

Record keepers

BY MAC RANDALL
Special to Newsday

Like many musicians and music fans of a certain age, Chuck D has no trouble remembering the first record he bought with his own money. "The Fatback Band, 'Master Booty,'" Public Enemy's leading man says as soon as he's asked. "Spring Records, 1977. It was a 45, like most of the records I bought then."

The Rock and Roll Hall of Famer and Roosevelt native also has plenty to say about the significance of the stores where he bought those early singles. "The small record stores in Roosevelt and Hempstead were oriented around 45s," he remembers. "Then, when I was 14 or 15, the 12-inches started coming out, but they had yet to become the major selling point of a store. So you had to go to the record stores on Jamaica Avenue to get those. They really were cultural shops more than record shops. They didn't just sell records, they sold opinions. And with the posters and the album jackets, they created a whole new environment. That was where everything came from."

All this goes a long way toward explaining why Chuck was chosen to be the official "ambassador" for Record Store Day 2014, which will be observed Saturday. For the

Chuck D's love of vinyl fuels his spin on its importance to music and culture



Chuck D of Public Enemy is the ambassador for Record Store Day.

seventh straight year, the experience of shopping for music in an actual brick-and-mortar location will be celebrated in record stores worldwide, including at least a dozen on Long Island and many more in the five boroughs with special events and exclusive releases.

Record Store Day co-founder Michael Kurtz says he approached Chuck D to be this year's ambassador because of an impassioned speech the deep-voiced emcee made in defense of record stores at Grimey's, a well-known music shop in Nashville, a few years ago. But, according to Chuck,

his words that day were nothing out of the ordinary. "I don't think I'm being self-serving when I talk about record stores because I come from the hip-hop idiom," he says. "The fact is, hip-hop sprouted out of DJ culture, and DJs needed records. So I'm very understanding of the trials and tribulations of record store owners."

There have been a lot of those trials and tribulations in recent years. When Kurtz and his colleagues came up with the Record Store Day concept in 2007, the future of record stores was in mortal danger. Several major chains, most notably Tower Records, were

closing, and it looked more and more likely that music purchasing would become solely an online activity. It's a different situation today. Kurtz estimates 150 to 200 record stores have opened across the country in the past four years, connected to their customers and each other via social media networks that weren't around when the big chains ruled the landscape. At the same time, there has been a resurgence of interest in vinyl records, as younger music enthusiasts increasingly seem drawn to products that are more tangible than an MP3 file.

Chuck D admits there is something about the 12-inch format that can strengthen the bond between performers and their fans. "The bigger graphics make it like a sonic poster," he says, "and it's easy to sign. You can't sign a mobile phone. You can't sign a tablet."

Still, in his view, the continuing existence of record stores is far more important than whatever they happen to be selling.

"We don't have a thorough nationwide library system for recorded music the way we should," he notes. "Some record stores will have six times what a normal library carries. To say that they should be all about vinyl is shortsighted. More than anything, they're gathering places for a community."

Tomorrow in exploreLI: How to transfer vinyl to digital.

A peek at exclusives

More than 400 releases are scheduled for this year's Record Store Day, mostly on 7- or 12-inch vinyl, with a smattering of CDs and even a few cassettes.

The majority of these releases are exclusive to the event.

Here are just a few of this year's highlights:



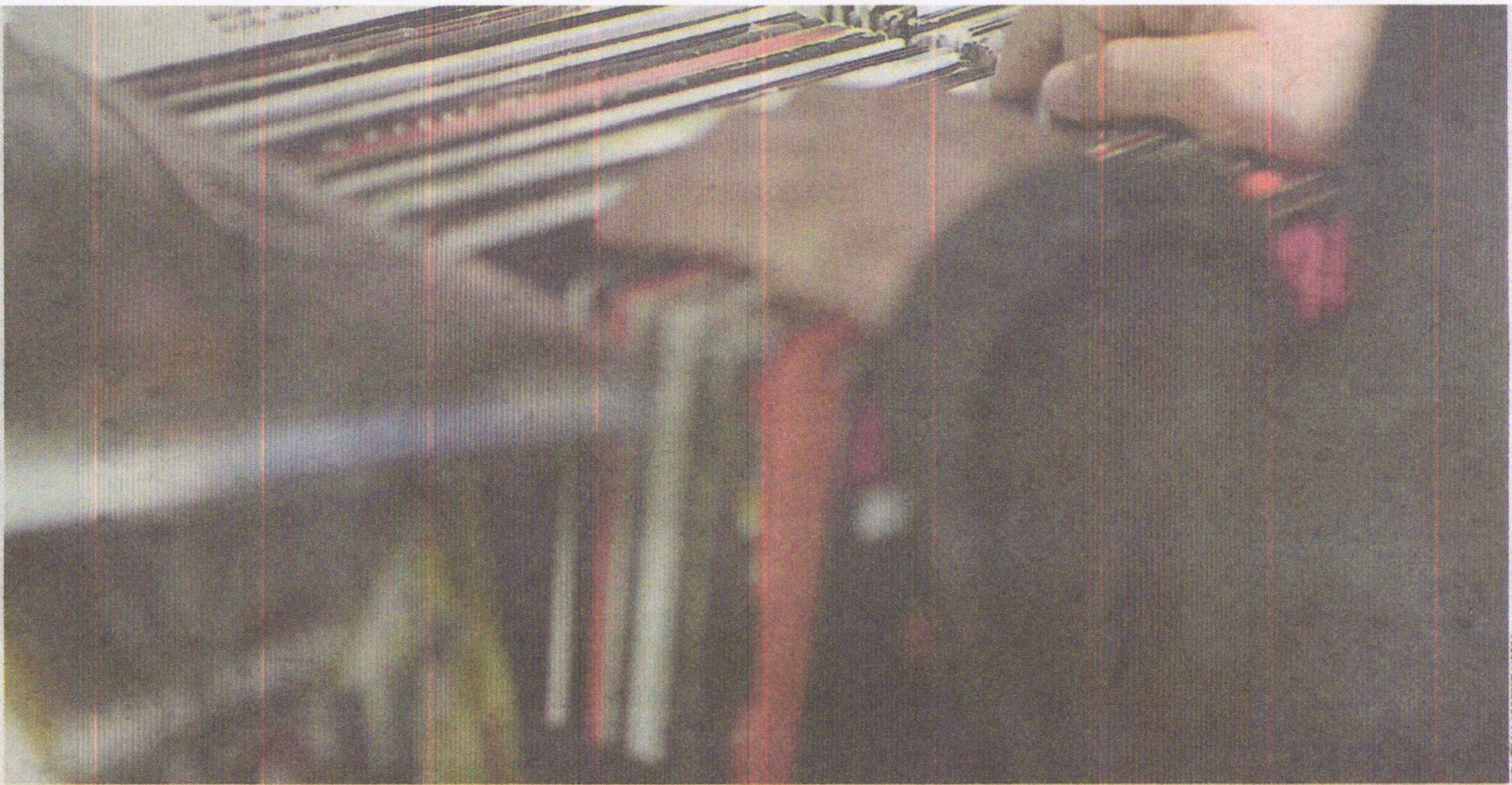
■ **Bruce Springsteen, "American Beauty"** The Boss trawled through his huge catalog of unreleased songs for his "High Hopes" album, and that trend continues on this four-cut 12-inch vinyl EP.



■ **Public Enemy, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back"** The indispensable sophomore album by Chuck D and crew gets a vinyl re-release with a deluxe 3-D lenticular cover.



■ **R.E.M., "Unplugged: The Complete 1991 and 2001 Sessions"** Georgia alt-rock kings have the distinction of being the only act to appear twice on MTV's live acoustic program. Both performances are collected on this four-disc vinyl set, including 11 tunes that were never aired.



NEWSDAY / ROBERT MECZA

Records and the stores that sell them have seen a resurgence in recent years, as younger generations are increasingly drawn to vinyl.



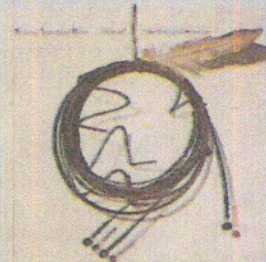
■ **Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, "Glorious Results of a Misspent Youth"** This pink 12-inch vinyl reissue of Jett's 1984 album features a revamp of her Runaways gem, "Cherry Bomb."



■ **Green Day, "Demolicious!"** Eighteen previously unreleased demos from the punk-pop trio's "Uno!," "Dos!" and "Tre!" sessions on red or clear vinyl, CD and cassette.



■ **Bayside, "Time Has Come"/"Indiana"** For this limited-run 7-inch single, the Long Island scene veterans pair a track from their new "Cult" album with a Record Store Day exclusive.



■ **Jaco Pastorius, "Modern American Music . . . Period!"** The late jazz bass virtuoso is captured here on recordings that date from 1974, two years before his classic debut album.



■ **Eric B. & Rakim, "Paid in Full"** This 7-inch reissue, previously available only in the U.K., combines the original version of the hip-hop duo's 1987 single with the famous Coldcut "This is a journey into sound" remix.

■ **Jorma Kaukonen, "Quah"** The Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna guitarist's 1974 solo effort is a favorite of Karl Groeger, owner of Looney Tunes in West Babylon, so he's reissuing it on his own Brookvale Records label in a limited edition of 2,500 with yellow vinyl and gatefold sleeve. For more information, go to recordstoreday.com



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