



Article published on February 17th 2012 | [Music](#)

An entire generation has grown up without having used, or perhaps even seen, one of the cornerstones of the home sound system of days gone by, the record turntable. It's a little hard to comprehend that not all so long ago, the record turntable ruled the world of recorded music, and there was one of those devices in just about every home in America.

Music wasn't always played on equipment made to play MP3 files, and before there were digital music files, people obtained vinyl records and played them on their stereo turntables. Those discs that you purchased at the store would fit on the turntable spindle and you'd just turn the stereo on and place the tone arm on the record, and the equipment would do the rest.

The tone arm had a diamond-tipped needle that would read all the grooves in the record and play the sounds that artists had recorded in the studio for us to hear. Some 40 or 50 years ago, when popular music looked to be at its creative peak, recording artists were regularly releasing LPs chock full of hit tunes that delighted and inspired their fans.

Much of the music that was popular in the 1960s, such as Neil Young vinyl albums, is still widely appreciated today, not only by people who were teenagers back then, but by today's young people, too. Because of LP records, the famous music produced during the 1960s was easily transportable, and reached virtually all corners of the world because it was simple to ship.

During the early to mid-1960s, you certainly couldn't go anywhere on the planet without seeing The Beatles vinyl records available for sale on store shelves. It's hard to overestimate the sway that the Beatles' music had on popular music, and that influence is so profound that it is still being felt today, decades after their records were first released.

Suddenly, there was a phenomenon called "youth culture" that was probably the direct result of the Beatles' music, and for a while at least, it seemed that the world was being changed by new ideals of world peace and unity. Along with the profound changes they made to the popular music of the day, the Beatles also presented a new look and style, including their long hair, which was widely emulated by youths everywhere.

The Beatles' energetic pop would give way to other groups of long-haired, colorfully dressed musicians who would proffer a harder, more raucous brand of pop. In the years following the Beatles' introduction, other acts played music with a heavier beat, and they turned the volume up high to further exploit the potential of the electric instruments that became central to rock music.

Fans of "psychedelic" rock, known for its exotic, mind-blowing improvisational instrumental solos, might want to purchase some Jimi Hendrix vinyl. Hendrix was the prototypical blues-rock guitarist who played a sizeable role in establishing psychedelic rock as a keystone in the international music scene.

Jimi Hendrix put the "electric" back in the electric guitar, and because of that, other musicians were inspired to further explore the dazzling possibilities that rock music offered.

Article Source:

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Article Keywords:

vinyl records, Neil Young vinyl albums

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