

Vinyl Records: Are they just a fad or staying for good?

- Camila Llorente

An invisible hurricane hits the world. 2020, a year that many would remember for the rest of their lives. Covid-19 arrived and flipped everyone's life upside down.

Located in the streets of North Austin, in front of a green grassy area bordered by telephone lines, what at a simple glance can appear to be an office happens to be a music world of wonder - Gold Rush Vinyl Record, one of the few vinyl pressing plants in the country, who also experience a drastic change this past year.

Intending to fill production gaps in the industry and make vinyl publication faster and more accessible for smaller orders, in 2018, Caren Kelleher founded Gold Rush Vinyl Records.

"Vinyl isn't just a fad... One hundred vinyl records are equivalent to about half a million Spotify streams or two point five million youtube views in terms of what an artist will earn," Kelleher said.

The plant has grown drastically since its opening. In 2020, a year where music became an escape to many during the lockdown, and people started to get saturated by technology, vinyl record sales began to escalate – growing 28.7 percent, according to the Record Industry Association of America. Our consumption of vinyl has more than doubled in 2021.

While usually, growth in demand would indicate a growth in profit and overall economic stability, it has become an obstacle to fulfilling the plant's goal of a faster production of vinyl records.

"With concerts canceled around the globe, we saw more and more musicians turning to vinyl as a way to make money, to offset the losses they had from the pandemic. This has pushed out our

production queue to six months rather than six weeks' worth of orders." Kelleher said.

The reality is that the industry cannot keep up with the skyrocketing demand for vinyl records, the lack of materials, the rising shipping prices, and plants being closed. Opinion on how long the trend of vinyl records will last may vary.

"I don't see it holding up, particularly because the production side, like everything, is really struggling. Everywhere is delayed, and in the long run, the casual vinyl buyer will fade away," Nathan Lankford, owner of Austin Townhall Record, said.

On the other side, Caren Kelleher believes that listeners will not give up the experience of listening to vinyl records.

"Listeners embraced vinyl during the pandemic, and it has not slowed down. They took the time to really sit down and enjoy the music how the artist intended," Kelleher said.

During the lockdown, music fans have changed their experience of buying a concert ticket to buying a turntable.

The sale of vinyl records and merchandising goes hand in hand with experiencing live music. It is a priority for many artists when they are in concerts and on the road since it keeps them going.

The client demographic of vinyl records has expanded drastically, providing a positive income to the industry, and Caren believes its audience will never disappear.

"Vinyl will continue to grow thanks to Gen Z, especially. People crave tangible things in a digital world and a chance to show how much of a fan they truly are," Kelleher said.