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HUFFPOST MUSIC CANADA

Last Shop Standing: Whatever Happened to Record Shops?

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For nearly 30 years my job has been to sell to independent record shops. The major record companies had numerous reps on the road covering different parts of the UK but because I worked for a small music distributor my area was the whole of the country. When I started we had over 2200 independent record shops but by 2009 the number had dwindled to just 269.

One day an elderly Auntie of mine asked "How are things in the land of record shops?" I told her things were bad as lots of my customers had closed down and some of them had lost their homes as they had ploughed everything into keeping their businesses alive. My Auntie asked me if they were going the way of the candlestick makers. She informed me that when she was a little girl the High streets contained stamp shops, coin shops and candlestick makers but nobody talks about them anymore. Her comments struck a chord with me and inspired me to write my book 'Last Shop Standing (Whatever Happened to Record Shops?)'.

I set off on a journey around the country to interview 50 record stores who I thought would be amongst the last shops standing to find out what they had done to survive whilst hundreds of others had failed. At that point I felt that record stores would soon be part of our history and I was writing the obituary of the record shop. It did not turn out like that as when I interviewed the shop owners they all had fabulous anecdotes about the crazy world of record retailing so instead of writing about the death of the record store the book became a celebration of these great places that bring so much pleasure to music fans.

When the book came out my expectations were low. I hoped it would bring some much-needed positive publicity and if the 50 stores featured all took 10 copies then I would be delighted. I was just like tens of thousands of people who write books each year on a low budget. The editing was done by a combination of my 15-year-old son and my next door neighbour who was a retired English teacher. The sleeve was done by a friend I played soccer with in return for buying him a beer.

To my surprise the book sold very well (now on its 5th edition) and it was clear that thousands of people were just like me. They were people who cherished record stores and cared about their survival.

In 2012 Blue Hippo Media approached me about turning the book into a film. I was very excited as a few days earlier I had read about an author receiving \$500,000 for the film rights to the book. A few days later we met in a pub and they bought me a beer and a ploughman's lunch and that was enough for me to agree to do the film.

To finance the film we posted a clip on the internet and informed people that we were making a movie that champions record shops and if people were interested in being involved then send us \$25 and we will send you an advance copy of the DVD and say thank you in the credits.

The response was amazing as hundreds of music fans all over the world contributed. We are proud that it is a film about independent record shops, produced by an independent film company with a soundtrack donated completely free by independent bands and musicians such as Half Man Half Biscuit, Clara Luzia and the James Clarke 5. Best of all the film has been financed by independent music fans.

The organisers of Record Store Day asked for the film to be 'The Official Film of RSD'. On 20th April the film receives a world wide release. The DVD will only be available in record shops taking part in RSD and as well as the film the DVD contains 75 minutes of extras which include record shop owners telling funny anecdotes ,a visit to the most unusual record shop in the world and exclusive interviews with Paul Weller ,Johnny Marr ,Richard Hawley and Sid Griffin.