

[Independent Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sport](#) | [Comment](#) | [Education](#) | [Motoring](#) | [Money](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Travel](#) | [Enjoyment](#)

[Home](#) > [Money](#) > [Personal Finance](#) > [Invest & Save](#)

Iconic album sleeves are the new art collectables

Forget the vinyls, it is the classic record sleeves that have artistic value advises Nick Kettles

06 November 2004

Future generations of teenagers may never experience the joy of leafing through their friends' record collections on a rainy afternoon looking at the album sleeves. The increasing use of music download sites like Napster, Sony Connect, and Apple's iTunes have all but sounded the death knell for iconic record cover art.

But their parents may find reason to display classic sleeve designs that chronicled the times in which they grew up. Peter Doggett, former Record Collector magazine editor says: "Its possible to speculate that in 20-30 years time people will collect sleeves for their artistic value alone and not want the vinyl because the music will be available online."

Jason White, the owner of online record store Left Legged Pineapple, says they already are: "A lot of our sales go overseas, especially the Far East. It's obvious many collectors don't actually have a deck to play the vinyl and are simply collecting the album for their visual appeal." Changing patterns of consumption mean the second hand vinyl market will continue to be flooded with old LPs and 45rpm singles, keeping prices low, but dealers say the value of rarer records will continue to grow.

The most sought after Beatles record is known by a description of its sleeve design. The 'Butchers' cover, was shot for a 1966 US album release of *Yesterday and Today*, showing the fab four dressed in butchers' smocks covered in choice cuts and dismembered dolls. It was quickly withdrawn. At least 25,000 copies were produced, but many were pasted, leaving few mint condition examples available. Today these can fetch at least £10,000. Expect to pay more for one of the few US editions of 'Street Fighting Man' 45rpm singles by The Rolling Stones, with a sleeve depicting anti-Vietnam demonstrations.

The late sixties and early seventies also saw a move towards more experimental and extravagant packaging as graphic designers moved away from simple artists' mug shots. The *Two Virgins* mono album depicting John Lennon and Yoko Ono nude came in an additional brown paper sleeve with a peephole for their faces, but few have survived intact. The Andy Warhol produced Velvet Underground and Nico's first album is a design classic, but rare without the peelable banana removed. Mint condition examples of the above were available ten years ago for well under £100, but today can demand £300. The Rolling Stones *His Satanic Majesties Requests* album with a 3D lenticular cover is more widely available at £50, but the promo copy with an additional padded silk sleeve demands £2,000.

Lithographic errors can also attract interest from collectors. For example a handful of The Smiths 'Hand In Glove' seven inch single printed in negative and supposedly destroyed sometimes find their way to market. But Tony Boothroyd, a buyer at online dealer Vinyl Tap warns: "Genuinely rare items will retain their value, but collectors should note artists do go in and out of favour." But like everything in the music industry, exceptions to the rule exist. A complete set of Garbage singles, using different sleeve materials such as rubber, wood, and the limited metal edition for their first release, *Vow* demand well over £200.

As always the key is to balance rarity with desirability, but failing that your best bet is to seek out classic vinyl covers simply for their design appeal, and consider the enjoyment they might bring as display art. Especially the work of artists and designers of note thankful for the audience this unique canvas would reach.

Vail Galleries in the West Midlands, have produced limited edition fine art prints of Sir Peter Blake's cover of Paul Weller's *Stanley Road* album, and classic examples of design group Hypgnosis' work for Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, and Ian Dury. Tibor Kalman is better known for his work for Benneton, *Wired* magazine and redeveloping Times Square, but also did early Talking Heads covers including *Remain In Light*.

Jazz fans may think Thierry Henry's latest ad for a well known car is a poor homage to Reid Miles' classic Bluenote sleeve designs, but it at least demonstrates just how much record cover art can merge into the public consciousness.

'Even when the music is dodgy the artwork is spot-on'

Duncan Beadle, 30, a DJ from the Midlands, started collecting vinyl albums from the Mo Wax label for the graffiti inspired artwork. "Even when the music is a bit dodgy, the artwork is always spot-on. I always have at least 10 framed on the walls of my home."

Duncan has over 200 examples in a collection amassed since the mid-nineties worth more than £10,000. He cites examples of first pressings, which retailed at £50 and were soon changing hands on the internet for 10 times that much. Their continued appreciation depends on demand, but that looks solid while interest in dance music is strong.

FOUR YOU CAN AFFORD

*** PUBLIC IMAGE LTD**

Metal Box with three vinyl LPs and paper dividers intact. £30-£40.

*** ROLLING STONES**

Sticky Fingers album with heavy-duty zip, double holes intact - £40-£60

*** DAVID BOWIE**

The Man Who Sold the World with Bowie in renaissance-style dress - £200-£300

*** LED ZEPPELIN**

Led Zeppelin's III album produced in 1970 with rotating disc - £20-£30

Also in this section

[Questions of cash: Abbey underestimated demand for ISAs](#)

[How you can make money a great gift for a child](#)

[Iconic album sleeves are the new art collectables](#)

[What does a Bush second term hold for investing in America?](#)

[The Share Challenge: School students beat fund managers at their own game](#)

[Legal](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Using our Content](#) |

© 2004 Independent News & Media (UK) Ltd.