

Formats

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Did you know that digital music revenue didn't surpass the revenue of physical music until 2014? So, despite the numerous sites where you can download music--MP3, Spotify, iTunes, Pandora, Jamendo--music lovers still bought more physical manifestations of music than digital ones. And to make that old adage true--everything old is new again--lately the album has been making a comeback.

One format that is resurfacing in the fragmented music industry that I find particularly interesting is the FLEXI RECORD. Pressed on thin plastic or coated paper (which is, of course, my preference) FLEXI RECORDS started appearing commercially in the 1960s. The first "FLEXIS" were "talking postcards" which were available as early as 1905 and allowed friends to mail audio recordings to one another. And, after WWII, were used for promotions, novelties or one-song samples--remember The Archies' record embedded onto the back of the Kellogg's® Sugar Pops cereal box? Even the Beatles used FLEXI RECORDS to send out hundreds of thousands of Christmas greetings to their fan clubs.

Five years ago, Pirates Press in San Francisco built its own FLEXI RECORD press inspired by similar machines that had made FLEXIs in the past. However, as Pirates Press President, Eric Mueller notes, "The actual designs we settled on were vastly different and improved, which allows our current FLEXIs to offer much better sound quality than the talking postcards that were made in the past. It also enabled us to use the same machine for both paper and vinyl products, something that had never been done in the past." Today they are the only company in the world that offers FLEXI RECORD printing to the public. In a recent interview on NPR, Mueller noted that a FLEXI can have a huge impact. "It's something somebody's going to put on their wall and play and share with their friends."

We all feel differently about a tangible object than we do about a digital one. And, to go one step further, once we own a tangible object we assign it even more value. This is called the Endowment Effect and, as it turns out, the effect is so strong that we don't even have to physically own something to trigger this feeling in our brains. For example, if we hold something like a paper catalog with images in it, we can tip your brain toward feeling ownership for the images themselves! So, it stands to reason that we would feel a stronger relationship with the music (and musicians) we "own" through their CDs or albums, or FLEXI RECORDS vs. something we download.

To find out more about the Endowment Effect and the importance of touch for communicators, be on the lookout for Sappi's latest publication A Communicator's Guide to the Neuroscience of Touch by Dr. David Eagleman and Lana Rigsby. We'll be rolling it out to our clients this summer. I'll be presenting the publication and sharing the fascinating research around the neuroscience of touch at Haptic Brain, Haptic Brand in San Francisco on June 22. Please join me if you can! In the meantime, I might need to dig my record player out of the garage, after all!

Does that make sense?

As an educator, designer, humanist, mentor and lover of all things graphic arts, Daniel Dejan has been an evangelist for the power of paper and print for the span of his career. He is the face of the etc (education-training-consulting) Group at Sappi Fine Paper North America where he delivers etc services to Sappi's wide range of clients.

With more than 40 years of design, production, print buying and on-press experience, Dejan is always ready to share his knowledge of the successful and effective marriage of print and paper. On the road 200 days a year, he is a hands-on, in-person resource--delivering presentations to designers, printers, corporations and paper merchants as well as to organizations at public and private events and conferences throughout North America including AIGA, HOW and Printing Industry of America chapters, Canadian Printing Industries groups, IDEAlliance/IPA events, Print Production and Art Directors Clubs .

As printing techniques have evolved, Daniel has embraced new technology by not only investigating creative and effective ways to use QR Codes and Augmented Reality in conjunction with print and paper--earning him a position as a Google Glass Developer--but also by exploring and commenting on the layered and complex relationships between the print and digital worlds; merging new -communications technology and human interaction.

Dejan has written articles for numerous trade magazines and was both a technical consultant and contributor to The Designer's Guide to Print Production. As a certified G7 Expert, Dejan is an authority in both Color and Color Management and an avid student of color perception and color theory as it relates to branding and printed color reproduction. He co-chaired the Spectrum Conference in 2007 and is currently a member of the Board of Directors for IDEAlliance/IPA.