

Girl Beer Geek: Peter B's Introduces Vinyl Night

By Merideth Canham-Nelson, Monterey County Herald

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Peter B's Assistant Brewer Chris Loecher during Vinyl Night.

Beer connects people. And I don't mean the "telling your life story to a stranger after a few pints" type of connection.

A shared love of craft beer links beer geeks together, but we're more than the drink in our glass. The underlying, and often unexplored, diversity of the beer community is what makes it an exciting experience. Interesting people are all around — you simply need to get to know the individual at the next barstool.

I've met a 100-mile endurance runner and an aspiring opera singer while drinking beer. We met our good friend Dave through beer and over time discovered that he and the Beer Geek are both Civil War history buffs. Beer brought us together and repeated conversations uncovered other common interests that deepened the friendship.

A similar revelation has been brewing at Peter B's Brewpub in Monterey. Brewmaster Kevin Clark and his brewery team recently discovered a mutual passion for vinyl records.

The brewing process requires impeccable timing and a patience to wait while science works its magic. It's during these in-between times when the beyond-beer bonding happens and ideas flow. In this case, the inspiration was LPs.

According to assistant brewer Chris Loecher, “Music is always playing in the brewery. It’s a frequent topic of conversation.”

“We connect on the vinyl for sure,” Clark agrees. “Chris mentioned it would be fun to have a vinyl night like an open mic night. So we ran with it.”

And run they did.

On the first Wednesday in February, the idea hatched between boiling grain and pitching yeast became a reality. With two turntables set up in front of the fermentation tanks, beer-drinking vinyl collectors gathered to toast their favorite records — including my friend Raymond.

Raymond at the brewpub isn’t unusual, except this night he came especially for the vinyl meet-up. I knew his beer drinking side, but I didn’t know he has collected vinyl records for 30 years.

“I don’t have a lot (of records),” he said humbly, “maybe 1,000.”

Not partial to a particular musical style, Raymond makes purchases based on quality and “playability.” It was a sentiment repeatedly expressed throughout the evening.

As Loecher donned the headphones to become DJ Hop Wax, the beat shifted from ’80s punk to ’60s-style limbo rock; an odd transition, but no one seemed to mind or even notice. All through the event, pub goers didn’t just walk by, they danced, regardless of the type of music playing.

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“Gatherings like this are about introducing people to music they didn’t know before,” says Steb Montez, a weekend DJ for KRML and an avid vinyl collector.

Even the Beer Geek got into the action by bringing Big Brother and the Holding Company’s “Cheap Thrills,” one piece of our vast eight-album collection. It made no difference that we own just a few records; our vinyl was welcomed just the same.

The parallels between beer geeks and audiophiles quickly became apparent. We both like to compare notes, swap stories and introduce each other to fresh ideas. It was a fun evening discovering previously unknown things about my friends and meeting new people all while enjoying the fantastic Peter B’s brews. Underneath, beer geeks and vinyl geeks really aren’t so different, and combining the two equates to a rocking good time.

Vinyl Night at Peter B’s starts at 6 p.m. the first Wednesday of every month. So dust off those LPs, grab a pint and join the party. The next gathering is March 2.

Merideth’s many beer travel adventures can be found on thebeergeek.com. Join her for a pint at 5 p.m. every Wednesday at Peter B’s Brewpub for the live broadcast of KRML’s “Pub Talk.”