

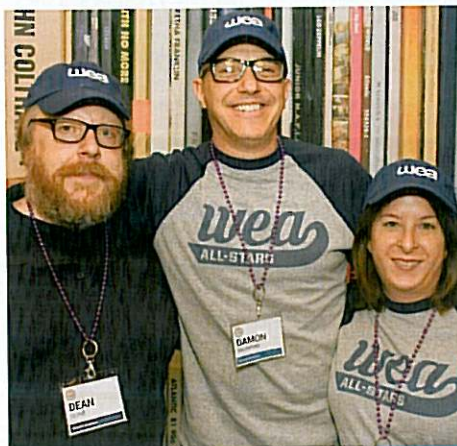
During a lively audience discourse – orbiting around indie retailers’ obvious pent-up frustration about not getting the respect they deserve from the industry – a store veteran bellowed from the back of the large ballroom: “We need to take back our industry... Some of us have been doing this for 40-plus years.”

Michael Kurtz, RSD’s co-founder and main spokesman, sitting among the audience, confirmed he sympathises. Every time a store customer finds out that he or she can’t buy a coveted record, whether or not it’s an RSD release for whatever reason, the cumulative harm, according to Kurtz, “is death by a thousand cuts”, risking the loss of a loyal patron and further disenfranchising RSD affiliates.

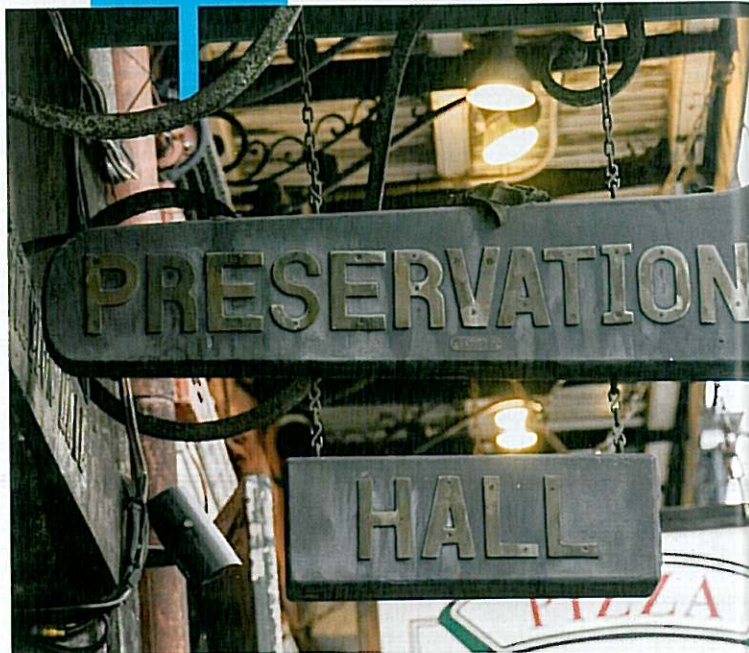
“The franchising can now make the difference in whether or not a record makes it to No. 1 on the charts,” Kurtz explained later, when *Long Live Vinyl* sat down with him.

The vast majority of vinyl records are not released ‘day and date’ simultaneously with CDs and digital, and it’s hoped that the new pressing plants popping up around the world might loosen the logjam, thereby reducing vinyl back orders all along the supply chain.

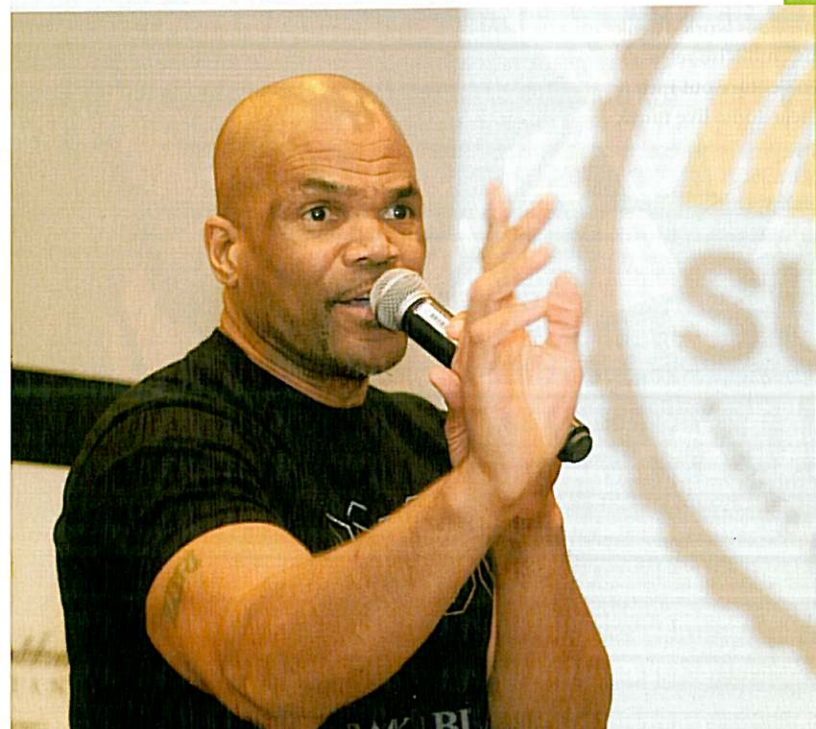
WEA vice president Billy Fields, Warner’s affable ‘vinyl guy’, was also among the audience, and admitted to experiencing



Above right, Dan Auerbach entertaining the Campers. Below, Darryl McDaniels delivering his keynote speech



THE LIST OF OFFICIAL RSD RELEASES IS SO SECRET, IT'S NOT EVEN UNVEILED AT SUMMER CAMP



TALK THIS WAY

Record Store Day releases usually aren’t divulged until a month before. An exception at RSD Summer Camp was an announcement from indie label Brookvale Records’ owner Karl Groeger Jr, who also owns West Babylon, New York’s Looney Tunes. Last April, Brookvale reissued Peter Tosh’s *Legalize It* for RSD, among the 70 records he’s licensed over the past 10 years, including the Grateful Dead Dick’s Picks live-concert series.

Groeger revealed that this Black Friday, he’s releasing *The London Chuck Berry Sessions* and *Back From The Dead*, a 12-inch EP and preview of the forthcoming comeback album from hip-hop pioneer Darryl McDaniels of RUN-D.M.C. McDaniels’ unforgettable keynote address told of him growing up “a nerdy little weird kid who loved school and always made the honour roll, liked to read comic books and wore glasses because I wanted to see.”

Darryl (DMC) couldn’t relate to his teenage peers who trash-talked about their latest street fight or which girls they fancied. He preferred the latest Elton John hit he’d heard on Top 40 AM radio to the emerging Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five. Catholic high-school classmate Joseph Simmons (younger brother of future mogul Russell) recruited him to write lyrics. A few years after RUN-D.M.C. made it big, McDaniels said when they ran into Steven Tyler and Joe Perry in the studio in 1987 while recording a cover of Aerosmith’s *Walk This Way*, the rap trio thought the classic-rock duo were from The Rolling Stones.



occasional problems. “We’re not perfect. We do something good, and then we fuck up. You guys aren’t perfect either,” he noted, urging the disgruntled to not lose sight of the fact that both small, independent shops and major labels are “passionate and vital to the future of the music business”.

Indie stores’ biggest competition, Kurtz believes, is not from Amazon, but ‘D2C’ – the major labels and artists selling ‘direct to consumer’. “[Labels and bands] that understand this are more accommodating [in considering indie retail needs],” he said, adding that it’s not malice, but rather poor communication, that’s at fault.

With the next US Black Friday date of November 24 looming, the list of official RSD releases is a secret so closely guarded it’s not even unveiled at Summer Camp. Instead, throughout the year, an RSD committee sifts through about 1,000 LP, EP and 45 proposals for reissues, of which around half are approved.

Elsewhere, at the Town Hall, attendees complained about unethical eBay resellers taking pre-orders at \$99 for limited-edition titles months before they’re released.

Another touchy topic striking a nerve with indie retailers was the US moving new release day from Tuesday to Friday, three years ago, to be in sync with the rest of the world.

On the plus side, it was reported that every week, RSD hears about a new independent store opening, adding to an estimated 1,500 in the US and a similar number elsewhere in the world.

“We’ve released over 4,000 unique RSD releases, at an average quantity of 3,000 – that’s 12 million vinyl records,” Kurtz said. “If there are 100,000 unsold RSD titles, that is less than 1%. Every year, we get better and better at managing production, and the sell-through on RSD releases in 2017 was the best yet.”

Kurtz and fellow RSD co-founder Carrie Colliton are the only people working year-round on RSD in the US. Surveying the large room during her speech, Colliton mentioned how pleased she was to see more women present at the event than the previous year. Lisa Foster, who left behind academia to run Guestroom Records in Louisville, Kentucky, then continued the theme by focusing on the subject of gender injustice and how sexism in society also permeates record stores. Since record stores’ social media is often, perhaps stereotypically, handled by female employees, Foster urges owners to not “make fun of selfies, especially with your store logo in the background. [Women are] taking pride in your store.” ●