

Dave's Vinyl Party aims to educate, entertain and empower



Regular patrons of the Aurora Farmers' Market will know the vinyl-spinning stylings of David Heard, who has used his expansive collection of records to entertain patrons each Saturday between May and September.

But, as the winter approaches, he has not packed the vinyl away for the season. Instead, they are being put to very good use as the local historian achieves a long-held dream.

Dave's Vinyl Party, a new space for music education with a splash of retail, is now a reality, tucked away in a unit on Vata Court.

Boasting more than 140,000 individual records pressed over the last eight decades, and artefacts from Aurora's history, including an original cash register and art from Mary's Flower Shop/Caruso's, a downtown Aurora mainstay for more than a century, Heard intends for the space to become a destination for music lovers eager to absorb music both popular and obscure, at individual listening stations, fuelling their creativity and passion.

"Everybody has heard me talk about this project for years and years," says Heard. "Now, people are coming in and going, 'Oh, my God, he's done it' now, what can we do about it?"

From his perspective, the possibilities are just about limitless.

Walking into Dave's Vinyl Party, you're greeted by a display wall that has the capacity to hold up to 138 individual records "fittingly for the season, the wall currently features Christmas albums representing more than six decades of work.

"I want to have a place where people can come in, students and others, maybe they're on a budget, and they want to come in and sample; they want to get ideas for their band. The big reason this space was important was mostly for curation," says Heard. "It was about 21 years ago I predicted vinyl was going to make a resurgence. I was travelling around Ontario and thinking vinyl was coming back, I was buying up collections from as far away as Thunder Bay, Sault Ste-Marie, Blind River, Elliott Lake, and found some very interesting pieces.

"Vinyl and music, it's all about the auditory and my goal is to bring both together. Vinyl Party doesn't just mean the music; it's the visuals, it's the history, it's the music, it's the enthusiasm behind the format and I am so glad it's back because I see what it is doing for people for their mental health, for seniors, for people with ASD and I am just empowered to keep doing more and more."

A man living with hearing loss, Heard describes himself as a "mono living in a stereo world" and the conflict can leave him

exhausted.

"This has given me a lot of peace," he says. "When I go out in the community, I'm exhausted, even when I use earplugs and things like that. One of the reasons I do vinyl at the Farmers' Market is it allows me to be inclusive. With this, the approach I am taking is very empathetic because I am walking in other people's shoes; I'm there, and I know what it's like to go through a challenge where you're stuck in a rut, you can't get out of it, which a lot of people are going through. Through this positive distraction of this collection, it can help people learn how to be resilient.

"I'm working on a program [where this can] help with mental health and I'm talking to different agencies right now who are very interested. I have done some of it already with people who are very gifted and unique, people who are struggling, seniors, to a very high success. I have a background accredited by having a High Honours diploma from Seneca College and I'm taking my education, high knowledge of history with this format, meshing it all together and it is clearly working."

And it's working beyond the walls of his Vata Court space.

This Saturday, December 14, Heard will bring a large selection from his collection to the Aurora Public Library's Living Room space where he will be spinning 90 minutes of Christmas music, representing a range of styles including Reggae, Soca, Rock, Funk, and R&B. The presentation will feature a multimedia component as Heard showcases an array of dazzling and evocative album covers in the process.

Achieving a long-held dream is an experience Heard says has almost left him without words, but the feeling of being "blessed" does come to his mind.

"[Former Council member and Public Education Trustee] Bob McRoberts asked me, 'How do you spot all this stuff?' I said to him, 'Maybe when I lost my hearing in my right ear, maybe the gift was it enhanced other things. I am looking at the positive: if it allows me to do this, I'll take being unique!'"

Dave's Vinyl Party is located at 6 Vata Court, Unit 2 (in conjunction with Best Seat in the House) and open by appointment. For more information, email davesvinylparty@myyahoo.com.

By Brock Weir