degree.

The paranoia, the obsession the nostalgia the psychosis of collecting and fandom. Expressing it more beautifully and meaningfully as I have ever read and felt about the subject. I believe the book strikes the right cord for those out there. Who are if the same particular tribe be it music, movies, books whatever you find yourself collecting . The poetry and partially pathetic guilt that you sometimes feel afterwards and in trying to explain yourself. And yet still labeled a hipster for caring about something sincerely and having an emotional attachment to it. It might be over analyzing or it could be the autobiography of your life said through other words, but only you can make the connection.

Bent Hansen says

With this book, Eric Spitznagel has written a tremendously funny, entertaining and touching story about music, memories and friendship. The idea behind the book - to find the exact copies of the most important records of your teen years - is so outrageous that it shouldn't be possible, and it turns out that in most cases it isn't.

But the journey itself is worth every page due to Spitznagel's hilarious observations about people in his life, musicians, song lyrics, album cover art, and himself in embarrassing and defining moments in his life -

carried out with honesty and dripping, self-deprecating irony. I laughed out loud many times throughout the book - resulting in curious looks from my fellow commuters on the train.

The book is basically a super long magazine article about a lot of different music mostly from the 1970s and 80s, and one could doubt that the market for such a book is very big. However, I still recommend it to all who love music and the memories connected to it - be it pop, rock, country or punk. In my view, the book will appeal mainly to male readers that aren't put off by frequent descriptions of sex, drugs and alcohol.

[The book was generously provided as an advance readers copy through the *First to Read* program]

Marc says

I was very excited by the premise of this book, but it simply doesn't deliver. I'm a music fanatic who has recently returned to vinyl, and I love searching through used record stores looking for albums I used to own before giving them away during one move or another. The description of Spitznagel's book made it seem like we were kindred spirits, and I looked forward to reading about his quest to recover his missing loves.

Unfortunately, this premise wasn't the focus of the book. Instead, Spitznagel focuses more on the journey to adulthood and how often we fight against new responsibilities (parenthood, a steady income) in favor of past indiscretions (drugs, one-night stands, wasteful spending). What's more, he has little of interest to say in this regard, sharing many of the same platitudes and ideas that have been explored--in far more interesting terms--hundreds (or thousands) of times in the past. The sections where he discusses music are my favorite passages--such as his description of attending a Replacements reunion concert as an adult, or trying to listen to a Misfits album when he's really a Billy Joel fan--but they become less prevalent as the book goes on. Spitznagel also engages in some bizarre activities--moving his old furniture into his old house for a 12-hour listening party with friends, bringing a Replacements album to the afore-mentioned concert in the rain for no apparent reason, smoking multiple joints in the basement of someone's house looking through boxes of albums--and these result in the understanding that instead of being a kindred spirit, I do not identify with him or his mindset. Some writing looks for common ground between the author and reader; Spitznagel seems to enjoy finding the uncommon ground.

The writing itself is serviceable, with occasional analogies that are insightful or hilarious, but there aren't enough of them to warrant a higher rating in my opinion. I wanted to like this book, but it ends up being like an album with one or two good songs with far too much filler. I'd put it back in the bargain bin.

Anne says

"...digging through those bins, building a record collection that was like a never-ending scavenger hunt." For those of us at a certain age, who had a certain relationship with music, this is a near-perfect book.

"Memory isn't about reality, and neither is music. It's about the comforting reflections we want to hold on to, even if they're mostly bullshit." Finding the exact copy of his old collection, well... that's a little far-fetched but who'd publish a book about just finding a different copy?

This pairs well with Rob Sheffield's *Love Is a Mixtape*.

