

The Gestalt of Vinyl

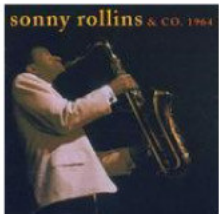
Categories:

[amoeba music](#), [analog sound](#), [Feed the Groove](#), [Internacional](#), [linn sondek LP 12](#), [LP](#), [Music Phenomena](#), [thorens turntables](#), [vinyl](#)

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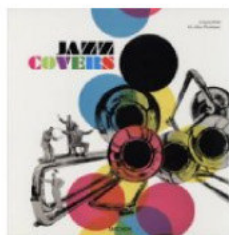


The other night, while listening to Sonny Rollins on a double lp set on RCA that I picked up in Paris years ago, I was thinking about how cool vinyl is. For me listening to lp's is a bit of a ritual and takes some work. If I pull out an lp that I've had for a while, I first clean it to make sure the surface is clean. I use a VPI HW17 record cleaning machine for that. Paper sleeves can disintegrate over time and deposit paper dust over the years, which is why Japanese vinyl and other quality lp's always have clear rice paper or plastic sleeves).



As I listened I watched the Rollins' lp spinning on the Linn turntable, it was quiet and smooth, the Benz cartridge tracking perfectly. It's cool to watch, and there is physical contact: needle in the groove, the sound as good as it gets. Digital cannot compete with a well-recorded analog lp. Just like Steve Jobs or Neil Young or thousands of audiophiles would tell you. Drums, for one thing, always sound better on analog. And belt-drive turntables just sound better because the motor is detached from the platter and arm. Deejays use direct drive because they are more rugged, have high-torque motors and fast start up time. Belt-drive turntables are more delicate and intended for home use.

A turntable is a precision mechanical object. Like an old Leica, Nikon, or Rolleiflex SLR camera. Like a fine Swiss watch with a jeweled movement; no wonder that a Swiss company like Thorens, which makes high-quality belt-drive turntables, started out as a cuckoo clock manufacturer. Or maybe playing vinyl is like driving an old manual-shift car. It's a hands-on thing, takes more work, but it's all worth it.



Another pleasure of vinyl is the art work and graphics, often cool and classic (check out the new [Taschen album cover art book](#), subject of an earlier post). It's also a pleasure to read the liner notes, look at the cover art & graphics, and get easy-to-read recording and personnel information. No page turning or eye strain. And you learn about music from it.

Turntable sales have been up over the past few years. It appears like many enjoy using a relic of a past era, this dinosaur of hifi's golden age. Thank goodness we still have some music stores that sell new and used vinyl. In LA and the Bay Area, we have the iconic Amoeba Music stores.

Can you take it (a turntable) with you? Is it convenient? Not very. Is the technology archaic? Some may say yes. But it remains a real pleasure you can enjoy at home, maybe with a nice glass of wine or a good espresso, perhaps paired with a nice cognac and a Cohiba.