

# Collectormania!

I'M... VERY... BORED

by Lisa Wheeler

In 1979 I bought my first Sex Pistols record, *Never Mind The Bollocks Here's The Sex Pistols*. I hid the album from my parents, who, a year previously, threatened me with house arrest if I attempted to "borrow" the car to drive an hour from our home, to Tulsa, Okla., to see them in concert. That rebellion later turned into a full-fledged collecting, dare I say, mania of the group. Before I knew it, I had amassed an impressive collection of four-dozen bootlegs, plus imports, magazines, ticket stubs and posters. But less than a decade later, the collection that I just "had to have" was stored in boxes in a closet, rarely seeing the light of day. What happened? Did I get tired of dying my hair magenta? Did my rebellion subside? Did my taste in music change? Did my ultra-conservative, (now) ex-husband hide them? Actually, it was probably a little bit of all of the above, but the truth is, I just got bored.

It starts out innocently enough. You like a particular artist and own a few recordings. Although you enjoy your readily available collection, you soon discover that the artist released an "only available in Tanzania" recording, and then there are the label variations, picture discs, and don't forget the entire newly remastered catalog. In a Dr. Jeckyl-like instant, you are transformed into a half-human, half-beast, charged with an adrenaline rush powerful enough to tackle Jerome Bettis, and you soon find yourself owning 100 different copies of the same single and searching for more.

"It was an addiction for me. I admit it," said Charles Carney, an Elvis Presley collector from Memphis, Tenn. "I had a room in my house dedicated to my collection and everything. And then, one day, I just came to the conclusion that this collection, which took me about 40 years to put together, wasn't as important as I thought it was. I mean, I still loved Elvis, but it just wasn't fun anymore for me." So Carney sifted through not only thousands of records but also magazines, posters and yes, even liquor decanters, and sold them or gave them away. He never gave this drastic move a second thought. "I kept a nice stash of records — the rare stuff — and yeah, I still buy a few records, but I'm OK with not having everything he ever released... and now I have room for a big-screen television."

Collectors often admit that the enjoyment of acquiring items is often lost when the search becomes too tedious, usually when an interest is exclusive to a singular artist or record label. "The Sun label was my major focus and I nearly had a run of the entire label, but then I just got stonewalled because I couldn't find or afford any of the missing items," said Mike Johnson, of St. Petersburg, Fla. Although he needed fewer than 30 pieces to complete his set, the process of searching, finding and then haggling over prices and vinyl condition took too much time and effort. "I did get bored with all the record-collector games. Grading things as 'M+++' or 'VG--' was just ridiculous. As far as I'm concerned there's mint, very good or player grade. Anything below player is Goodwill stuff. All the pickiness wore

thin with me." So when a fellow collector offered him a price for his collection, it was a deal he couldn't refuse. "As much as I enjoyed collecting and learning, I drifted away from records," he admitted. "The money helped me finish my hot rod, and I also felt relieved to be free of the responsibility to preserve the records. Someone else can take care of them."

"I think it can be as much frustration as boredom," said Scott Pell, a blues collector from Nebraska. "Tracking down obscenely rare pressings and forking over half of your retirement, only to be one record short of a label run, can discourage anyone." His epiphany happened when he attempted to collect every Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab recording. "I found myself in a bidding war with some guy over a UHQR (Ultra High Quality Recording) release of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Just before I was about to bid up to \$300, it dawned on me that I was going to spend hundreds of dollars on a record I had

**"Just before I was about to bid up to \$300, it dawned on me that I was going to spend hundreds of dollars on a record I had no intention of listening to... ever."**

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So what keeps us from waking up one morning and deciding that those old rags and can of gasoline in the garage, subconsciously placed next to your uncompleted Beach Boys collection, were actually put there on purpose? For starters, it's OK to take a timeout from your collection. Not spending every waking moment locked in a room cataloging or hunting for that elusive piece doesn't make you a bad collector. We all need a break sometimes.

"I can relate to the feelings of boredom or frustration. More than once recently I have thought about selling everything," said Robert Whetstone, a classic-rock collector from Ball Ground, Ga. "When I started collecting I, too, tried to grab everything out there. Now, I don't buy anything that I don't listen to and I don't buy anymore just for the sake of collecting, and I especially don't buy anymore just to resell. I collect what I like."

So, how do you keep the fun and enjoyment in collecting? For Florida-based collector Scott Hamrick, once you forget about the tunes, it's the day the music (and hobby) dies. "If you're bored with collecting, you're probably collecting for the wrong reasons. Collect what you like to listen to, not what other people say is collectible or valuable. I have never gotten bored with collecting. The more I buy, the more music I have to listen to, so if anything, my collection gets more and more interesting and diverse over time."

For many collectors, diversity is the key to keeping boredom at bay. Daniel Genzale, of Calgary, Alberta, is a Johnny Thunders fan. While on the surface you might not think the former member of the New York Dolls and The

## NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS

HERE'S THE

SEX PISTOLS

**A clandestine purchase of the Sex Pistols' first album was the start of *Goldmine* columnist's Lisa Wheeler descent into full-scale collectormania.**

Heartbreakers has a catalog large enough to satisfy a collector's attention, it did encourage an interest in a genre of music that even Genzale hadn't expected. "I started going through my Thunders and punk collection and seeing that a lot of the songs were covers of old '50s and '60s artists like Chuck Berry, Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent," he admitted. "So I started collecting that type of stuff. I am still collecting Thunders but now also '50s blues and rock music."

Pell, too, went back to his roots to rekindle his love of record collecting. "Not really sure how a white kid in the middle of Nebraska gets into blues," he said. "I remember a black family living down the street from us when I was very young. During the summer, an older man, who looked about 1,000 years old to me when I was five, would sit outside and play guitar. Once I became a collector I started snatching up John Lee Hooker recordings." That affection for the artist would grow into an impressive Web site dedicated to his personal archive, <http://webpages.charter.net/slpell>. "Most of my collecting still involves blues. Within that I find plenty of room to bounce around if I get bored with one artist or style. Many of the other blues collectors I've been in contact with have about a 30-year head start on me, so I have a pretty good backlog of reading material to catch up on as well. And when all of that gets old I can just slap on The Doors or The Who for a spin."

"Just take a break and enjoy life. There's so much more to life than getting nuts over any of this stuff," said Johnson. "I haven't played any of my records, except the ones on my old jukeboxes. The musical thing I'm enjoying now is trying to discover bands that still make rock 'n' roll and rockabilly records."

"Go back to what drew you in. For most it was just the music, the thrill of hearing something for the first time," said Pell. "Forget label variations, pressing variances and rarity. Next time you are at the thrift store, fork over a dollar for *Whipped Cream And Other Delights* and see what all the fuss is about."

What kind of collector are you? Do you collect a certain artist, genre or label? Tell me about it. What would you like to see in this column? If you have a story suggestion or comment, please contact me via my Web site, [www.isle-of-write.com](http://www.isle-of-write.com), where you will also find past articles for your dining and dancing pleasure. PS. I still have my Sex Pistols collection. And yes, it's out of the closet.

**Coming Up:** How far would you go to have the largest collection in the world of a certain artist? Ever consider taking out a loan, dipping into your child's college fund or hocking a prized heirloom for the title? And if you had the largest collection in the world, where would you put it? We'll introduce you to some collectors who have literally dedicated thousands of dollars and hundreds of feet of living space to proclaim, "I am, I said, the world's biggest Neil Diamond collector."