

The **Indie Retailer of the Year Award** is given to a retail store who has shown exceptional inventiveness and ingenuity in their practices during the past year in their interactions with consumers.

Submission #1

3hive Record Lounge

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3hive is setting the standard for content curation at independent record stores. Their original "Would You Rather" content series has generated millions of views (Samia, Annie DiRusso, etc). and their record store video content is unique to their brand and voice. They know how to connect with the next generation of record collectors in an authentic, meaningful way. This is a new-school record store that is leading what the future of thriving indie retail looks like.

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Submission #2

Easy Street Records

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Easy Street Records in Seattle is always on the front lines for our bands. A true partner to labels and distributors. I've had the pleasure of partnering with them on projects for over 20 years and their support is always there no matter what.

Here is just an example of how they go above and beyond for an artist. This was from an instore last year with Ruel:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQDSDhZAV9C/?igsh=MTd2azlqdjF0anNvMA==>

Alex Brody, Alex Brody
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Kevin Larson, for years, has been putting together the coolest window displays in the country!! He deserves a most creative marketing & artist award at the very least. These displays are pulling in the foot/car traffic for sure! He really is a superstar - photos of his window displays attached you can find more on his IG @73clift. Matt Vaughan and his team have made a real deal community center out of their store and cafe, and stepped it up even more in the last 5-6 years. They made a point to serve their customers during lockdown, bringing smiles to people when they needed it most. All retail had to change their ways during lockdown and think of creative ways to connect with their customers, but Easy Street went above and beyond with the most brilliant of ideas. Instead of hiding away during lockdown, Easy Street literally got out there on the streets! Matt would hand-deliver packages with his son in their Easy Street van. They also successfully pulled off RSD during COVID by changing up the whole day - check out this video here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYxii3hHuYY>. They are one of the most well-respected stores in the country, and it's time they awarded by the music industry...BIG TIME :) You can tell by Easy Street's socials that they love their customers and their customers/fans love them, and they have a super tight team - Team Work is A++!

Check out press for Easy Street leading up to RSD 2024.

Here's the review I wrote of their new record Dark Matter

<https://www.westsideseattle.com/robinson-papers/2024/04/19/review-dark-matter-career-defining-release-pearl-jam>

Huge honor to be interviewed by Pat Prince for Goldmine Magazine

<https://www.goldminemag.com/interviews/matt-vaughan-of-easy-street-records-on-maintaining-a-record-store-rsd-pearl-jam-more>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuz3FNrRo3U>

<https://www.fox13seattle.com/news/eddie-vedder-easy-street-records>

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zc7f4u59mnpsk71z4hlgw/Faithfull-Forum-Dark-Matter-Release-Day-4.19.24.mp3?rlkey=uucz7o4tsrtbekt009cwvrm4&st=kmve7prz&dl=0>

<https://www.westsideseattle.com/west-seattle-herald/2024/04/20/record-store-day-easy-street-sees-record-turnout>

Melanie Hoch, Melanie Hoch
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Okay, okay- so I know I work here, but I'm almost 60 now (gulp) and I LOVE record stores. In my major label distribution & label live I've visited hundreds of stores & I still do all the time. I truly believe Easy Street is the best store in the world- not the biggest, just the best. We don't suffer paralysis by analysis- if we want to do something we do it. We've added a bar, a diner & work the inventory like mad people. Our instores are frequent & legendary, our customer base is large and fervent, our customers are young, old and all respected. We break artists, we support labels & distributors and have a world view when it comes to selling records, or cds, or cassettes, or merch. If you haven't been here, please come visit. I'll buy you a coffee...a double!

Andy Nelson, Andy Nelson
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I've been in the music industry for 35 years. When I first started, CDs were a new format. While it was years later, approximately 10, that I became the sales rep for Easy Street in Seattle, I CONTINUE to be amazed at the level of involvement Matt's store play in the cultural identity of Seattle, WA. Easy Street is bold, it's loud, it's unapologetic, it's quirky, it's edgy, and most importantly, it's evergreen. Yes, that's a play on words, but as evergreens are a part of the NW, Easy Street is part of the fabric of Seattle. It represents persistent dedication to the music, the community, the city, and culture. Easy Street and Matt Vaughan are synonymous with Seattle.

Easy Street, like many independent record stores, has faced more than their share of adversity. I continue to marvel at the creativity that comes from Matt and his staff. I don't think Easy Street has ever had to "reinvent" itself, but it's hard to improve upon a concept as welcoming and supportive. However, I have seen him add to experience.

I will say this with 100% certainty; there is NO store that markets itself better than Easy Street. The branding is beyond imagination for an "indie". Yes, of course there are other stores that do a good job, but Easy Street has perfected marketing and inclusion into the DNA of Seattle.

On more thing that I'd like to add, both the store and owner appear larger than life. BUT, there's a humility about this store that is really special. Matt doesn't hoard ideas, he shares them.

As I mentioned, I've been doing this 35 years and as I approach a time that I'll be passing the torch to a younger, hipper, and more tech savvy person, I am truly honoured to have represented Easy Street for my company. Matt, Adam, Nathan, Mary, Sophia and more are the cream of the crop.

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Easy Street Records represents the culture of Seattle. It's very difficult in this day and age to go to a city that has unique stores that define and represent their city. Easy Street not only is a giant sponge and encyclopedia of Seattle, it represents the past, present and future of the music industry. The store itself is amazing, but the restaurant, coffee bar and bar take it up a notch. It's a one stop shopping experience! The staff are masters of their craft and you can tell all were hired with intent.

To be in Easy Street makes one feel as though they are a part of something special, the staff, the in-stores, the music playing overhead, the smell of coffee, the delicious food and amazing drinks make me yearn for one in LA, where I live. It is literally one of my most favorite places to visit in the world!

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Submission #3

Fingerprints Music

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Fingerprints Music has always poured a lot of love and energy into their in-store performances and signings, truly elevating the customer experience and leaving the customer feeling really special. Just a few weeks ago, they hosted Cardi B for an autograph signing and made SO many of her fans/their customers happy. I have always been envious of their great events and hope to have the energy to match one of theirs someday.

Here is a link to the Facebook page wrap-up:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1228248439338431&set=pcb.1228248472671761>

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Submission #4

Amoeba

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What's In My Bag, Amoeba music's YouTube series where musicians discuss their personal music purchases from the legendary record store, is as relevant today as ever, 18 years in! Music discovery has evolved greatly since their first guest Weird Al in 2008, and as Chris Richards' Washington Post 2023 article states "no algorithm can compete" with this music discovery tool. What other record store marketing program HAS been covered by The Washington Post? Today Amoeba has over half a million followers on their YouTube channel where WIMB resides. What's In My Bag connects actual (famous) humans telling human stories about music. <https://www.youtube.com/amoeba>

Gina Williams, Gina Williams
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Submission #5

Looney Tunes Record Store

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VIDEO: <https://youtube.com/shorts/QFUULqXpZnM?si=ifXRZulsiWTj2pzp>

facebook.com/reel/737923265576439/?fs=e&mibextid=wwXlfr&rdid=AT70BW21zOo4Lkzz&share_url=https%3A%2F%2F

I really think you to consider Looney Tunes for this award. I feel a little strange nominating myself but here we go... Looney Tunes has been family owned and operated for 55 years! This year is our 55th anniversary. Not only do we have the best events.... this year alone we had appearances from Mariah Carey, Jonas Brothers, Selena Gomez, Sabrina Carpenter, Cardi B, Warren Haynes and a ton more! And that was just the last few months! Not only do we try and host the best events, we also do a lot of community work with helping Long Island Cares a local charity started by Harry Chapin, helping those in need in our area. I really hope you give us a consideration. Happy to supply video links of some of our events if we can send you a URL. Since 1971...Low discount prices, wide selection and the best customer service.

Karl Groeger, Karl Groeger
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Submission #6

Rock and Soul DJ Equipment and Records

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Rock and Soul is the oldest and independent record store in the world, as they celebrated their 50th anniversary recently. Based in the heart of NYC, its not just the vinyl store, its a community of vinyl lovers, music lovers and DJs, they have multiple events throughout the year including RSD (Record Store Day), where they give chance to budding artists to present their music and artform in front of the big names of the industry. They also give out giveaways and gifts worth thousands of \$ every year.

Max, Max

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Submission #7

Rust And Wax

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There are many reasons why I'm nominating Rust & Wax. They have, in a very short time, become the hub in West Palm Beach for all things music and culture. The cultivated vibe in shop is top shelf and their openness and passion are arresting, but in a very good way. But the reason I am nominating them is for their weekly Staff Picks posts on Instagram. (Disclaimer: I was a guest in their Staff Picks in March of '25). I dig the interaction, each team member showing up in the post with image and likeness. The call to action to pick one or more from 'your' favorite record slinger. They've been able to extend the IRL experience into this specific series of comms and having experienced both I am impressed with the planning and execution.

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Submission #8

Zia Records

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Zia Records has spent the last 45 years as a pillar of the southwest. After becoming employee owned in 2021, Zia has been able to share their focus with their local communities more than ever while always having a good time!

After forming the Zia Community Improvement Initiative, Zia has worked donating to local organization focusing on art, education, and health. Even funding an education grant for students seeking higher education. Zia participates in the Adopt a Road program and facilitates road clean up. Their leadership are members of community groups, bettering their neighborhoods. In 2025 Zia teamed up with State 48 to host a tattoo fundraiser at one of their locations for local entrepreneurs. It was an incredible!

Zia Records employs nearly 200 staff members across 8 store locations. Most of the leadership team started their Zia journey as a clerks and have worked their way up in 10, 15, 20, 30 years! The longevity of Zia lies with their people and strong customer focus.

Their stores are filled with new and preowned physical media treasures from records, to collectables, to classic band tees, to books, to 4K, to blind boxes, DVDs, CDs, tapes, plush, handbags, anime, board games, posters, turntables, they once bought a Nascar tire across their trade counter! Zia has their customers covered with everything they could be looking for.

Zia loves to celebrate with their community, hosting big parties for Record Store Day, their mascot, Record Friends, birthday, and month long celebration of all things Zia, Zia Dayz in October. These days come with big themes, big giveaways, and big sales!

Zia Records has been a southwest staple for 45 years, here's to forever.

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Submission #9

Down in the Valley

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I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to nominate the remarkable store "Down in the Valley" for the prestigious Agent of Change Bizzy Award. This store has truly made an incredible impact on their community through its unwavering support for marginalized groups.

Their dedication to advocating for equality and justice is inspiring. They have consistently taken a bold political stand against the current situation in Minneapolis, using their platform to voice the need for change and support those who are often affected.

The Store Down in the Valley has become a beacon of hope and progress. Their efforts in promoting social justice and equality make them a deserving candidate for the Agent of Change Bizzy Award. I am confident that their recognition will further inspire others to follow in their footsteps and contribute to positive change in our society.

Thank you for considering this nomination.

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