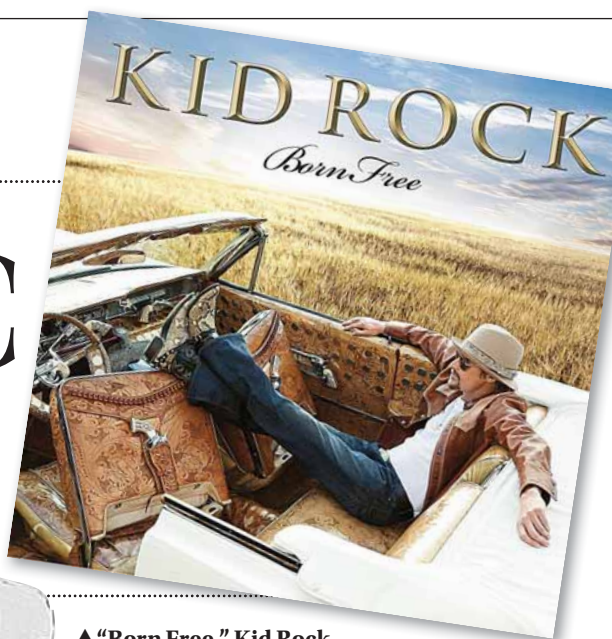


WHAT TO BUY THE MUSIC MAVEN



▲ "Born Free," Kid Rock.

The Kid continues his transformation from annoying rap-rock bragger to solid, mainstream rocker on his 10th release. The Detroit native is a favorite in Toledo — he's playing the Huntington Center Jan. 26 — and this kind of music is bread-and-butter popular in northwest Ohio. Working with a crack backup band that features members of Los Lobos, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and the Heartbreakers, Rock has fashioned a disc that has drawn comparisons with Bob Seger when he was in his prime. We're guessing the Kid considers that a good thing. Available at Target, Wal-Mart, Culture Clash, Ramalama Records, and other stores where CDs are sold.

◀ There's still something cool about slapping a vinyl album down after digging it out of the cardboard sleeve, dropping the needle into the groove, and listening to music as the record spins in front of you. It's a nostalgic thing, but there are plenty of audiophiles who argue the sound is better. Culture Clash sells an Audio-Technica PL 60 turntable for \$129.95 and the store's owner swears by it. "It's just a workhorse of a turntable," Pat O'Connor said. "We use ours eight hours a day everyday, day after day." Especially cool: You can plug it into your computer and rip music directly from vinyl into your hard drive. You can also find turntables at ABC Warehouse, the Appliance Center, and Best Buy, among others.



▲ Elliston, Ohio, native and American Idol runner-up

Crystal Bowersox releases her first CD, "Farmer's Daughter," on Dec. 14. Most of the songs were written by Bowersox, who won the hearts of Toledoans with her down-to-earth demeanor and powerful voice during her Idol run this year. The disc is a mix of rock, pop, country, and singer/songwriter balladry. And, yes, it includes "Holy Toledo," which is presented as a soaring anthem. Suffice to say this one will sell really well here. It will be available at Target, Wal-Mart, Culture Clash, Ramalama Records, and other stores where CDs are sold.



▲ Denon DHT-589BA

5.1-Channel Home Theater System. Listening to music these days isn't just limited to listening. The popularity of DVDs, specifically concert DVDs that capture musical acts in theater-like settings, has turned the experience into a visual one as well. Which is why (this for that special someone on your list for whom a few hundred dollars is reasonable spending; or, heck, just buy one for yourself) you might want to consider this outfit for about \$470 from the Appliance Center. It's going to sound great and look fantastic and, let's face it, settling into your couch to watch a concert can be a pretty comfy experience.

▶ The perfect gift stand-by is the ever-popular iPod gift card. If there's a teen-ager or young adult on your list, we'd bet a dozen Christmas cookies that if you've asked them what they want they've muttered a phrase that includes "iPod." Part of the problem with digital music — among other things — is that it takes all the fun out of going to a record store and looking through the bins to determine what to buy. But let's face it, anyone younger than 35 is probably all about downloading music and the dominant online "store" is iTunes. You can get these cards lots of different places, such as any Kroger store.

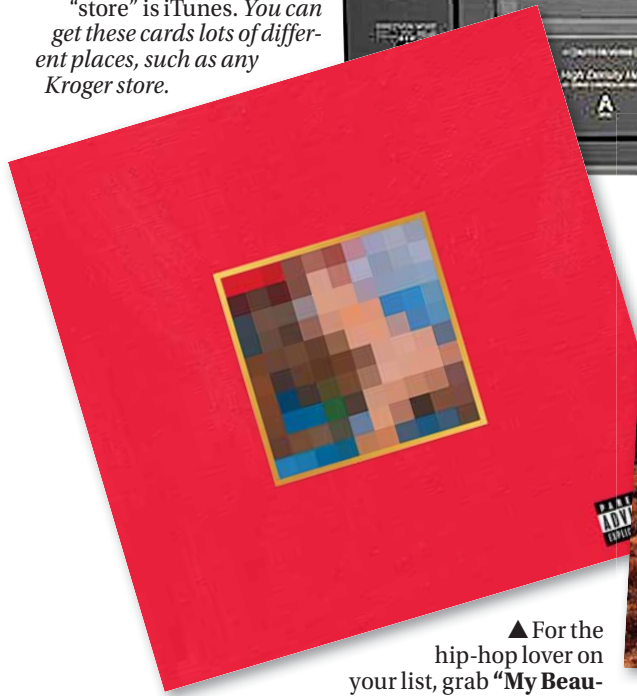


◀ The Sony LBTZX991 five-disc changer.

This thing just looks like a monster with a big, dominant volume knob that makes you think you could knock the house down if you turned it up. It's a 5-disc changer for the CD lover, but there's also an iPod dock for maximum efficiency. Oh, and it weighs 131 pounds, so it's a beast. It sells for about \$675 at Best Buy, and some reviewers say it's worth it.

▼ Sony TCWE475 Dual Cassette changer.

If this turns up on someone's Christmas list and you can afford the \$100 price tag at a store such as ABC Warehouse, get it. First, cassette decks are about as fashionable as mullets, which means that whoever wants this, really, really wants it. Second, cassettes are extremely old school, but if someone has a passel of the tapes and they want to listen to them, then you should be happy to help out. And third, remember the sound of a tape rewinding or fast forwarding? That was a cool sound.

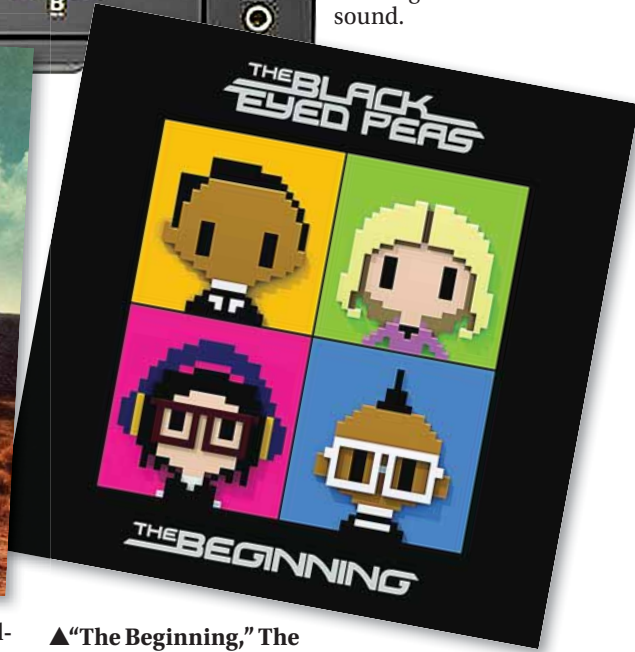


▲ For the hip-hop lover on your list, grab "My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy," by Kanye West.

Like My Chemical Romance, he's created a concept for the disc, crafting it as a kind of hip-hop fairy tale all about Kanye. It's an over-the-top affair with as many as 42 side musicians and guest vocalists as he takes listeners on a trip through his bruised psyche and angst-ridden life. Reviews have been generally positive and as Allmusic Guide noted, "Whether loved or loathed, fully enjoyed or merely admired, this album should be regarded as a deeply fascinating accomplishment." Available at Target, Wal-Mart, Culture Clash, Ramalama Records, and other stores where CDs are sold.



▲ "Danger Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys," My Chemical Romance. Big, over-the-top rock concept albums are kind of out-of-fashion these days, but for their first release in four years My Chemical Romance comes through with an epic that is sure to show up on more than a few emo loving kids' Christmas lists. The disc finds the band shedding some of their mopey tendencies toward more upbeat rock while taking on the persona of "The Fabulous Killjoys." Available at Target, Wal-Mart, Culture Clash, Ramalama Records, and other stores where CDs are sold.



▲ "The Beginning," The Black Eyed Peas. It's safe to say that the Peas, led by will.i.am, are the biggest band on the planet right now. Their ability to meld ultramodern sounds and dance beats with old-fashioned production values and liberal samples from past hits, gives their songs a hooky quality that is almost annoying. Suffice to say, once you hear these songs they rattle around in your head for days. The kids will want this one. Available at Target, Wal-Mart, Culture Clash, Ramalama Records, and other stores where CDs are sold.

Gift ideas: Rod Lockwood

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