



DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK

BY CHRIS LOMBARDI

Dan Curland runs Mystic Disc in the quaint fishing village of Mystic, Connecticut. Since Curland opened his shop in 1983, it's been a safe haven for music lovers of all kinds. Next year the modest businessman's record shop will celebrate its 40th anniversary. Curland, now 71, has no plans of slowing down or retiring. "They're going to wheel me out on a stretcher, I love this place" he exclaimed. In addition to vinyl records, Mystic Disc is ornately adorned with vintage posters, incredible photos and amazingly rare rock & roll paraphernalia. One of his most prized possessions is a handwritten, autographed setlist from a concert by Graham Nash. Yes, that Graham Nash—formerly of The Hollies as well as Crosby, Stills, Nash, and sometimes Young. Curland remembers the day that Graham Nash and David Crosby stopped into the shop. It was one of those rare days when Dan was out buying more records for his store. When he returned and was informed of the VIPs that he missed, he jumped in his car with a stack of records under each arm and drove to Boston, which happened to be their next gig. Dan somehow convinced security to let him backstage. He brought a gift for Graham which happened to be a set of records Graham was looking for. This simple gesture started a thirty year friendship that lasts to this day. There have been many celebrities that have visited the shop over the years, but Dan admits his favorite is still Graham Nash. Before opening the store, Dan made a living as a gigging musician playing bass in a local band. He also worked part time in a musical instrument store, selling guitars in New London. Mystic Disc originally opened selling records and tapes in 1983. Not all of the 39 years of running Mystic Disc have been prosperous. "In 2008, the music industry was really dying. No one was buying records or CDs. Everyone was downloading music." Dan recalled holding a staff meeting where he announced "if we're going out of business, we're going down selling what I love the most—records." Dan didn't go down, in fact the record

industry has made quite the comeback. "Somewhere around 2011, I saw the beginnings of a revival of vinyl records. Since then it's been fantastic." Dan considers himself very lucky and said "if I didn't end up running a record store, I would be working in one. I don't have any other skills. I don't even want to think about it!" Three days of peace and love. Dan was lucky enough to not only attend Woodstock and survive to tell the tale, but still has his pristine event

ticket. The ticket hangs in an unassuming tiny picture frame over Mystic Disc's beloved turntable that spins endless tunes at thirty-three and one third revolutions per minute. "When Blind Faith broke up before the show I had a ticket for, I turned in my unused ticket and got tickets to 'this thing I've been reading about in Rolling Stone called Woodstock.'" Dan got to the show the day before and camped out to get really close to the stage. In fact, he has a well worn book of photos from Woodstock where you can see a young Dan Curland in the audience only feet from the action. Dan admitted it was "the greatest weekend of my life, and I can say that because my daughter was born on a Tuesday." Curland credits Mystic Disc's longevity to his customers. "The best part of running a record store are these people." He was referring to the near capacity shop full of customers browsing through endless bins of records. Dan listens to his customers and tries to stay ahead of the musical curve. He tells a story of when a young kid asked for a record by The Beastie Boys. He had no idea who they were (at the time), but Dan ordered the record for the kid and a few more for the shop. Dan is very proud to point out there is no generation gap in record collecting. "When I have an adult come in with a child, and the adult tells me 'I used to come here when I was young and I had to show my kid where I used to hang out' I just love that!" Even first timers can tell Dan has a real passion for providing people with the music they want and need. Dan sardonically referred to himself as the 'grouchy record guy' and insists that "people don't come here for my smiling personality." Whatever brings people to the store, Dan has been packing them in for almost 4 decades now. Dan is convinced that high record sales are here to stay. Being in business for 39 years, he sells a lot of records. "We go from Abba to Zappa, and everything in between." When asked what record continues to sell well he said, "I can't keep Fleetwood Mac's Rumours in stock." He added, "The Beatles always sell well. Sometimes I'll put a Sgt. Pepper in the bin and it will sell within the hour!" Dan summed up the appeal of collecting physical media. "I love to open a record, pull it out, place it on the platter and drop the needle. Listening to a record allows you to get lost in the music, without any distractions. You have to physically perform a task to listen to a record, it's not at your fingertips on your phone. I really enjoy looking at the album artwork, reading the liner notes and looking up which musicians played on which tracks." Mystic Disc has many loyal customers, but it's the first time customers who are always shocked that there exists a place like Dan's shop in this fast paced world we live in. A place where you can take your time and browse through bins and bins of records. Dan personally greets each customer as they enter and makes them feel welcome and encourages them to dig and stay a while. Dan is very thankful for all his customers, even if they don't buy anything--this time. He knows they'll be back.