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WEST VILLAGE'S PARAMITA SOUND ENGAGES WITH COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC



Collaboration and community involvement play a huge role in Detroit's emerging landscape primed for entrepreneurs and startups looking for affordable spaces and a blank canvas for innovation. Just ask Andrey Douthard, owner of Detroit record store Paramita Sound, whose journey as a young business owner captures the infectious energy of Detroit's culture of entrepreneurship.

After studying music business at Full Sail University in Florida, Douthard returned to Michigan, where he interned remotely at Warner Music Group, dabbled in substitute teaching, and managed hip-hop artists. In January 2014, he registered for D:Hive's Build (now the Build Institute), a popular eight-week class geared toward both aspiring and established entrepreneurs, and was immersed in the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

As he finished up the program, he learned about a business competition for a space on Van Dyke Avenue in Detroit's West Village neighborhood called Activate 1417 – the outcome of a larger collaboration among the Villages Community Development Corporation (CDC), Revolve Detroit and Practice Space. The initial idea for the competition came from Paramita Sound's landlord, lifelong Detroiter Alex Howbert, who purchased the 1417 home and three others through a private sale.

"I thought if we could offer some helpful services to a business through my partnership with Practice Space, then we could do a competition ourselves. I asked Brian Hurtienne (of the Villages CDC) and Michael Forsyth (of Revolve Detroit) if they would be interested in partnering," says Howbert, who also owns Detroit River Sports and co-owns Detroit Institute of Bagels.

Douthard developed a business proposal for the competition, went through a four-month vetting process and, ultimately, ended up with the space. "We landed on Andrey after reviewing close to 30 proposals and interviewing several of the top submissions," says Howbert, who was one of the judges. "Andrey stood out as having excellent knowledge and passion for his business,

and seemed exceptionally prepared in terms of the business plan itself."

Furthering his business acumen, Douthard enrolled at TechTown's Retail Boot Camp – where he was awarded \$2,500, which he used for Paramita Sound's inventory – and is a client for the nonprofit's SWOT City program, too.

"I'm like a poster child for all of these organizations at this point now," Douthard says, laughing. "When you're trying to start a business in the city of Detroit right now and you don't have any money, you have to grind. You have to get out there and meet all these people."

Opened in October 2014, Paramita Sound specializes in new release vinyl records and sealed, new versions of reissues. They also carry new and used cassette tapes, have two listening stations for previewing albums on vinyl, an iPad listening station for previewing digitally, and a listening lounge that reflects Douthard's sentiment on slowing down and taking your time. This is also evident in their vinyl crates, which are organized alphabetically and kept lower in quantity. "I want you to be able to touch every record when you come in," Douthard says. "We want to engage with you here."

When customers step into the space – it's not easy to miss on the outside with the coziness of its white-painted wood and grayish blue trim – they're likely to see Douthard putting on a new record, such as *Endearment*, the debut album from Detroit band El Dee. "Not only am I just a fan of the vinyl format," Douthard explains. "But also, it's the most engaging format of music that I think is out there."

And engaging with the music, the space and the surrounding community is at the forefront of Douthard's mission with Paramita Sound. The store is within walking distance to newer West Village favorites – Craft Work, Detroit Vegan Soul, Red Hook, Tarot & Tea and Parker Street Market, for example – all adding to the neighborhood's appeal.

"The community that's here is what makes this neighborhood a gem," Douthard says. "It wouldn't be as appealing to be here if it wasn't for the fact that the people who are here – they've been here."  — Audrey LaForest
paramitasound.com

The Perfect Sound

Paramita is a Sanskrit term that means "the cultivation of perfection." It's the job that never stops, Douthard says, and a constant working at getting better. "Maybe (vinyl) is perfect in its imperfection," he adds. "The sound the needle makes when it hits the record, or the warmth you get from vinyl."

Either way, as Douthard says, collaboration has been key to the process, which is why he's enlisted the help of three other business partners. As vinyl enthusiasts from different backgrounds, they've each picked their top three favorite albums:

ANDREY DOUTHARD

Evidence – *The Weatherman LP*
Gang Starr – *Moment of Truth*
Lee Morgan – *Search for the New Land*

VICENTE ELIZONDO

Brian Eno – *Music for Airports*
Burial – *Untrue*
Hood – *Cold House*

ANNA ATANASSOVA

Black Sabbath – *Master of Reality*
Morrissey – *Viva Hate*
Righteous Brothers – *Go Ahead and Cry*

ZACH POLEY

Clipse – *Lord Willin'*
Kanye West – *Graduation*
Lil Ugly Mane – *Mista Thug Motivation*