

A Record Comeback for Vinyl

'86 As a teenager on Long Island, N.Y., Larry Jaffee '86 MA Com listened to albums by artists such as Bob Dylan and Patti Smith. He found the pop and hiss of the vinyl as gratifying as the songs themselves. But there was something else equally transcendent about the format.

"The experience is different from listening to something on a computer or a phone," says Jaffee, a New York-based freelance journalist whose bylines have appeared in *The New York Times* and *Rolling Stone*. "You're more immersed in looking at the cover art, or reading the lyrics or liner notes."

But the times soon were a-changin'. Starting in 1986, CDs outsold vinyl and cassettes, and by 1991, the major record labels stopped accepting LP returns as they did for CDs, essentially sending vinyl into oblivion. By 2012, digital streaming ruled the marketplace. The shiny, black platters appeared to be historical relics. But not if Jaffee had a say.

In 2017, he co-launched Making Vinyl, a networking platform that encourages the rebirth of the tra-

ditional record album. With the support of key industry partners, Making Vinyl hosts conferences for record producers, turntable manufacturers, and independent record stores to promote continued vinyl production. The co-founders won over rock musician Jack White, who keynoteed Making Vinyl's first event in Detroit.

Powered by a new audience discovering the joys of physical albums, vinyl has taken off—and in 2022, it became a \$1 billion business for the first time since 1986. "No one could have predicted this comeback," says Jaffee. It's expensive to manufacture an LP that's made from polyvinyl, but demand continues to grow, he says, and studies show

that 41% of new buyers in the past two years are under 24 years old.

Last year, Jaffee—who's currently teaching journalism at Rutgers University and owns 4,000 records—published *Record Store Day: The Most Improbable Comeback of the 21st Century*, about the evolution and reemergence of vinyl. —Andy Faught

