

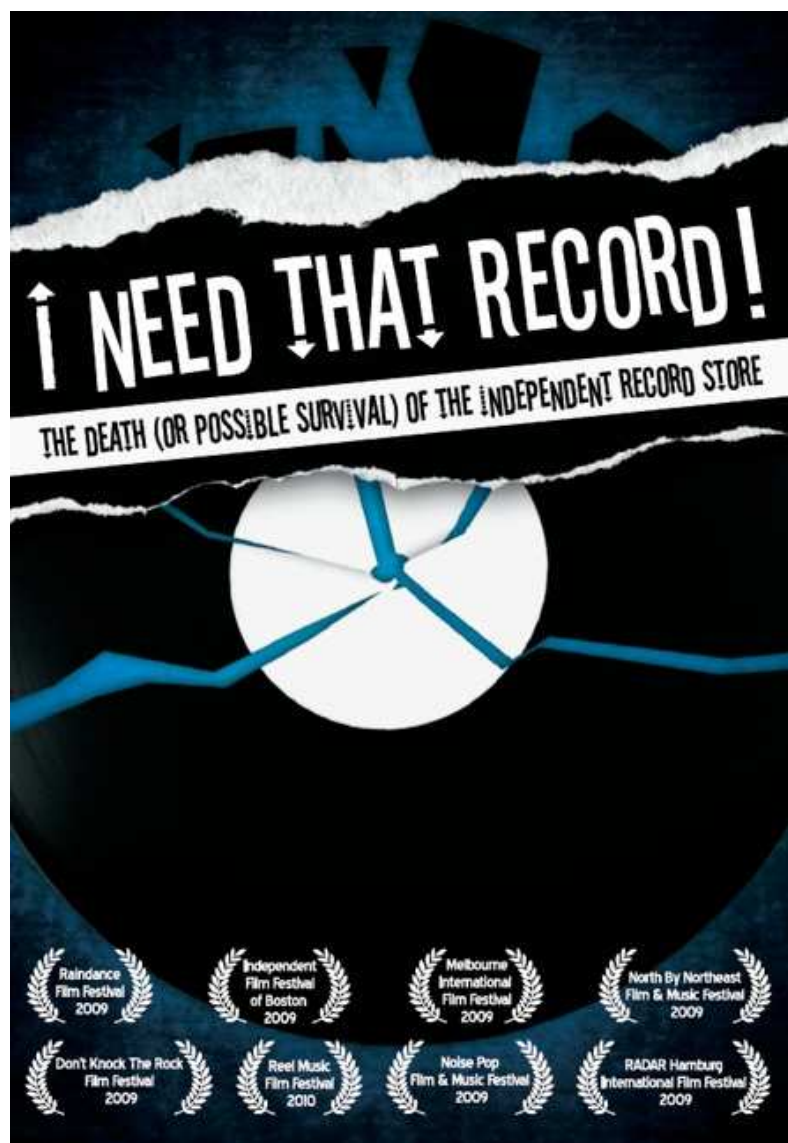


- [Home](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Events](#)
- [News](#)
- [wi-fight](#)

  
**SFR HOME PAGE**

## [Voting With Your Dollars: The Independent Record Store's Demise](#)

By [Adam Perry](#) on May 8th, 2010



Just released on DVD by MVD Visual, writer-editor-director Brendan Toller’s fascinating new documentary *I Need That Record!* is a must-see for American music lovers. In it, Toller travels around our troubled nation discussing the plight of independent record shops with ousted or struggling store owners; underground music legends such as Thurston Moore, Mike Watt and Ian MacKaye; social and political expert Noam Chomsky; and people of all walks of life who are upset about how difficult it’s becoming to buy albums anywhere but “big box stores” like Wal-Mart and Best Buy.

On a recent trip to San Francisco, I was able to do a much-needed record-shopping run at Amoeba Records in the Haight Ashbury district, which is a holy pilgrimage for American music geeks. It’s not hard to argue that if an album can’t be found at Amoeba—which is housed in a former bowling alley near the entrance to Golden Gate Park—it doesn’t exist. But it’s also not tough to argue that the number of such quality independent record stores—places where you can spend hours discovering new and rare music from all over the world, meeting interesting people and even catching live sets by traveling bands of all genres—has depressingly dwindled in the past decade. And the problem is getting much, much worse.

Over 3,000 independent record stores have closed since 2000, and Brendan Toller does a fine job astutely explaining the independent record store’s demise, which could end in the elimination of yet another place where Americans have long loved to gather and connect face to face over a shared passion:

“The love of money corrupted all the major music distribution channels,” Toller says in *I Need That Record!*

It’s true. To the detriment of small record stores, MTV decided in the mid-1990’s to play more reality shows than music videos in order to raise profits, which seriously diminished the number of young people who are excited about buying new music that isn’t spoon-fed by major labels. More damning for independent record shops, however, is the current reality that 75% of hard-copy music sales in America now occur at Wal-Mart, Best Buy and Borders.



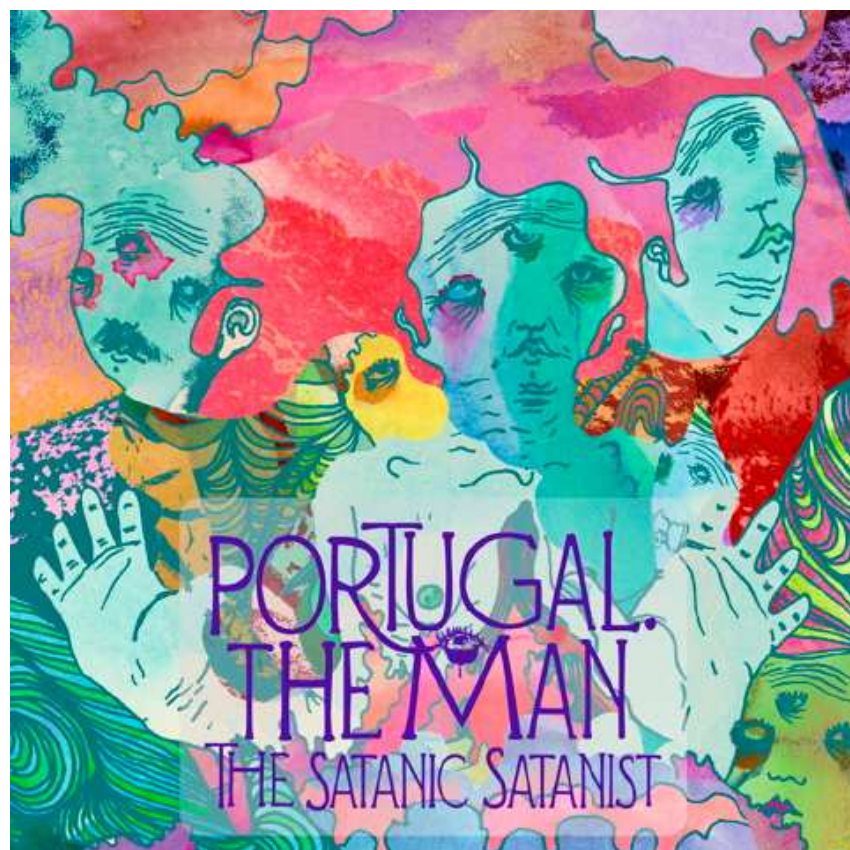
Music is just one more cheap product at Wal-Mart, which is even succeeding using its power as the nation's leading music retailer to requisition family-friendly content from record labels, and in general all of the big box stores sell music at a loss (i.e. under \$10) in order to get shoppers to load up on more expensive items—or just more items, period. This business method drives masses of potential music buyers away from indie stores that can't pay rent without making a profit every month. Additionally, as Toller details in *I Need That Record!*, many small record shops are now forced to buy a large portion of their CDs from Best Buy and Wal-Mart because it's actually cheaper than buying directly from major labels, many of which still haven't realized that \$18 is a ridiculous price for one CD.

If this community-threatening pattern continues at record shops and all kinds of other independent stores in America, our country could realistically become devoid of any shops that are not chains. Imagine all our cities' urban marketplaces resembling downtown Denver, where what passes for "local flavor" is The Cheesecake Factory, ESPN Zone and the Hard Rock Café.

Perhaps worse, Toller states that less than 2% of revenue at big box stores goes to local payroll, so money spent there makes a fast getaway out of town, whereas money spent at independent stores obviously nurtures local economy—not to mention local friendships. One wonders how often a CD purchase at Wal-Mart results in a long conversation about music with an exceptionally knowledgeable clerk—or exceptionally knowledgeable fellow customer—who ends up turning the buyer on to a new band, or even a new genre. Indeed: "Big box stores move product, while independent record stores define culture," Rob Miller, of Chicago's Bloodshot Records, asserts in *I Need That Record!*

Of course, in America convenience is king, and a key reason for the near-extinction of independent record stores has been the rise of iTunes and online file sharing. Sure, it's less expensive to download singles for 99 cents and steal mass quantities of music via file sharing than to support indie shops and burgeoning musicians but, as Thurston Moore says in *I Need That Record!*, "The internet is really lonely and boring." Plus, according to Toller, iTunes carries less than 1% of the recorded music available in the world, which can make one long for a heavenly trove like Amoeba.

And who can forget (or stop appreciating) the great cover art, stickers and posters that often came with LPs and some CDs? A grainy image of a CD's front cover on your iPod just can't compete with the four 8" x 10" photos of the Beatles I was excited to find in my first used copy of *The White Album* or the extraordinary pop-up art from Portugal. The Man's 2009 CD *The Satanic Satanist*.



Right now, the amount of music downloaded per month trumps the number of hard-copies of record music sold in America by 12 to 1, Toller states, and file sharing is growing by 100% a year. Thus, independent record shops sadly represent “one less place to go,” as a dejected former East Coast indie record shop owner who recently lost his lease after 21 years says in *I Need That Record!*

If you relish the experience of discovering great new and rare music at locally owned shops where the clerks know your name and it’s easy to find an embraceable community of music lovers, don’t go to big box stores. If you buy albums solely at Target or Wal-Mart, the aforementioned experiences could be gone forever. Supporting indie record stores is no different from grabbing breakfast at Santa Fe Baking Co. instead of McDonald’s, or burritos from Posa’s instead of Taco Bell. As the legendary Joe Strummer said just before his death in 2002, we vote with our dollars in today’s society, and we really can get whatever quality we demand as consumers if we refuse to pay for the cruddy experience and cruddy products doled out by Big Business.

The DVD version of *I Need That Record!*, with over two hours of bonus interviews, is currently only available at independent record stores and will be sold everywhere starting July 27. Just one last thing: I’m new here—where are the good independent record shops in Santa Fe?

[ShareThis](#)

[buzz this](#)  Tags: [best buy](#), [brendan toller](#), [documentaries](#), [film](#), [I need that record](#), [mike watt](#), [music](#), [noam chomsky](#), [record stores](#), [rock](#), [sonic youth](#), [thurston moore](#), [wal mart](#)

Posted in [Culture](#) | [No Comments »](#)

### Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (required) (will not be published)

Website

Comment

Submit Comment

↑ [Back to top](#)



•

• [!\[\]\(d38d40db5bb31e2db2f3490804bde37d\_img.jpg\) \*\*The Santa Fe Reporter\*\*](#)



- Eyedropper: Fresh Meat: Santa Fe is known for many things: adobe, French-Riviera-like lighting, a violent history ... <http://bit.ly/9OEK0A> about 21 hours ago from [twitterfeed](#)

• [\*\*Julia Goldberg\*\*](#)



- [@DonnerKay](#) congrats, that's awesome [about 11 minutes ago](#) from [TweetDeck](#) in reply to [DonnerKay](#)

• [\*\*Corey Pein\*\*](#)



- "Not a single anecdote in her life-story would be out of place in a Rhodes Scholar app.—and I mean that as damning" <http://bit.ly/9GZpbK> about 2 hours ago from [TweetDeck](#)

• [\*\*Alexa Schirtzinger\*\*](#)



- Scientists encourage you to eat two handfuls of deez nutz, via [@SCFOM](#) <http://ow.ly/1JIV0> about 25 minutes ago from [HootSuite](#)

• [\*\*Zane's World\*\*](#)



- o Milwaukee has solar-powered parking. Why not Santa Fe? <http://tweetphoto.com/20543297> 09:13:40 PM April 30, 2010 from [TweetDeck](#)

- [Rani Molla](#)



- o New Eyedropper: Fresh Meat ! <http://bit.ly/9mPzAy> about 22 hours ago from [TweetDeck](#)

- [Charlotte Jusinski](#)



- o New Eyedropper: Fresh Meat is delicious <http://bit.ly/9mPzAy> about 23 hours ago from [TweetDeck](#)

- [Alex de Vore](#)



- o [@artichokegirl](#) oh yeah..samm levine who was on one good show ten years ago? Sure care about his opinions. Pbbbbthhhhhbbbt. [about 11 hours ago](#) from [Twitterrificin reply to artichokegirl](#)

- [Santa Fe Mountain Lion](#)



- o I prefer [#windageddon](#) (sounds more like kitten than the other) RT [@fbihop](#): Is it [#windageddon](#) or [#windocalpyse](#) in NM today? [09:22:55 PM April 29, 2010](#) from [TweetDeck](#)

- [Eating Wrong](#)



- o Why are fried beet chips so so so good? A few minutes in safflower oil at 325 degrees and then sweet, crispy delerium [10:27:48 PM April 23, 2010](#) from [TweetDeck](#)



[Show the Eyedropper what has left the back of your eyelids burning.](#)

- [Digital Special Issues](#)



• **Feeds**

- [Main RSS Feed](#)
- [Culture RSS Feed](#)
- [News RSS Feed](#)



•

• **SFR @ YouTube**

**Click 'n Watch**





powered by



## • Archives

- [May 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [March 2010](#)
- [February 2010](#)
- [January 2010](#)
- [December 2009](#)
- [November 2009](#)
- [October 2009](#)
- [September 2009](#)
- [August 2009](#)
- [July 2009](#)
- [June 2009](#)
- [May 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)
- [March 2009](#)
- [February 2009](#)
- [January 2009](#)
- [December 2008](#)

- **Find Your Watershed**  
Enter your ZIP:

[More info](#)



- [Connect with Facebook](#)

- SFReeper.com is New Mexico's source for breaking news and culture with a local focus from the [Santa Fe Reporter](#). This site is optimized for viewing on mobile platforms. Your phone will auto-detect the appropriate url.

- **Which Republican gubernatorial candidate would fare best against Democrat Diane Denish in November's general election?**

- Janice Arnold-Jones
- Doug Turner
- Allen Weh
- Pete Domenici Jr
- Susana Martinez

[View Results](#)





- 
- - [Latest Posts](#)
  - [Latest Comments](#)
  - [Tags](#)
- - [Eyedropper: Fresh Meat](#)
  - [Through Rain, Sleet, Snow, Wind... Well, Not Wind](#)
  - [Voting With Your Dollars: The Independent Record Store's Demise](#)
  - [Dennis Larkins – Much More Than “That Grateful Dead Guy”](#)
  - [Spring Sprang!](#)

Sign up for our  
Email Newsletter

Privacy by  SafeSubscribe<sup>SM</sup>  
For Email Marketing you can trust

## • SFR Tweeps

Santa Fe Reporter

### SFR staff tweeks



[aschirtz](#) Scientists encourage you to eat two handfuls of deez nutz, via @SCFOM <http://ow.ly/1JIV0>  
25 minutes ago



[aschirtz](#) RT @haussamen: @ImBackingBob, where's your finance report? In fact, where are your last two finance reports? They aren't on SOS Web site.  
about 1 hour ago



[coreypein](#) "Not a single anecdote in her life-story would be out of place in a Rhodes Scholar app.—and I mean that as damning" <http://bit.ly/9GZpbk>  
2 hours ago



[coreypein](#) Big Oil doesn't want to share its bribery budget, ie, "how



Join the conversation

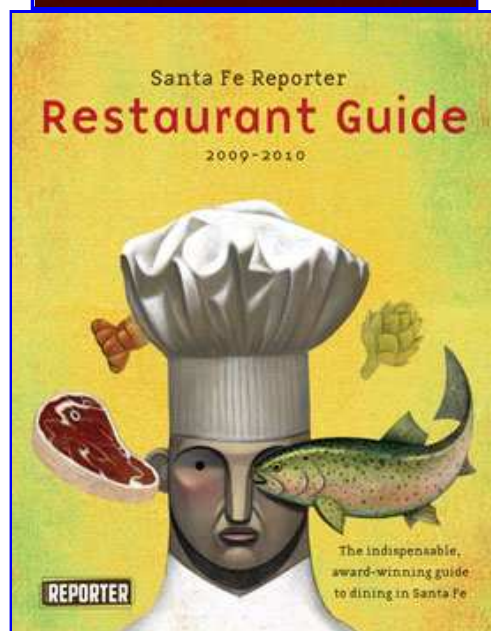
**Santa Fe Reporter**  
Like

1,695 people like Santa Fe Reporter



Jonathan Mariela Jennifer Will Laura  
David Jim Nancy Susan Margarita

**SFRBACKPAGE.COM**



## • NM Political Blogs

- [Democracy for New Mexico](#)
- [Heath Haussaman on New Mexico Politics](#)
- [Joe Monahan's New Mexico](#)
- [Moralia Blog](#)
- [New Mexico Independent](#)
- [NMFBIHOP](#)
- [Only in New Mexico](#)
- [Santa Fe Review](#)
- [Sheriff Greg Solano Blog](#)
- [Whirled View](#)

## • Santa Fe Culture Links

- [Adobe Airstream](#)
- [Artistic Overdose \(defunct\)](#)
- [Center for Contemporary Arts](#)
- [Garcia Street Books](#)

- [IndieSF](#)
- [Lentic Performing Arts Center](#)
- [Meow Wolf](#)
- [Santa Fe Opera](#)
- [Santa Fe Reporter photo contest](#)
- [Steve Terrell's Music Blog](#)
- [Tin Star Blog](#)
- [True Believers Comics & Gallery](#)
- [Warehouse 21](#)

## • Santa Fe Reporter Links

- [Blogging Bill \(defunct\)](#)
- [Julia Goldberg's Blog](#)
- [Pinecore.com](#)
- [Rob Wilder](#)
- [Santa Fe Reporter](#)
- [SFR@MySpace](#)
- [SFR@YouTube](#)
- [Swingstateofmind.com \(defunct\)](#)

## • Useful Resources

- [Rail Runner schedule](#)
- [Santa Fe Craigslist](#)
- [Santa Fe Movie Showtimes](#)
- [Santa Fe on Wikipedia](#)
- [SF Bus Routes and Schedules.](#)

## • Follow the Money

COST OF CAMPAIGN '10		
New Mexico District 03		
Candidates	Raised	Spent
Ben R Lujan (D)	\$664,430	\$304,711
<b>Adam Charles Kokesh (R)</b>	<b>\$199,838</b>	<b>\$187,835</b>
Thomas E. Mullins (R)	\$71,376	\$42,699

**Add this widget  
to your site**

© 2010 SFReeper.com | [RSS Feed](#)

[Switch to our mobile site](#)