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Listening to the Beatles' 'White Album' 100 Times, All at Once

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Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Mr. Chang at the Recess Gallery.

When the conceptual artist Rutherford Chang presented his idiosyncratic art show “We Buy White Albums” at the Recess Gallery in SoHo in January, he told a visitor that the exhibition was only part of the project. The exhibition seemed plenty, really: Mr. Chang transformed the gallery into a mock record shop in which the only discs on display were copies of “The Beatles” — the 1968 double-disc set popularly known as the “White Album” because of its stark cover.

Mr. Chang had hundreds of copies, all vinyl LPs, and what fascinated him was the way each aged and the ways their former owners kept them — some pristine, others with drawings, poetry, messages or scrawled names.

Now, in time for the 45th anniversary of the album's release on Friday, Mr. Chang has completed the project's audio component. While listening to each copy of the "White Album" he collected, Mr. Chang made a digital recording. He then overlaid 100 of them, and pressed them as a vinyl set, with a cover on which some of the more colorful examples of former-owner artwork were overlaid as well. He has posted Side 1 on his [web page](#), and said he would sell copies at the [WFMU Record Fair](#), Friday through Sunday.

The albums, as it turns out, have also aged with some variety. Some played cleanly, others had scratches, noise from embedded dirt, or vinyl wear. And though the recordings are identical, variations in the pressings, and natural fluctuations in the speed of Mr. Chang's analogue turntable, meant that the 100 recordings slowly moved out of sync, in the manner of an early Steve Reich piece: the opening of "Back in the U.S.S.R." is entirely unified, but at the start of "Dear Prudence," you hear the first line echoing several times, and by "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" the track is a nearly unrecognizable roar.

"The project is ongoing, and I am still growing the collection," Mr. Chang said in an email. "Hopefully I'll pick up some more copies this weekend." He currently has 902 copies of "The White Album." The visual part of his show is currently on exhibition at [Wesleyan University](#), in Middletown, Conn., and will be part of a five-artist show at the [Atlanta Contemporary Art Center](#) in January.

