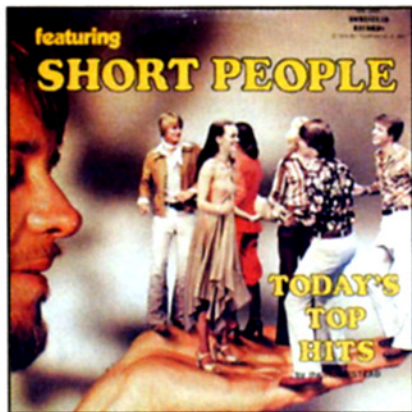


Weirdness is in the eye of the album cover holder

A trip to the room where Matthew Glass keeps his personal album collection is not for the faint-hearted. With an estimated 10,000 LPs, anyone expecting to find the standard Beatles or Rolling Stones records in the mix will be quickly caught off guard by what Glass considers collectible. Whether it's the subtle play on words and double-keyboard humor of *Seymour Gibbons Plays With Himself*; the wholesomely staged clean-cut teenagers in *How To Teach Children The Wonders Of Sex*;

or *Defend Yourself*, starring the grunts and groans of Nick Liberty, who offers an entire album dedicated to teaching the listener about aikido judo, it's a collection that defies definition. Glass is probably the world's foremost collector of some of the most bizarre albums ever made, such as *Today's Top Hits Featuring Short People* (pictured here).

"I started collecting as a teenager," said the New York marketing director. "I became bored with standard albums and the covers. I think it all started with those *Music For* albums — those bachelor pad albums with the cheesy album covers of women in provocative poses." Glass, who often frequented used record stores in his youth, began to have an appreciation for the strange and unique, if not plain weirdness of certain albums and album covers. "They were always decorating the walls of these stores with these kinds of albums, and I just got hooked."



Just when he thought he had amassed an impressive collection of quadriplegic keyboardists, Christian ventriloquists and high-school student typing records, eBay entered the picture. On the online auction site, he has discovered a new world of collecting possibilities and more unique topics immortalized on vinyl. His most recent finds include *The Odd Sounds Of American Fast Food Restaurants* and *The Odd Sounds Of San Francisco Adult Book Stores*.

"Collecting these albums has really opened my eyes to social norms — a unique glimpse of just how different the world views [are] that Americans might consider strange or bizarre," he said. "Originally my collection was a slice of American history, patterns and styles of the times, but with eBay you really get to see the art of what people consider beautiful — things that wouldn't be considered so here in America. A good example of that is what is considered sexy or attractive. I have an album from South America, with a larger, Rubenesque woman on the cover — a woman that by American standards would not be considered attractive."

Keeping track of his ever-growing collection involves a very detailed system. The collection is so large that there are categories within categories.

"I have an education category, a Christian category, a cheesecake category — which are not to be confused with

my nude category. Those cheesecake ones are my favorites; I have about 750 of those. But sometimes I'll have an album that I'll have to cross-section, for instance, a Batman album that will have a nude woman on it."

At any given time Glass is bidding on a dozen albums. Because collecting "out of the norm" recordings is catching on, he often faces fierce competition. "I mean, you just can't believe that there is so much of this stuff out there. However, I have my want lists; I have my holy grails."

For all of the questionable, if not obscure albums in his collection, there are a few "strange and unique" items that are also highly regarded as rare collectibles. Last year, on a hunt for spoken-word albums, Glass paid \$1,500 for a rare copy of Jack Kerouac's *Poetry For The Beat Generation* (Dot 3154). The LP, featuring Steve Allen on piano, was pulled almost immediately after a handful were shipped out to reviewers. According to Kerouac historians, the album was allegedly considered "off color" by the label. It's estimated only 130 were released (the album was later re-released on the Hanover label).

Have you found a strange or unique record on an online auction site? One person's trash might be your treasure, and I want to know about it. Contact me via my Web site at www.isleofwrite.com.

— Lisa Wheeler

Web sites of interest

www.showandtellmusic.com/

www.danacountryman.com/danacovers/danacovers.html