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Last Shop Standing: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Independent Record Shop

by [Mark Tolch](#)

Published on 07-19-2013 08:19 AM

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Vampire Hookers...watched this as a teen hoping for serious sleaze...was vastly disappointed. I...

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[Todd Jordan](#) 09-11-2013 09:54 AM



I'm interested to see the new transfer. I've never watched the AB Blu so, hopefully, it will stand...

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[m birmingham](#) 09-06-2013 01:38 PM



I was going to buy it to support GR, but it's really, REALLY bad. The extras sound interesting,...

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[Mark Tolch](#) 09-06-2013 08:14 AM



Was looking forward to this release for they hype behind it. Seems just like a shitty movie with...

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The hippie stuff puts me off. Doesn't seem like something I'd watch more than once, but I'd like to...

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[bgart13](#) 09-05-2013 11:45 PM

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Released By: Convexe Entertainment

Released On: 08/06/2013

Director: Kevin Barker

Cast: Richard Hawley, Paul Weller, Johnny Marr, Billy Bragg, Jo Good

Year: 2012

[Purchase From Amazon](#)

The Film:

It had been around for ages, but for me, it really started sometime around 1983; I got my first real-life stereo with an actual, honest-to-goodness turntable. And though in hindsight, it was a piece of garbage, the seed was planted when I was given some of my dad's dusty records to play on it. Black Sabbath's Masters of Reality....Alice Cooper's Easy Action....Frank Zappa's Them Or Us....and Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon. I was instantly a vinyl FREAK, and set out to collect as much as my small allowance would permit. It was a good time to collect vinyl; you could still find it in the racks at A&A and Sunrise Records

and Tapes, though most records were 7.99 plus tax (a fortune at that age), and I had much better luck at flea markets and garage sales, where you could find boxes, bins, and crates full of used vinyl for a quarter, ten for two bucks. Although I listened to a lot of the poppier, synth-driven stuff on the radio, my pre-teen self focused on collecting the "classic rock" music that had drawn me to records in the first place.

A few years later, and a change of cities and musical ideals found me sifting through the stacks of used vinyl at local record stores with a new focus in mind; punk rock. Wandering into one particular store, I was forced to admit to the girl behind the counter that I really had no idea what I was looking for. I had heard the Sex Pistols and a couple of tracks by The Clash, and I wanted to know more. Directing me to a less populated area of the store, I picked out records by The Clash, the Pistols, and The Dead Kennedys, starting what would become a compulsion to buy every hardcore punk 12" known to man.



Another few years later, and another move to the bustling city of Toronto led to the discovery of a number of vinyl shops, and, armed with a government-sponsored student loan, I added to my collection in massive numbers almost daily. Spreading out from punk into rockabilly and other weirdness, I scored cheap platters by The Cramps, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis, and a number of little-known Canadian garage bands.

And suddenly....it was gone. Sure, there were still stores around that sold vinyl, but it seemed like the majority of them disappeared overnight. What had been available at flea markets and garage sales was picked through until only The Carpenters and Herb Alpert remained. Records weren't available in any of the major stores anymore. I reluctantly switched to the "new" format of CD, which was supposed to be superior in sound, but lacked in character. You could still head down to places like Toronto's Vinyl Museum and sort through the unorganized bins there, but you were lucky to find even one treasure in an afternoon of scavenging. What happened?





Last Shop Standing, based on the book by Graham Jones, attempts to tell the story of vinyl, from its first boom of popularity in the 1950's with rock 'n' roll records to its death in the 90's, and subsequent rebirth. Through the stories of a number of independent record store owners and their famous patrons, we hear first-hand what made record stores so great; listening booths, knowledgeable staff, and the ability to "window-shop" for new bands, picking up unfamiliar titles based on a name or the cover of the jacket. Being that the film's location is based in the UK, we see a number of well-known English shops, and hear personal record-shopping anecdotes from the likes of Billy Bragg, Johnny Marr, Paul Weller, Richard Hawley, and BBC DJ Jo Good.

Where the film gets particularly interesting, however, is in the discussion of vinyl's downfall. Not content to blame things simply on the compact disc, mp3, or downloading, the store owners talk about the effect that record labels and distributors had on the demise, as they pushed records into the local supermarkets, essentially giving product away to ensure big numbers in the charts as customers bought them in droves at discount prices that the independent shops couldn't compete with. This, combined with an inferior product in flimsier, more easily damaged records, as well as the low manufacturing cost of compact disc, essentially resulted in production dwindling and more customers buying into a well-marketed new technology.



But, as the title suggests, the film also addresses vinyl's more recent rebirth, as music fans are once again discovering the advantages of employee advice and a more beloved format; thanks specifically to vinyl-friendly events like Record Store Day and the dedication of musicians who record promotional items in the form of exclusive records that can't be found at HMV, Walmart, or online stores like amazon.com. Despite the closing of Hudson's, one of the stores featured in the film that had been open since 1906, *Last Shop Standing* ends on a promising note, with stores adapting to shopper's needs and vinyl sales once again becoming a very tangible thing.

Last Shop Standing has only two flaws that should be addressed; the first is that it's extremely short. The editing is tight, the information is fast-paced, and the stories are entertaining, and the 49-minute runtime flies by far too quickly. The second is that with nothing but talking heads, this is probably not

going to appeal to people who have never spent hours flipping through records. Regardless, Last Shop Standing is a thoroughly enjoyable film that inspires a good deal of positive thinking on the subject of my favourite musical media, and should definitely put the viewer in a happy frame of mind by its conclusion...even if this probably means that the days of finding cheap, used vinyl are over and done with for now.

Video/Audio/Extras:

Last Shop Standing comes to DVD in a 1.78:1 anamorphic transfer that looks just dandy. If there are any artifacts to speak of, I sure didn't see them, though the subject matter doesn't lend itself to startling colours and beautiful scenery. The Dolby Digital surround track is adequate as well, with dialogue coming through crystal clear and well-balanced at all times.

As the film is so short, the extras here are more than welcome; an extra four-and-a-half minutes of the Rebirth segment of the film, as well as six-and-a-half extra minutes of shop owner interviews add a little more bang for the buck, and the hour of additional interview footage with Johnny Marr, Paul Weller, Jo Good, Richard Hawley, Billy Bragg and Sid Griffin are also definitely worth seeing.

A Trailer for the film is also included.

The Final Word:

"You are never going to discover Captain Beefheart or the 13th Floor Elevators or the Velvet Underground in your local supermarket, ever." says Richard Hawley in the film (and quoted on the back of the case). That should be the only motivation you need to see Last Shop Standing. Highly recommended, especially for vinyl freaks.





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2 Comments



Nolando - 07-19-2013, 10:51 AM [Reply](#)

Well said, Mark. The best reviews we write are those incorporating our own story into the narrative mix and you do that very well here. Thanks for sharing.



Mark Tolch - 07-19-2013, 02:38 PM [Reply](#)

Thanks, man. It's also pretty hard to write anything at length about a 49-minute movie of people talking about how awesome vinyl is. Haha.

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