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CHICAGO

READERS' CHOICES
& THE
READER'S CHOICES



Best Record Store, Reader's Choice: Dusty Groove

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Best Record Store

Reader's Choice Dusty Groove

Jazz, soul, Brazilian music, Latin, and hip-hop are among the areas Dusty Groove excels in, but you'll find interesting items in just about every genre in its globe-spanning selection. The shop got its start selling vinyl to crate diggers, and it also still boasts an excellent selection of secondhand records—the one section where prices can get superhigh. ➤ 1120 N. Ashland, 773-342-5800, dustygroove.com. —Peter Margasak

Readers' Choice Reckless Records

➤ 3161 N. Broadway, 773-404-5080; 1532 N. Milwaukee, 773-235-3727; and 26 E. Madison, 312-795-0878; reckless.com.

Best Recording Studio

Reader's Choice Electrical Audio

Say what you will about Steve Albini and his trollish personal politics—the man has done real good in the form of Electrical Audio. Albini's slavish devotion to analog recording has led him to assemble one of the world's best places to put jams down on tape, and the same DIY mentality that's inspired many a rant is also responsible for the studio's indie-friendly pricing structure. No, it's not the cheapest studio in town, but you get more for your money than at comparable pro-grade studios. ➤ 2621 W. Belmont, 773-539-2555, electrical.com, rates (including a staff engineer other than Albini or righthand man Greg Norman) start at \$500/day. —Miles Raymer

Readers' Choice Electrical Audio

Best Rock Venue

Reader's Choice The Hideout

Chicago is the best live-music city I've ever lived in or visited, and that has as much to do with venues as it does with artists. (The two have a symbiotic relationship, of course.) From the unbeatable divey ambience of Cal's to the unbeatable acoustics of the Old Town School to the unbeatable bookings of the Empty Bottle, we just rule. (Note to City Council: any future attacks on this rich biodiversity will be seen as an act of hostile deforestation.) It's hard to choose among them, and the choice will vary with the criteria used, but I'm going to stand by the Hideout for its combination of bookings, friendliness, comfort, price point, and community involvement—and the fact that the barflies more in love with the sound of their own voices than the sound of the band get a room to themselves with a door that closes. ➤ 1354 W. Wabansia, 773-227-4433, hideoutchicago.com. —Monica Kendrick

Readers' Choice Metro

➤ 3730 N. Clark, 773-549-0203 metrochicago.com.

Best Jazz Venue

Reader's Choice Velvet Lounge

My favorite places to hear jazz these days are actually the Hungry Brain and the Hideout, but those venues present jazz only once a week. For venues strictly devoted to the music, none can match the Velvet Lounge, the free-jazz temple owned by tenor legend Fred Anderson. Although national acts stop in on occasion, most

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