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Vinyl album sales out-perform digital downloads for first time

by Roisin O'Connor, The Independent, Tuesday 6 December 2016



More money was spent on vinyl than album downloads last week for the first time ever, new figures have revealed. The Entertainment Retailers Association (ERA) said vinyl sales earned the record industry £2.4m in week 48 of 2016, while downloads took in £2.1m.

It is a significant shift in how people are consuming music. In November last year it was reported that vinyl albums made £1.2m in sales while digital records made £4.4m.

The ERA, which used Official Charts data, suggested that this surge in vinyl sales could be due to customers giving friends and family vinyl as Christmas presents, along with the growing number of retailers, such as Tesco, Sainsbury's and HMV, which now stock vinyl.

"This is yet further evidence of the ability of music fans to surprise us all," ERA chief Kim Bayley said in a statement.

"It's not so long ago that the digital download was meant to be the future. Few would have predicted that an album format, first invented in 1948 and based on stamping a groove into a piece of plastic, would now be outselling it in 2016."

The popularity of events such as Record Store Day (RSD) have also been credited with encouraging people to buy vinyl. Observed on the third Saturday of April each year, the event has been celebrated globally since 2007.

Record store owner Adam Gillison said: "Ultimately, in this digital world our customers are continually looking for a tangible, physical way to celebrate their love for their favourite artists – something that digital services simply cannot offer.

A report by the BPI, the record labels' association that promotes British music, was released in May and showed how resurgent sales of music on vinyl generated more income for UK artists than YouTube in 2015.