

40 YEARS OF RECORD COVER DESIGN

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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

" 40 Years of Record Cover Design "

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO :

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF DESIGN :

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION

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March 1989

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INTRODUCTION

Media products are unique in that they tend to be responsive to short-term trends in visual design. They are immediate and transitory mirrors of consumers tastes, particularly in the case of record covers. The attitude towards the packaging and marketing of music has dramatically changed in the last five decades. The sharp contrast between today's cover designs and those of forty years ago is an indication of the difference in music and design between the 1940's and the 1980's.

There have been millions of record covers produced over the years, and a substantial amount of these are still in circulation. Album covers have become permanent items. Covers give information, which on a simple level just makes it easier to select what is wanted. This information is passed directly by means of lettering or indirectly, but often more clearly, by the cover design itself. One soon comes to learn which record is which by recognising its cover. An attachment may develop for covers either because they package favoured albums or because they are stimulating in themselves. It is this second reason that concerns this thesis.

It is not possible to talk about every musical style and sleeve design in the last forty years. I will look at the elements that influenced the most noted albums from Britain and America and

their designers in the development of design in the music industry, starting from the early days of album covers to the present day.

CHAPTER ONE - THE EARLY YEARS

A century has now passed since the first sound recordings were made by Thomas Edison. At this time professional music making was likely to be experienced in certain clearly defined contexts e.g. the music hall, the opera house and the dance palais. Young ladies brought the classical repertoire and sentimental music hall songs into the victorian drawing room. People sang in unison or harmony at family events and celebrations, in the pub, or to ease monotony at work which we now call traditional or folk music.

When the first musical recordings became commercially available, the status of music was itself irreversibly altered. Musical ability was potentially the material product of a fast growing industry ; the owner of a photograph or gramophone was the consumer. Music lost its associated conventions of occasion, manners and class, it was now a marketable commodity. It was not until the industry entered its fourth decade that the brittle 78rpm records were made obsolete by the invention of tough plastic 45rpm and long playing 33rpm records. Now a sign system began to consciously evolve in which the package of recorded music became an increasingly efficient mediator between musicians and their public.

The flat-disc gramophone was invented by Berliner in 1895 and was

in production by the end of the century. The records, first made of rubber, then of shellac compound were first of all sold without any protective covering. But by 1910 it had become standard practise to ship and sell records in paper envelopes. All the relevant information was on the label in the centre of the record and it soon became standard practise for this to be revealed by a hole in the sleeve. As these sleeves began to have more elaborate distinctive designs they often formed a kind of frame for the label (see fig.1) and in many of the most aesthetically pleasing examples the label provided the focus for an integrated design. It was the label that gave the product itself, the neutral black disc, a distinguished and distinctive appearance and often two or three colours, with silver and gold were used to print it.

The protection of records seems to have been low on the list of manufacturers priorities. In general careless handling and storage must have ruined many records. The first record sleeves that had any real permanence or stability were produced by record shops. Plain cardboard sleeves received the imprint of chain stores. One example (see fig. 2) shows advertising space on the reverse side taken up by a manufacturer of needles, a subsidiary of a recording company.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the designs on paper sleeves provide many examples of attractive period graphics. An early example which dates from 1911 is for Victor records. Plain typography is relieved by a floating Art Noveau harpist emanating

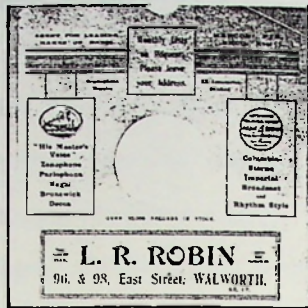


FIG. 1



FIG. 2



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

from a phonograph horn (see fig. 3)

During the 1920's the sleeves came to include representational scenes of Jazz age young people enjoying the foxtrot in the privacy of their parents homes (fig 4) or cavorting in an open air idyll (fig 5) Black music continued well into the 60's to be packaged in a way that glossed over its raunchier aspects and aimed to give it a more acceptable image (fig. 6) Compare however a contemporary sleeve for Vocalions " Race Records " a term that continued to be used until the late '40s when the term " R & B " (Rhythm & Blues) took over. The cheerful guitarist seems well aware of the effect he's having on the white women on his left. This suggestive package would have outraged anyone outside the male black audience at which it was aimed. In contrast the Black Swan company pushed social purity as a criterion of excellence (fig.7,9)

Starting before the 1920's books of records bound together had been available - this is the origin of the term 'Album'. These records were mainly sets of classical works; collections or else whole symphonies which would not fit on single 78's. They always had plain typographical covers with the title both on the front . and on the spine. (fig. 8).

As the sale of album books increased by 1939 they began to have picture covers- usually drawings in several gaudy colours, sometimes with the picture of the artist superimposed on them.



FIG. 5



FIG. 6



FIG. 7



FIG. 8



FIG. 9

This material was stuck onto the board covers, and to a certain extent the album book designs overlap with the 10-inch LP sleeves which began to appear in the late 1940's, since the same paper "slicks" would be used on both.

The designs, like those on the early paper sleeves, were evidently produced in most cases by free-lance designers, and were often re-used with a different title inset. But during the '40s recognisable formulae began to emerge in which musical idioms tended to be identified by a characteristic style. Black and white photographs of star performers predominated on classical recordings, while they rarely appeared on those of non-white musicians, evidently not being considered a useful selling point. "Coloured" or "Race" music was associated with geometric, often abstract designs in which maroon, yellow, and brown often predominate. (figs. 10, 11, 12)

At this time there was an explosive growth in profits for the music industry which increased production to please a fast moving teen market. By 1946 record companies were selling ten times as many songs as they were a decade earlier; that year RCA, Victor and Decca sold 100 million records each. In 1949 Capitol and RCA produced the 45rpm box - intended as a replacement of the 78 album books to compete with Columbia's 33.5rpm records - with a playing time of up to 23 minutes, these were the first long-playing records.

Within a year or two it became obvious that sets of 45s which

still had to be changed on the player like 78s - would never catch on for classical music or other lengthy compositions, now that LP versions were available. 45s were ideal for shorter pieces for example pop music. Clearly a competitive situation was not to anyone's advantage. In 1951 RCA and Columbia signed a peace agreement and Columbia started making 45s and RCA 33.5 LPs.



FIG. 10



FIG. 11

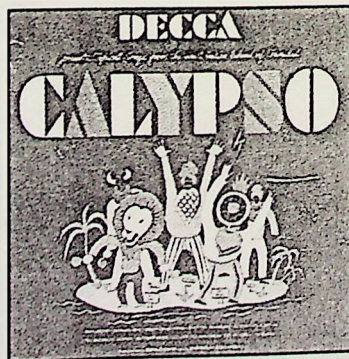


FIG. 12

CHAPTER TWO - THE 40's & 50's

An important aspect of this era was the overlap of the two fastest growing and most influential media of the 40's and 50's ; popular music and the movies. The biggest record companies in America were associated, in varying degrees with the film industry. The fact that recorded music and films shared the same market was quickly exploited. The soundtracks of Hollywood musicals became available in album form and later in LPs, and the eye-catching imagery of the film posters was easily adapted to a smaller format. Wide screen cosmetic close-ups provided a synthetic intimacy that was to become pervasive on 1950s record covers by soloists of both sexes.

The "teenage" cult of the 1950s was largely a product of consumerism. Big businesses were quick to recognise a growing market. However rock n' roll was sold mainly as 45's which explains the sparsity of albums at this time.

The Rock n' Roll revolution, launched on a wave of teenage hysteria in 1955 had started to die out by 1962. The music became popular in the fifties with disc jockies like Alan Freed (the man who popularised the words "Rock n' Roll") playing songs by "Little Richard", "Fats Domino", "Chuck Berry" and "Frankie Lynnon and the Teenagers". Elvis Presely took this music to a new level that changed the course of Rock n' Roll forever. Where before a few hundred thousand records represented a major hit,

Elvis Presleys records sold in such huge numbers that the entire record industry had to rethink and adjust to new dimensions.

Rock n' Roll, like Ragtime, Jazz and Swing was a hybrid made possible by records and radio. But it was only after an artist had lots of singles successes that any career development was envisaged for him or her. It is significant that Elvis Presleys' followers tended to have, like him, a career in film, the medium in which big companies saw success. During the 40's and 50's it was movies and their posters which provided the initial imagery for record sleeves (fig.13)

Elvis' first record sleeve is a black and white shot of the man in action his face and body distorted by excruciating passion (fig.14) Thanks to his manager, Colonel Parker, and RCA's art department, this wild abandon was transformed on subsequent sleeves into the standard soft-focus smile. The Hollywood glamour gestalt continued to be invoked on sleeves regardless of the music contained on them. (fig.15-18) . On his emergence from the army in 1960, Elvis' assimilation into the status quo had become obvious and sadly his image joined the by now hackneyed tradition of movie soundtrack artists. It wasn't until the mid sixties when rock music gathered momentum that record companies were obliged to make certain concessions to major artists as to how their music should be packaged.



FIG. 13. 1940s and '50s record covers which were largely influenced by the movies.

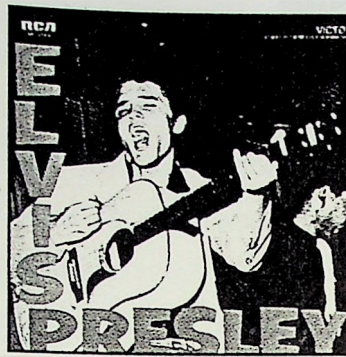


FIG. 13 14



FIG. 15



FIG. 16

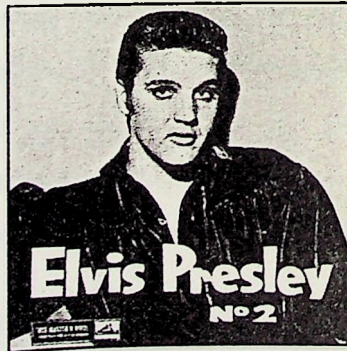


FIG. 17



FIG. 18

CHAPTER THREE - JAZZ

Most Jazz enthusiasts found the war a compulsory hiatus in their devotion. If they were not away in the services, and their collections broken up, the American Federation of Musicians recording ban of 1942-1944 descended on them, together with the general shortage of consumer goods, including records, that hostilities brought increasingly as the war went on. When the long playing record was introduced many people were suspicious of it ; it seemed to be a package deal forcing you to buy bad tracks along with the good at an unwantedly high price (the dubbing or remastering of 78s as LP's too was regarded as a damaging practice) While Rock n' Roll covers were aimed at teenagers a more sophisticated audience continued to buy Jazz. The development of modern or 'live' Jazz had been helped by the inventors of the LP, which made possible the recording of improvisations and the covers of these LPs proved as influential as the music. The intellectuals and the 'Bohemians' who bought LPs wanted information but they also received style.

In the 1950s this was largely the responsibility of small companies run by dedicated people with a strong sense of musical history who were more concerned with making Jazz music available than with making huge profits. Unlike the major corporations, in these companies one person often undertook several roles - record

production, marketing, administration, packaging. Indeed as small operators they were probably forced into it. In major companies , even today, one would find a tendency towards pigeon-holing, where as with the small labels there is a total involvement in all of the processes in making a record. This informality together with the improvisational nature of the music, led to a more flexible approach to the problem of design. There was a conscious attempt to explore the problems of linking the music with the visuals, which after all is the most important aspect of cover design. Modern Jazz tended to be associated with abstract expressionism; avant-garde sounds with avant-garde imagery. (fig19-21)

In America in the post-war years there were many record companies recording Jazz music. Some of the most notable were CLEF, VERVE, BLUE NOTE and CONTEMPORY, which are now famous for the music they recorded and also for their innovative sleeve designs. Much use was made of free-lance illustrators whose work was also evident in magazines etc. The prolific David Stone Martin produced hundreds of sleeves during the 1950's and 60's and his free yet linear style of pencil line drawings became especially associated with the "Verve" label. He had an ability to recognise a specific gesture of the musicians and portray it. (see fig.22) He worked in the environment of the musicians and became familiar with their particular characteristics which he often portrayed in his designs. For example his portrayal of Slim Gaillard and Bam Brown in his cover design for "Opera in Vout" (see fig. 23). Slim



FIG. 19



FIG. 20



FIG. 21



FIG. 23



FIG. 22

was famous in Hollywood for his height , good looks, personality and striking wardrobe. Bam Brown on the other hand was insecure and a heavy drug user. He ended up in a mental hospital where he remained until he died. In the cover design, Slim Gaillard is laid back, relaxed, confident and grinning. Bam Brown is small serious and almost appears to be hugging his instrument for security. These musicians were both black which is not obvious in the sleeve design. Perhaps as in the earlier years it was not considered a useful selling point. But also, perhaps David Stone Martin didn't consider their colour, but only their characters, as having any relevance on the music that they played. The performers approved a David Stone Martin sleeve as commercially good , and also for many the sleeve was now becoming as important as the music it contained. His style was quickly seized upon by an entire generation of European artschool students, most notably in Britain. In America artists tried blatantly to pass off their work as David Stone Martin styled and some even signed their work in the same manner. The reason why he became so famous was perhaps, simply because he was so different. His style was such a contrast to the wholesome insipidness projected by the sleeves up until then. The finished imagery for Rock n' Roll became almost de rigeur for rock musicians, who usually appeared on their own record covers transfixed in technicolor retouched grins. This archetype developed into an empty formula, reappearing with increasing crudity on both sides of the Atlantic. Of course at this time, the especially larger record companies were dictating what should appear on the sleeve, the musicians had very little

involvement.

Norman Granz, supervisor of CLEF records was the first entrepreneur to employ quality artwork as opposed to photographs, for the long record sleeves. He hired David Stone Martin, whom he first met when he was associated with Asch Records. Norman Granz was advised by his associates that to use David Stone Martins designs for his record sleeves not only made commercial sense but was artistically sound. Many people ,both musicians and fans, claim that Stone Martin was the most gifted illustrator ever to have turned his attention to the Jazz Music industry. He also illustrated for the theatre and a good example of his work is a poster he designed for the "Threepenny Opera", of Broadways big hit of the '50s (see fig.24,25) It is interesting to see how stone Martin interprets the scene of Mack the Knife, sadistic and sexy leader of Soho's underworld, making a pass at Jenny, a tawny barmaid, as a beggar looks on. This is I suppose, a true indication of his ability to translate the wit, the vigour and the drama of music and theatre into his designs.

Vanity being what it is, David Stone Martin claims that not even the most volatile performers ever took exception to the manner in which he portrayed them. He is reported to have said;

" Quite the contrary - they approved of what I did. Charlie Parker ... Billy Holiday ... They understood what I was trying to achieve " (1)

Another contemporary of the 'Clef' and 'Verve' label was 'Blue Note' New York. 'Blue Note' was founded in 1939 by Alfred Lion,



FIG. 24

"A CLASSIC!"

— BROOKS ATKINSON, NEW YORK TIMES

CARMEN CAPALBO & STANLEY CHASE
(IN ASSOCIATION WITH LUCILLE LORTEL) PRESENT

Kurt Weill's the Three- Penny Opera



ENGLISH ADAPTATION
OF BOOK AND LYRICS BY

Marc
Blitzstein

MUSIC BY

KURT WEILL

ORIGINAL TEXT BY

BERT BRECHT

DIRECTED BY

CARMEN CAPALBO

THEATER de LYS

121 CHRISTOPHER STREET NEW YORK 4, N.Y.

FIG. 25

and was later joined by Francis Wolff. The Blue Note record company was distinguished by three days of paid rehearsals and the best sound engineer in the field - Rudy Van Gelder. This pursuit of excellence extended to the packaging as companies were becoming more aware of the importance of strong visual imagery on record sleeves in what was now becoming a very competitive industry.

In 1956, Blue Note hired designer Reid Miles, who went on to turn out over 500 definitively stylish covers into a running commentary on all that was innovative in the late 1950's and 60's in graphic design.

Reid Miles had a style that was very different to that of David Stone Martins. He was not an illustrator but worked with type and photographs to produce stylish, exciting and sometimes elegant record sleeves. But fig. 26, 27 are examples of Andy Warhol's early work as an illustrator. These Kenny Burrell albums were done for Blue Note under the design and art direction of Reid Miles. These avant garde illustrations are strongly influenced by David Stone Martin's style. But if you compare them, Warhol's illustrations have not captured the same feeling of movement that was so exclusively David Stone Martins.

Reid Miles cropped photographs of the musicians to produce near abstract gestures and adorned them with one colour tints (see figs 28, 29). He jammed type together, cutting letters in order to

fit the large type onto the limited area of the record sleeve, creating unusual abstract patterns. Miles broke away from the common use of photography as an overall image. He reduced photographs of the musicians to become a small percentage of his design, which actually served to bring as much, if not more, attention to the musician he was portraying (see fig. 30). He often abandoned the use of photographs and concentrated on the use of type to create his design, for example his 'Something else' cover design (see fig 31). He used one long column of type, reversed white out of black, which resulted in a very stylish, simple yet informative record sleeve. Miles work was extremely influential, since he pioneered the cool juxtaposition of photography and type which came to be associated with Jazz sleeves during this period. He also produced equally good covers for a company called Prestige, at this time. What Reid Miles called " the period of renaissance of type " is exemplified by his purely typographical sleeves (fig. 32)

Blue Note have recently re-issued many of their albums of the 50's and 60's, using the same album covers due to popular demand. Much of Reid Miles work is true to the fact that good design never goes out of date.

The third well known label of the 50's was Lester Koenigs 'Contemporary' from Los Angeles. It was the first Jazz label to introduce 45rpm singles stereo and attain national distribution. It was an independent company that cared as much for the presentation of its wares as Blue Note. This was achieved by



FIG. 26

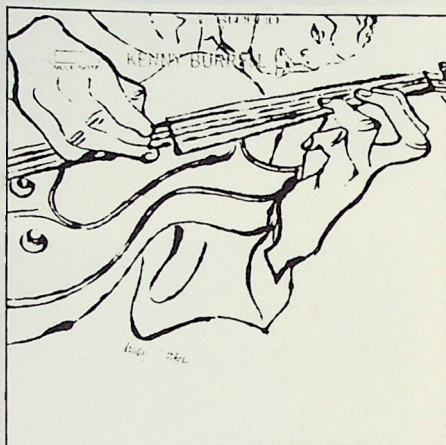


FIG. 27



FIG. 28

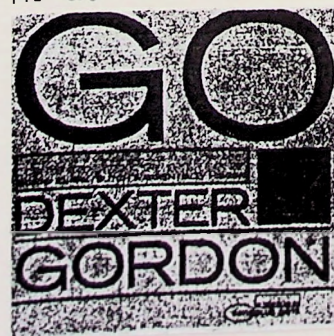


FIG 29



FIG. 30



FIG. 31

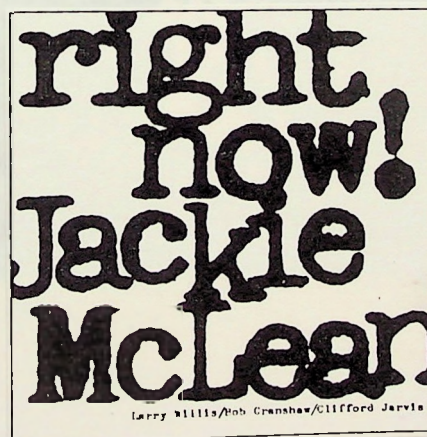


FIG. 32



FIG. 33



FIG 34

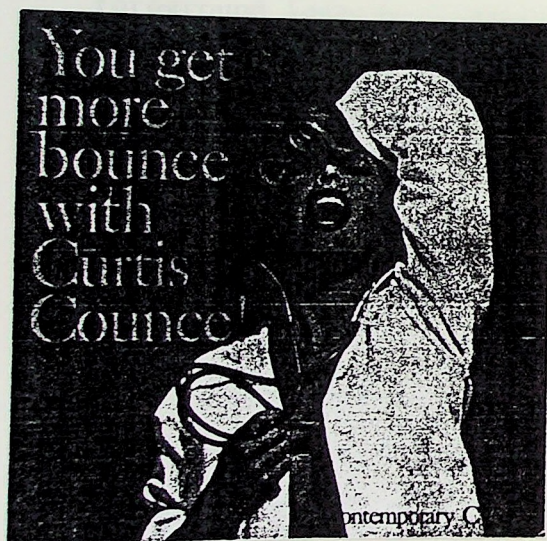


FIG. 35



FIG. 36

using William Claxtons photography; and bold, brightly coloured type by Tri Arts studio. The designs today look very dated compared to Reid Miles record covers. The type was a lot weaker in comparison, the main elements being shots of women with a very vogue like look, which did not really give the sleeves a jazzy feel to them. They actually looked more like photographs for magazine covers than music covers. Compare fig.33,34 to fig.35,36

Curtis Counce album reads " You get more bounce with Curtis Counce". The photograph is of a good looking woman half dressed in a doctors coat, with a stethoscope in her ears, listening to her heart. Another example shown is "The music of Bob Cooper" with Bob Cooper in the background, and a womans face in the foreground looking directly at the viewer, and her mouth forms the letter 'O' to make up the word 'Coop'. Although this idea was used in Victorian times , it is unusual, even today on sleeve designs or otherwise, to see part of the body or the face used as letter forms.

The repackaging of vintage recordings has provided opportunities for stunning examples of posthumous portraiture (fig.40). The gradual eroding of a dividing line between Jazz and other musical forms was accompanied by the merging of type considered appropriate for each type of music. But Frank Guanas design for the Bill Evans / Jim Hall album "Undercurrent" (fig. 37) could, at the time (1962) only have been used on a Jazz album. It was not for another three or four years that rock albums appeared with no type on the front, for example the "Rolling Stones No. 2"

album (fig. 39) and here no chances were taken with the identification of the performers. But by 1975 such an image as Wilson McLeans illustration to Return to Forever's "Romantic Warrior" (fig. 38) could have been used with equal effect and acceptance on albums by pop, jazz or rock artists. This merging of images was perhaps a result of the influences of the different musical styles blending together.



FIG. 37



FIG. 38



FIG. 39

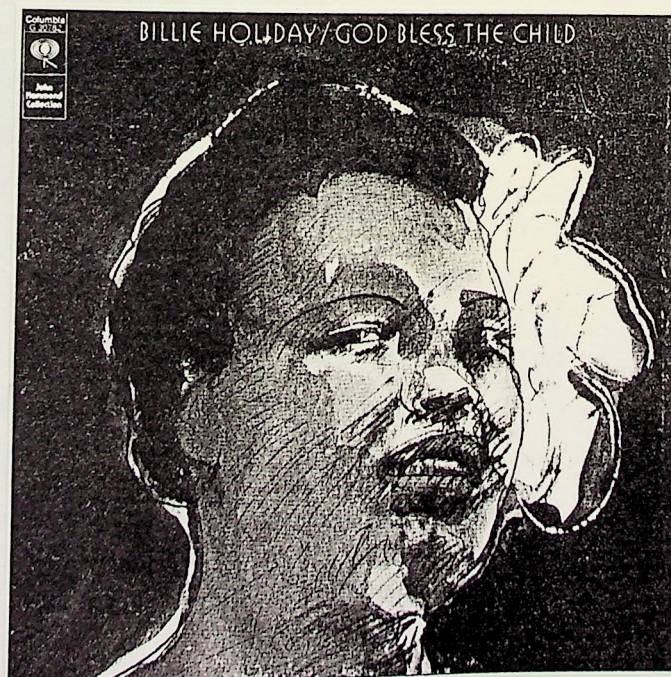


FIG. 40

CHAPTER FOUR - THE SIXTIES AND THE BEATLES

" Poets, novelists, painters, and performing artists all sought an art that was concerned with distilling personal experience, with immediacy, with process as the intuitive, spontaneous reflection of the unconscious. The watchword of American fifties art was 'process' - the doing of art for arts sake. It permeated every art form , from bebop and rhythm n' blues, to 'action' painting, 'stream of consciousness' writing, 'method' acting. To 'experience', to feel, intuitively, directly, with inhibition, became the art form. " (2)

The sixties have been defined as the "media" generation. Never before had the human eye been so assaulted and so regaled by such a variety of visual imagery - painted printed stencilled photographed, both moving and still. Only in the sixties did the power and effect of modern mass communications, through publication, films, television, advertising, radio and popular music, become generally apparent. Western society was persuaded both frontally, and subliminally, of a whole new set of signs, symbols, emblems and metaphors. And the generation gap which opened in the fifties now became a chasm. America was divided between those who had grown up with traditional, pre-war basically Edwardian values and those who had grown up under the baleful influence of the new media.

In 'Swinging London', the worlds of fashion advertising, fine art, and popular music became inextricably involved with each other. An elite formed of photographers, models, designers, film makers, artists, and performers, and they collectively became arbiters of taste.

All this making of myth and manners could hardly escape the attention of artists, particularly as one of the key artistic issues just prior to the sixties was 'What happened after Abstract Expressionism?'. What happened after abstract expressionism, among other things was Pop Art, an art which latched directly onto the media explosion. Pop Art was at this time bringing about a situation of feedback between the "fine" arts and everyday visual ephemera which was exhilarating for artists, critics and public alike.

The highest degree of involvement of a recognised "fine " artist in rock music was the role played by Andy Warhol in the career of the Velvet Underground as mentor, stage manager, artistic director, and sleeve designer (fig. 41) But the most familiar examples of "fine" artists excursions into sleeve design can be seen on the Beatles album covers.

From the mid-60's rock music gathered momentum and the record companies were obliged to make certain concessions to major artists. This power shift (while it had little real effect on the exploitive nature of the record business) is reflected in record sleeve design. The Beatles from Liverpool, were the musical successors of 1950's American Rock n' Roll. They produced a note of irreverent child like whimsy, that seemed to captivate every young person in the world. After the release of their first big hit, " She Loves You", in 1963, Beatlemania was everywhere. No artists had ever dominated the

market to such an incredible extent.

The first Beatles cover (1963 see fig. 42) was a rather off-hand product of the in-house packaging department. The four musicians are pictured full of glee on their day out at the EMI offices and beam down from the first landing of a concrete stairwell. The photograph has a certain infectious charm which is marred by the crudity of the lettering.

It was closely followed by "With the Beatles" and the Liverpool lads of the happy snap are almost unrecognisable (fig. 43) On this sleeve their self-consciously deadpan faces are presented in high contrast black and white, like photographs on the pages of contemporary issues of Vogue magazine. This sleeve photograph was in fact taken by the fashion photographer Robert Freeman, who became the groups official photographer on their first American tour. Freeman was also responsible for the 'Hard Days Night' cover, which has more than a hint of Warhols portrait technique (fig 44.) The starkness of these sleeves connects them with the early Jazz covers already discussed but to an even greater extent they play on the buyers recognition of, and identification with, a subtle matrix of visual signals, which were to become increasingly intricate and esoteric towards the end of the decade.

In June 1967 came the album that many still regard as the most influential in the history of pop music, "Sergeant Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band"(fig 46). A total of seven hundred hours

recording time and 40,000 went into the making of the album over nine months. When the album was at last recorded the Beatles turned their attention to the sleeve. They commissioned pop artist Peter Blake, who with the help of his wife Jann Haworth, discussed ideas and learned of the groups intention to parody a German marching band. This suggested to Blake a park setting with flower beds. The flower bed was then constructed in the studio and the flowers in the foreground spelt the Beatles, with lifesize cutouts of famous people in the background. The trendy , elaborate uniforms for the Beatles were the creation of well known London theatrical costumers, Bermans, with more than a little input from the Beatles themselves. They sifted through mountains of braid, medals, hats and trinkets to find the right image for their pseudomilitary fantasy. Finally the instruments the Beatles would hold on the cover were hired and collected by Mal Evans, who spent four hours polishing them in preparation for the photoshoot. The montage of famous faces and figures forming the backdrop for the band was assembled by Peter Blake and Jan Haworth. These faces included people such as Karl Marx, Shirley Temple, Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, W.C. Fields, Ghandi and many more. This task in itself took months of painstaking work.

The plain white paper sleeve that normally holds the actual record was replaced by a swirling red and wine coloured inner wrapper designed and executed by a trio of Dutch designers called "The Fool". Also inside the records sleeve a separate sheet of card was supplied featuring a picture of the fictional Sergeant

Pepper plus moustaches , badges, and stripes. Since all of the items could be cut out the sheet was an invitation to a do-it-yourself form of pop art. The record was released on June 1st 1967 to a flood of acclaim from just about anyone who owned a record player. It is still considered by many today as the Beatles crowning achievement. The design of their sleeve represents the total convergence of the media at that time: allusiveness, collage, and ellecticism are used to maximum effect on the record and its sleeve, and both were identified with the onset of 'psychedelia'.

The link between the Beatles and the pop artists which brought about the covers for both 'Sergeant Pepper' and the 'White Album' was provided by Robert Fraser, an art dealer, gallery owner and entrpreneur. He had introduced Blake and his wife to the group, feeling that their delight in popular imagery would produce a good album cover. The following year he showed the group a print by Richard Hamilton which was based on a collage of newspaper cuttings of the Rolling Stones' infamous drugs trial, in which Fraser himself had been involved.

Paul Mc Carthney approached Hamilton and asked him to do something similar for their next cover. As far as Hamilton was concerned the great attraction of the commission was the gigantic size of the potential audience (5 million) and the artistic freedom resulting from the power of the Beatles to override any objections from the record company. However Hamilton did not like the idea of himself adding to the number of garish sleeves in

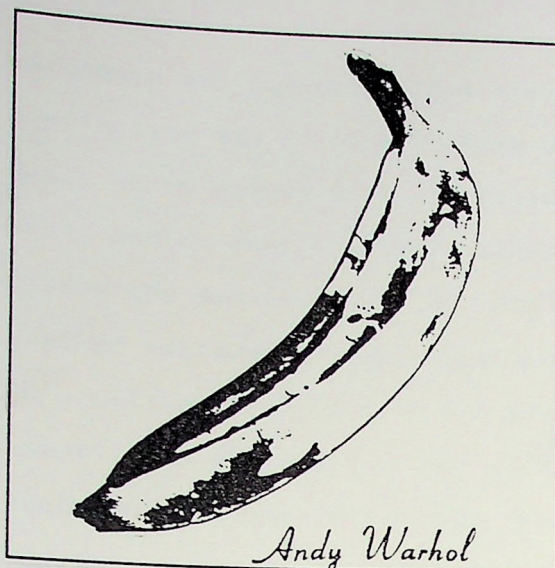


FIG. 41

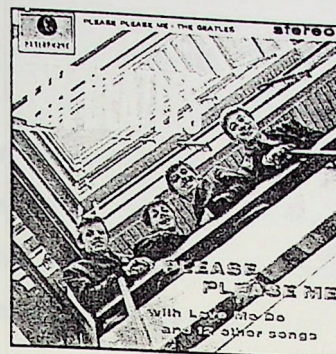


FIG. 42



FIG. 43



FIG. 44



FIG. 46

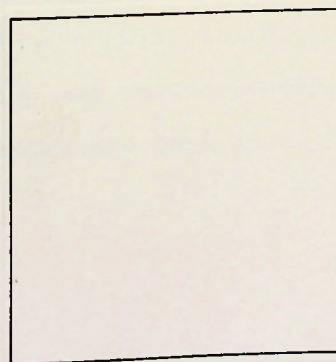


FIG. 45

existence and suggested that the best way of making the cover distinctive was to have nothing on it at all. He decided on a plain white sleeve with the title "The Beatles" embossed on the front and an edition number stamped in grey ink just below, giving the mass-produced art object the status of a national limited edition. Accompanying each album was a poster consisting of a collage of photos of the group (that doubled as a lyric sheet). The starkness of the 'White Album' (fig. 45) represented a complete change from the exuberance of "Sergeant Pepper".

Peter Blake was later to commission Richard Hamilton as one of the artists for the sleeve of "The Who" entitled "Face Dances" in 1981. This was an unusual synthesis of portrait painting and photography / mechanical reproduction. Peter Blake asked fifteen artists to paint portraits of the band from commissioned photographs. Pete Townshend's face for instance was depicted by Bill Jacklin, Tom Phillips, Colin Self and Richard Hamilton (fig. 47) Peter Blake's contribution was a naturalistic portrait of Kenny Jones. The final sixteen paintings executed in markedly different styles were reproduced chessboard fashion across the album cover. The name of the album is discreetly handwritten along the border. It is interesting to note that the members of 'The Who' were apparently dissatisfied with this record cover ; they felt their lack of unity as a group was inadvertently revealed by the cover design, which represents them as individuals and not as a band.

Many members of the English bands that emerged in the 1960's including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd, had art school connections. They were either ex-artstudents or they had friends who attended art school. They began to commission their friends and contemporaries to design their covers. An interest in rock music and its associated imagery, was likely to attract a young designer to work in the music industry, rather than say advertising. The reason for this strong link was perhaps as a result of the particular tension in art schools, between creativity and commerce and as a result pop music became the solution for many. Simultaneously, art directors in record companies were becoming more sensitive to the possibilities of the album cover medium. All this was part of a widespread change in visual awareness. As the musician and art critic George Melly wrote in 1970 ;

" The record sleeve is at present the natural home of a visual pop style " (3)

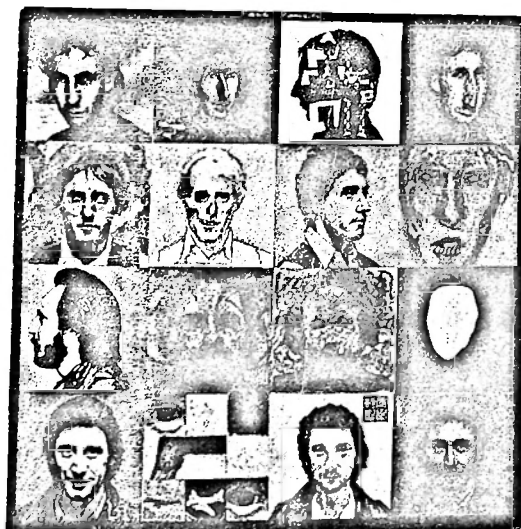


FIG. 47

CHAPTER FIVE - THE PSYCHEDELIC ERA

One dazzling haven sought by the way-out young rebels of the '60s was immersion in some sort of psychedelic experience. According to the " Random House Dictionary ", psychedelic meant " intensely pleasurable perception of the senses ". In the words of the rebels themselves, psychedelic was " something beautiful man, like it blows your mind ". This mind blowing adventure could be triggered by music, sexuality, drugs, fool-the-eye art, or even extended meditation into the esoteric reaches of astrology or Hindu mysticism. It could also be triggered by a wild jumble of multimedia distortions hurled at the senses of patrons at psychedelic rock palaces (fig. 48) An anti-establishment, rebellious stance among the young people who made and listened to music escalated into a celebration of youth. Musicians were realising the potential of electronic music and enhancing the hypnotic rythms of rock n' roll.

By 1967 the term " psychedelic " was being applied to everything from second-hand clothing to the amplified sitar, but there is no doubt that it was specifically associated with the hallucinogenic drugs and the life-style that had been evolving in San Fransico since 1965. Yet oddly enough the earliest suggestion on the psychedelic style on an album had been the Beatles 1966 'Rubber Soul' album (fig. 49). Not only was the bands photographic image given a hallucinatory aspect by the use of a wide angle lens, but the distorted lettering on the



FIG. 48

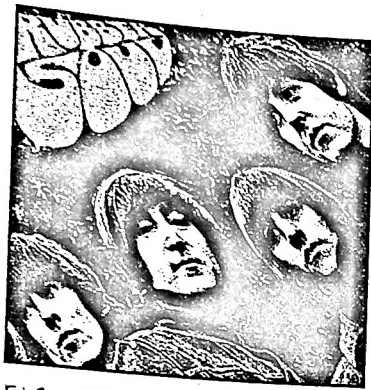


FIG. 49

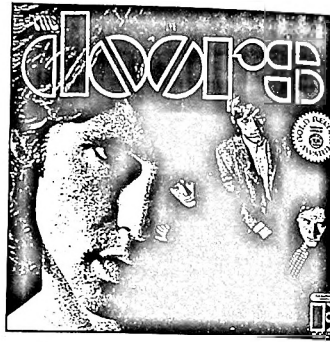


FIG. 50



FIG. 51

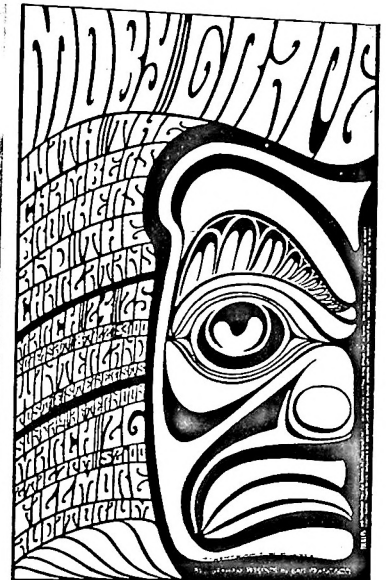


FIG. 52

cover, soon to become ubiquitous made its first appearance here. However from 1966 onwards, a reciprocal influence seems to have developed between designers in America and in London. While the day-glo colours and the use of collage incorporated with swirling forms characteristic of San Francisco poster art was an influence on Martin Sharp's cover for Creams "Disrael Gears"(fig. 51) the first Doors album(fig 50) imitated the style of David Baileys moody shot on "Rolling Stones No.2" (fig. 39).

"Organic Modern" was the phrase used in 1965-6 by some San Francisco poster artists to describe the effect they were aiming for. (fig. 52) On both sides of the Atlantic, the convoluted forms and the stylish lettering of Art Noveau had provided inspiration. Legibility and information were lost and the use of bright complimentary colours increased the pulsating rythmic effect. The psychedelic poster and record sleeve were, literally, objects of contemplation. Listening to records was in the late '60s a matter of 'getting into it'; you put the record on the turntable, you got high, and probably looked at the cover while listening.. The complex and ambiguous images were food for fantasies.

'Hapshash and the Coloured Coat', a design company consisting of artists Michael English and Nigel Waymouth, were responsible for some of the best English posters of this era, and they also performed on a record bearing the the name of their design group. (fig. 53) The cover of this record is certainly the most

successful of the British psychedelic sleeves. The direct influence of oriental mysticism was obvious in many of these sleeves.

Borrowing from the surrealism of Magritte , Ernst and Dali, provided another line of development. A generation that was committed to undermining accepted notions of reality rejoiced in disturbing contradictions embodied in a highly illusionistic style. Bob Cato's cover for 'Moby Grape ' was an early example, combining collage and gouache (fig. 54).

In the late '60s , photography began once again to be important, having been eclipsed for a while by illustration. The essentially informative nature of the medium became more oblique, in time with current trends. the use of infra-red film or colour negatives was common, for example Frank Zappas 'Hot Rats' (fig. 55) Aynsley Dunbar Retaliations ' Dr Dunbars Prescription' (fig. 56). The transposition of colour related to the colouristic waywardness of 'psychedelic' graphics. The "psychedelic movement" produced comparatively little work of any lasting quality , but proved to be catalytic. Trends in album cover designs since the late 60's are almost without exception either reactions against or continuation of themes that have been identified with the psychedelic style. The visual excesses of psychedelia gave way to a more controlled typographical style. In graphics also a more geometric approach largely replaced the obsession with organic forms. Art deco succeeded Art Nouveau as a major influence in popular illustration.

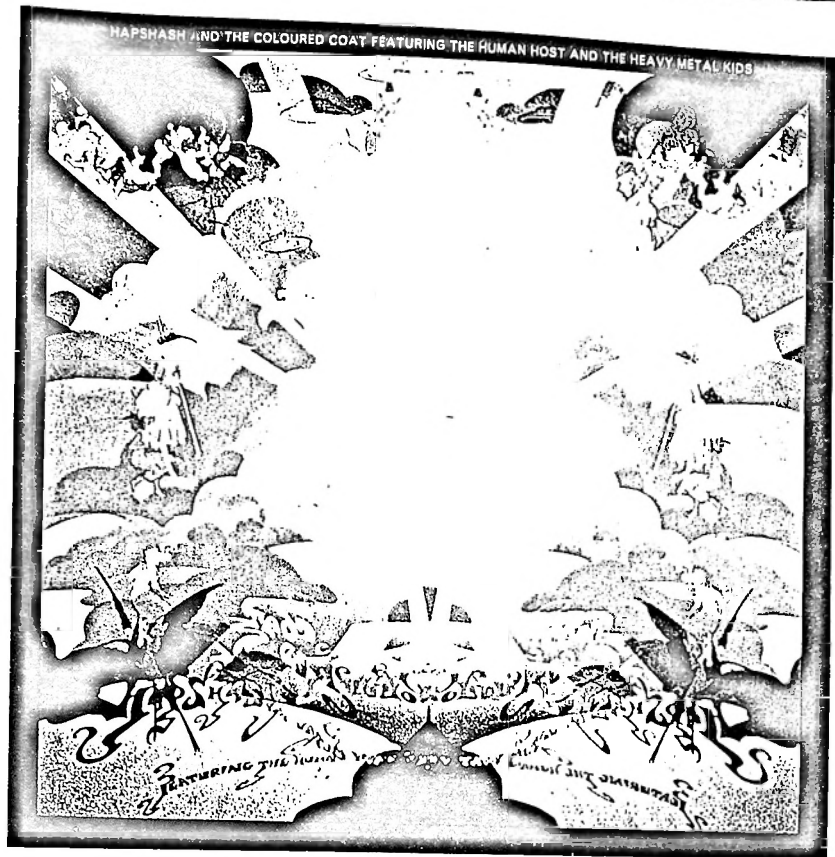


FIG. 53

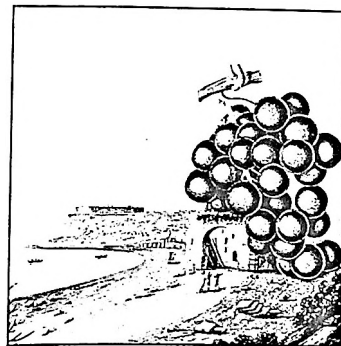


FIG. 54

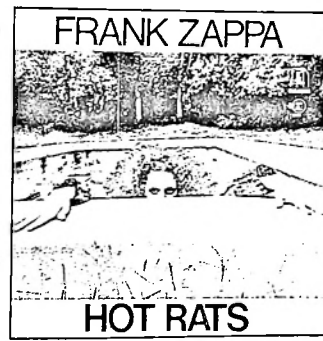


FIG. 55



FIG. 56

Hipgnosis

Hipgnosis was a design company which has produced some disturbing and unforgettable images and although no longer in existence still makes its presence felt through innumerable covers which have taken inspiration from their work. It consisted of Aubrey Powell, Storm Thorgerson and Peter Christopherson. Powell and Thorgerson started designing sleeves in 1968 when they were still at film school. After a year of working 'after hours' in the RCA photography department they worked in Powell's flat, eventually getting a studio in Denmark street, London in 1970.

Christopherson joined the group straight after leaving the State University of New York in 1974.

Hipgnosis first sleeve was for Pink Floyd, with whom Powell and Thorgerson were friends. After working for Pink Floyd, they were given sleeve commissions by EMI for 'Quatermass', 'Toe F at' and 'Panama Jug Band', Floyd's agency got them commissions from 'Free' and 'Aynsly Dunbar' and slowly they built up their reputation. Their work is very much influenced by the pschedelic period but the more surrealistic influences of Salvador Dali are predominant. One of their preoccupations was with the human body. (see fig. 57) which are particularly about detail and not about full figures. Montrose's 'Jump on it' is an attempt at turning a very real and sensual part of the body into an abstract geometrical shape by going in close and posing the girl in an

exact way (see fig. 58) Toe Fat uses anatomical detail in a montage designed primarily to shock the viewer (fig. 59). The breast of Cochise simulates a landscape, non-terrestrial perhaps, whilst 'Savage Eye' is on the one hand simply impactful, and on the other hand a kind of dialogue. The eye belongs to someone who is telling you to mind your own business, or alternatively, is giving you a knowful and playful come-on. (fig. 60, 61)

Thorgerson said ;

" Our cover designs usually refer quite specifically to the records and we make a point of listening to the music in most cases, and reading the lyrics if there are any. 'Toe Fat' however was designed from an idea about tele-communications. In the distant future the evolution of psychic powers will render normal sense organs redundant. Hence they're absent. We see a head of contourless skin which houses the psychic transmitters and receivers. When we used a photo of an actual toe in the artwork, the result was so initially strong that even for a heavy rock outfit it felt inappropriate. Why the client ever accepted it is beyond us, but it is supposed to be grotesque. Cochise wanted a straightforward lyrical picture but this lunar bodyscape felt more interesting by far, than a real slice of pretty countryside. 'Pretty Things', 'Savage Eye' and Alan Bowns 'Stretching Out' are designs stimulated by the album titles. The bright red crotch for Montrose (fig.) was originally completed for another client who, it seemed to me suffered from terrible sexual repressions. At the end he rejected it in a fit of pique. 'Montrose' had already decided on their title 'Jump On It' and were keen to have the design. They weren't so keen when we submitted a disclaimer with the artwork - a note to the effect that whilst appreciating the relevance of this title we lamented its complete lack of elegance ".

" At Hipgnosis we go through a series of steps to put a cover together. It isn't always the same sequence, but this outline gives an outline of what is involved. Some parts of this process are the same for most other designers.

Basically we secure our work in two ways. One way is to take our portfolio around to the art departments of record companies and show it to the art director. The other way we get work, which is much nicer is when they ring us. It can be the artists themselves who contact us, their manager or their record company, and sometimes its a combination of all three Nine times out of

ten we listen to the music on the record in question, or to music from previous albums. The mood of the music tends to influence us most. Often between the connections between our sources and the brief we arrive at are tenuous and private but the ideas are usually exclusive to that record, and even if we are reworking an old idea, or meshing a couple of different ones, they are altered and given new touches to relate them to the job in hand. The brief is also fundamental in that if its wrong the end result can be inappropriate, however good it may be. The brief may be either too tight or too loose ; in either of these instances we go back for clarification. " (3)

The unexpected juxtapositions and distortions of scale derived from surrealism continue to appear both in photographic collages and in illustration and have become almost as predictable a formula as the standardised portraits of the 1950's, with some exceptions such as Hipgnosis. The themes of mysticism fantasy and science fiction have been exhaustively explored and are even parodied on Frank Zappa's 'One Size Fits All' of 1975 (fig 70)

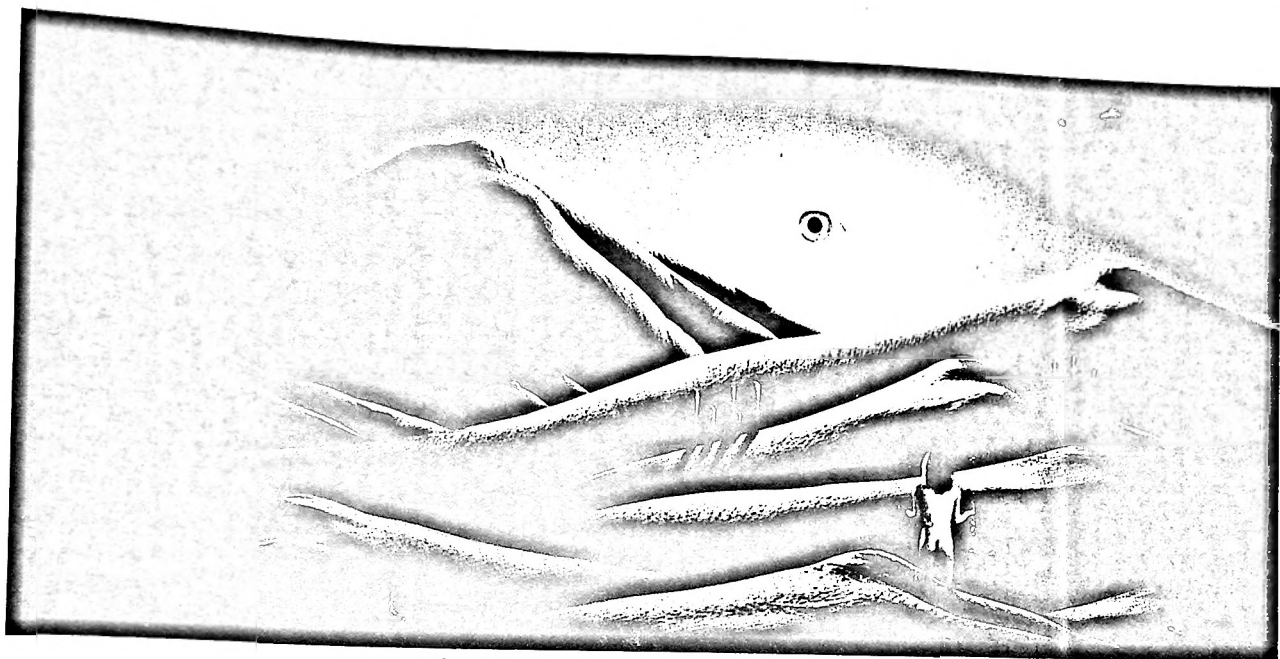


FIG. 57

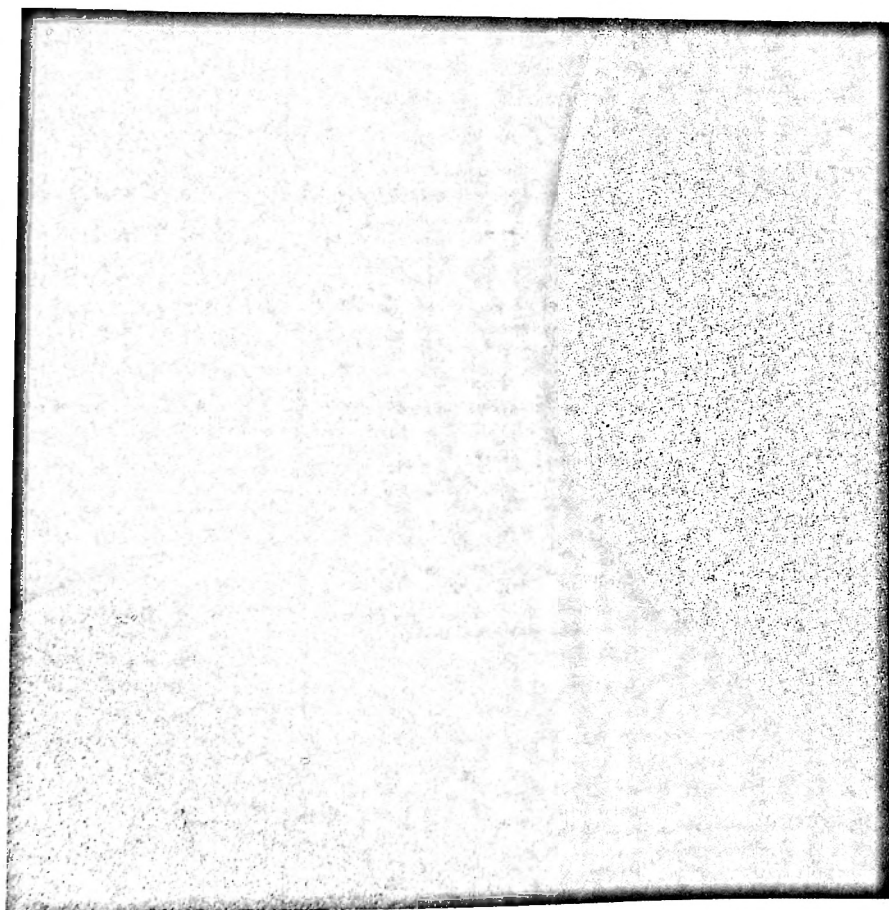


FIG. 58

TOE FAT

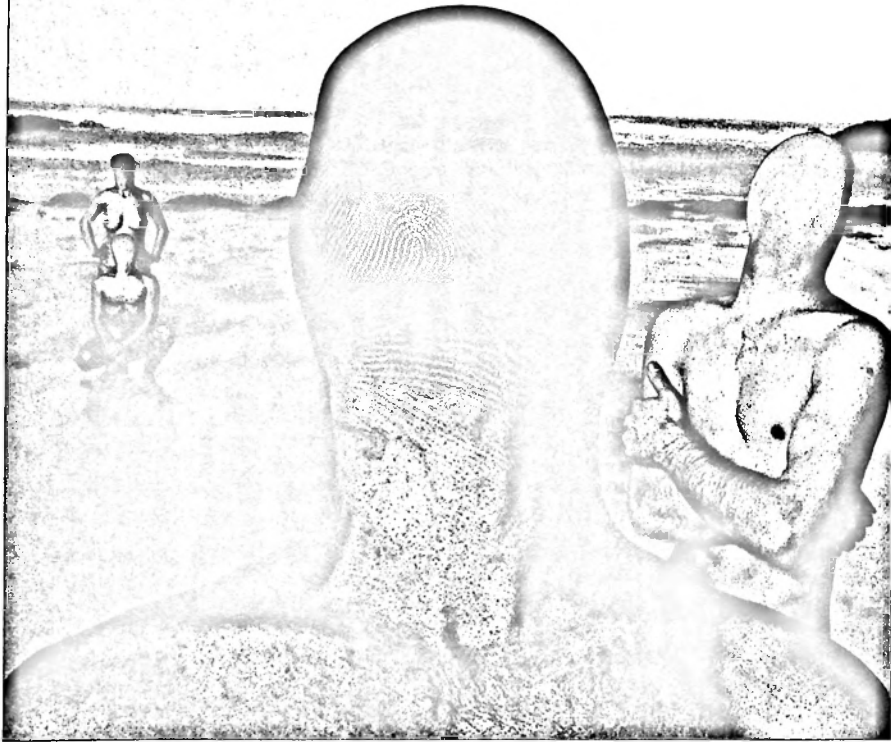


FIG. 59

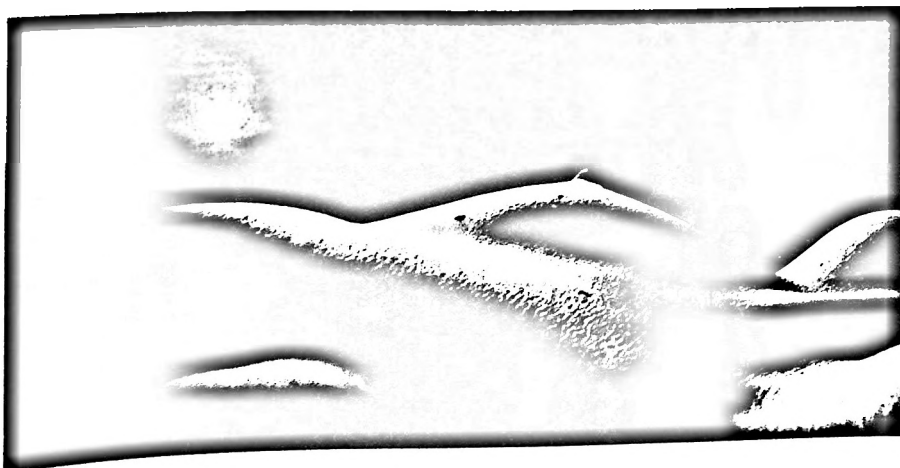


FIG. 60

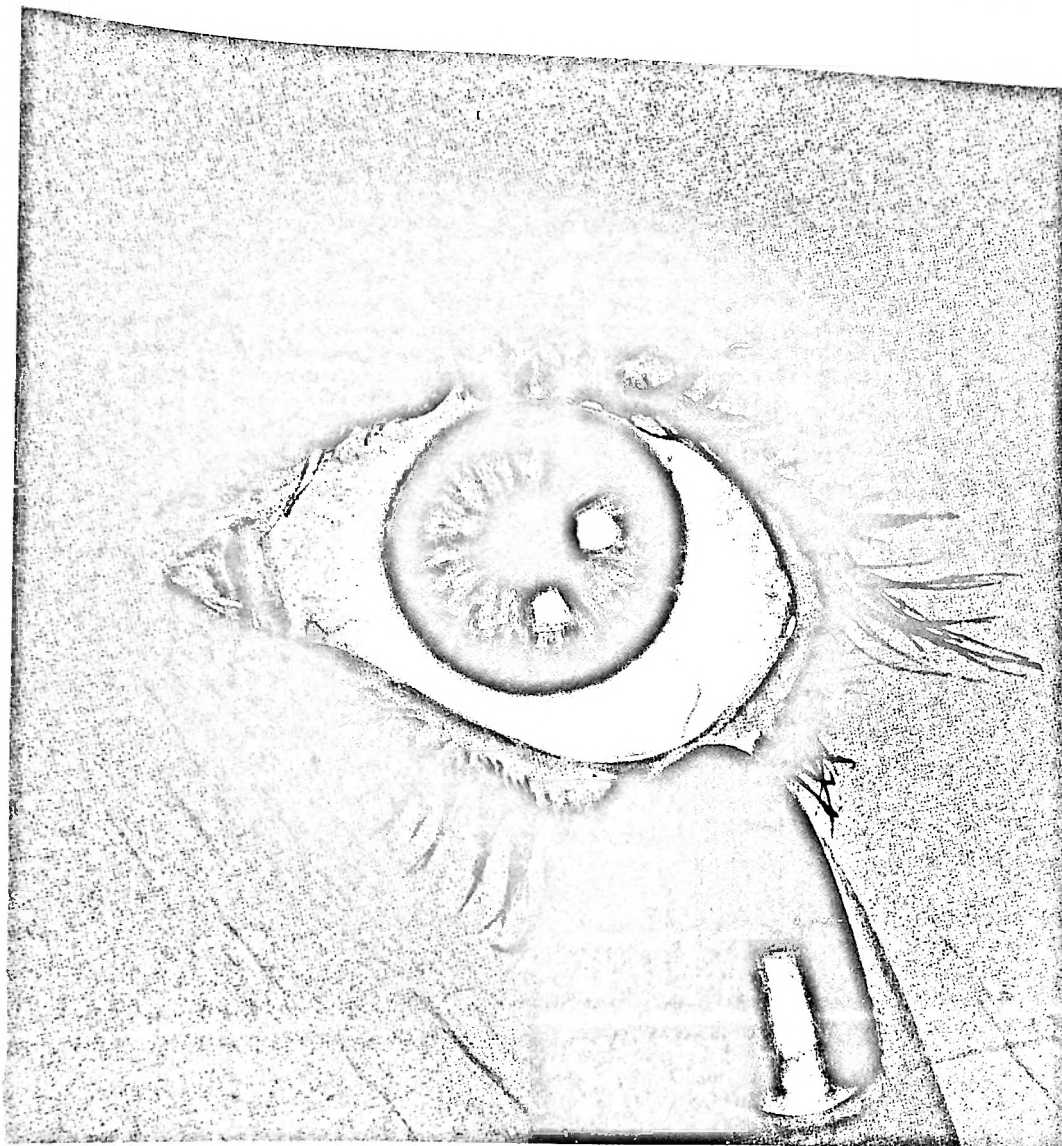


FIG. 61

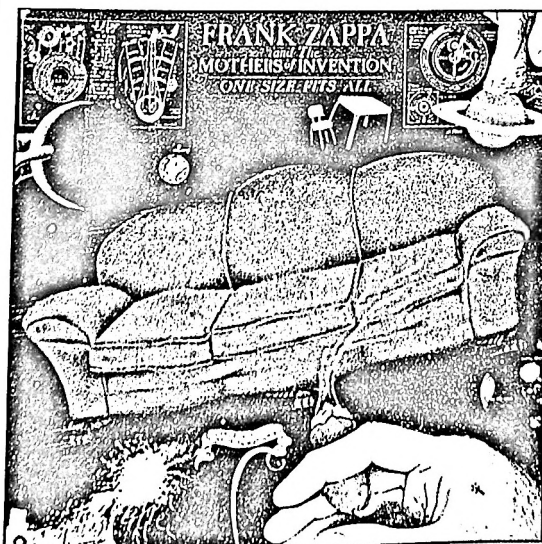


FIG. 70

CHAPTER 6 - THE PUNK MOVEMENT

By the mid 1970's it had become difficult to distinguish between nostalgia, glamour, and soft pornography on album sleeves. In old movies and consumer ads an extra inch of thigh or an airbrush gloss on an ice-cream cone was enough to impart a sensual fusion. This potential was taken over and developed with some skill by record cover design's. The rosy-cheeked waitress on the cover of the soundtrack to " American Graffiti " couldn't make it more clear, she is offering it to you on a plate. The first Roxy Music album (1972,fig 71, 72) bears the image of a woman, undeniably beautiful, immaculately groomed. the make-up and props derive from '40s movies with the important addition of the gold record - but these trappings are belied by her contrived pose and especially by a smile that combines a salacious invitation with defiant aggression. The implication was no longer that if you were a star (if you were a man) you could have women like these (though if you were a 'super' star you could) but that as a star you became like this - a rich haughty unobtainable object of desire.

Three years later Punk music arrived . America seemed to avoid the dubious distinction of having a punk revolution but it flourished in England. The punk movement was spontaneous and short lived. It originated in December 1975, and grew to its peak in the Summer of 1977. By January 1978 it was last years fashion.



FIG. 71

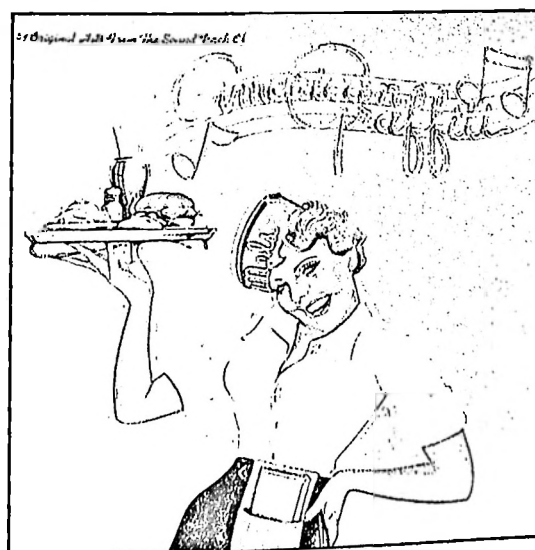


FIG. 72

The punk movement may be considered an attitude of the young. There were various ideas which the bands involved presented. They were against the work ethic and believed that goods, tourism, and mass-media turned people into passive consumers. The Sex Pistols poured scorn on holidays in the sun and fast food products. They tried to encourage the young to become producers of culture rather than consumers of it. Punk rock was so basic anyone could do it ; it was a do-it-yourself music . Live music had now become available to the young people who couldn't afford to see huge rock bands like Pink Floyd and th Rolling Stones. Punk music was played in smokey nightclubs and dancehalls and related to their audience well so they were not, initially, commercially orientated.

The image of both the musicians and their fans was as chaotic as the music they created. They wore bright colours, ripped clothing, dyed their hair fluorescent pinks etc. They wore safety pins, razor blades and chains, strategically placed through ears, noses and nipples. This movement did not last very long, but it was music that emanated from the young rather than what the record producer wanted. But the freshness and genuine anger of the music was absorbed and channelled by the established record companies. As a result it opened the door for many new bands. It increased the number of small independent labels. Many more bands had the nerve to get up and do it.

At the same time as the punk music explosion of the mid to late seventies, there appeared a barrage of bright colours, torn -

lettering 'blackmail style' and a general anti- design approach. It was provocative and aggressive, the type was scattered across the record sleeve in a disorganised and anarchic fashion.

The Sex Pistols were punk's most notorious manifestation and their sleeve design (fig. 73) has many of the typical punk elements. It was designed by Jamie Reid ,the Sex Pistols designer at the time and produced on the 'Virgin' record label. The title contains the word 'bollocks' which inevitably was bound to upset people and provoke a reaction. The dayglo colours grabbed attention and the lettering was intentionally shoddy (as if cut from newspaper) and very blatant. It was expensive to print - two colours and black, all line work. There were no credits on the cover, no band members names, just a list of songs. A fittingly hypocritical piece of self promotion.

This typographical approach created shock waves that reached and eventually influenced traditional type users of the time. Outrage was the most common reaction ,but that, of course, was its object. Cheaply produced magazines and 'fanzines' sacrificed clarity and legibility for the overall feel of the rebellion. This precisely reflected the punk music that it derived from. Form was more important than content.

Some bands like the Clash used simple straightforward pictures of themselves, roughly designed and accompanied by stark lettering. (fig. 74) Other bands used harsh black and white photographs

NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS

HERE'S THE

SEX PISTOLS

FIG. 73



FIG. 74

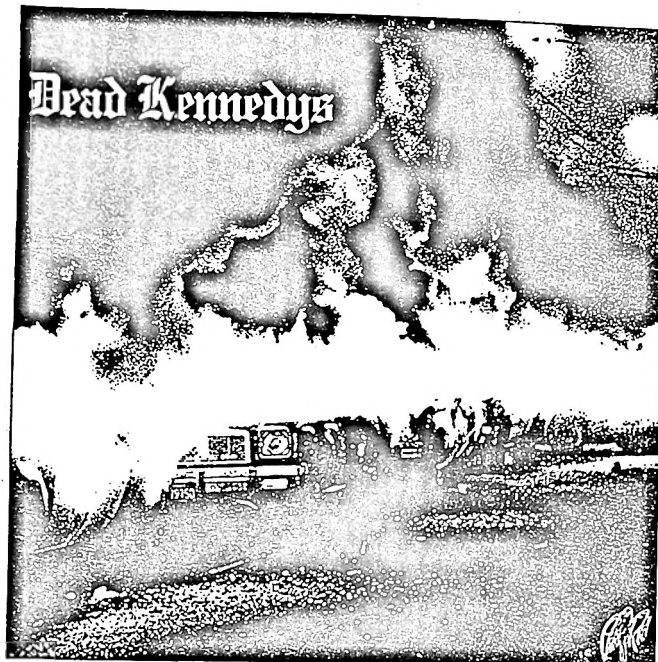



FIG. 75



FIG. 76

7



NO
+ M
+ U

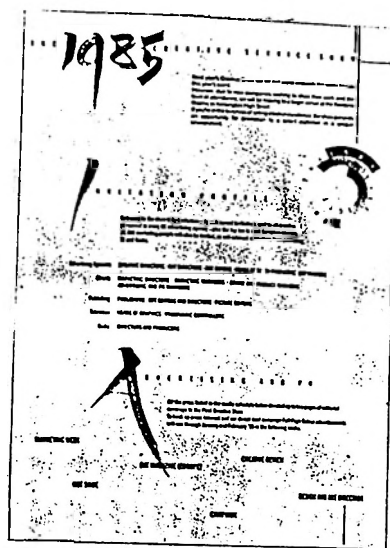


FIG. 78



FIG. 79

and images of debatable gruesomeness and so-called sick humour. (fig 75,76).

Recovering from its state of shock, the design business began to see possibilities of incorporating typography into the system of commercial design. The obvious main use of this design trend was on record covers, but this soon extended to magazines, programmes and all the usual musical ephemera. The next stage was the adoption of what might be called 'cleaned up punk' by the advertising designers. Blocks of colour with type across them. sans serif faces and a disregard for grids epitomized the current state of the art and is still widely used today.

Punk music worked with new unrefined musical forms and stressed that the presentation was more important than content. The same has applied to punk typography. There has been no type design associated with the movement, existing typefaces have been used rather than specifically designed ones as in the psychedelic period.

Considering that the phenomenon of punk typography has only been in existence for a few years it has a notable effect on typography today. Punk typography has now matured into more controlled uses. (fig.77-79) but magazines such as Face and I-D clearly show their typographical origins. Sans serif faces, particularly italics, can be seen increasingly in the non punk magazines sector and this would seem to be the extent of the punk type legacy so far in traditional publishing areas.

CHAPTER 7 THE EIGHTIES

FROM the dwindling ranks of Punk emerged a variety of different sounds and styles loosely called 'New Wave', consisting of bands called the 'Buzzcocks', 'Siouxsie and the Banshees', 'Elvis Costello' and later on, 'Two Tone' bands such as the 'Specials' and 'Madness'. The sleeve style of the late '70s / early '80s changed along with the music, clothes, and presentation of the bands image. There was a mixture of old fifties styles, bright garish colours, lines and bars from the 30's, and semi-technical graphics of the computer age. (fig 80-83). These covers were designed with more thought and were not as simplistic as the first punk records. The changes that were effected, whatever they were, can be seen as starting here to continue and diversify right up to the present day. The art of the music industry has always been eclectic. It has plundered the advertising and fine art media as enthusiastically as they in turn have absorbed and utilised images and techniques drawn from record sleeve designs. These are the covers designed by 'Fine Artists' such as Peter Blake's cover for the Beatles 'Sergeant Pepper' and Richard Hamiltons 'White Album' mentioned earlier. Then there are the cover designs which have incorporated the work of painters such as the New Order sleeve, designed by Peter Saville called 'Power Consumption and Lies'. For this cover Peter Saville, who was 'Factory Records' original designer, uses a painting by a nineteenth century French painter Henri Fantin-Latour called 'Roses'. (fig 84) Unusually this cover contained no lettering to indicate the title or the name of the rock group. Recognition of the record's origins and identity therefore, depended on a

FIG. 80

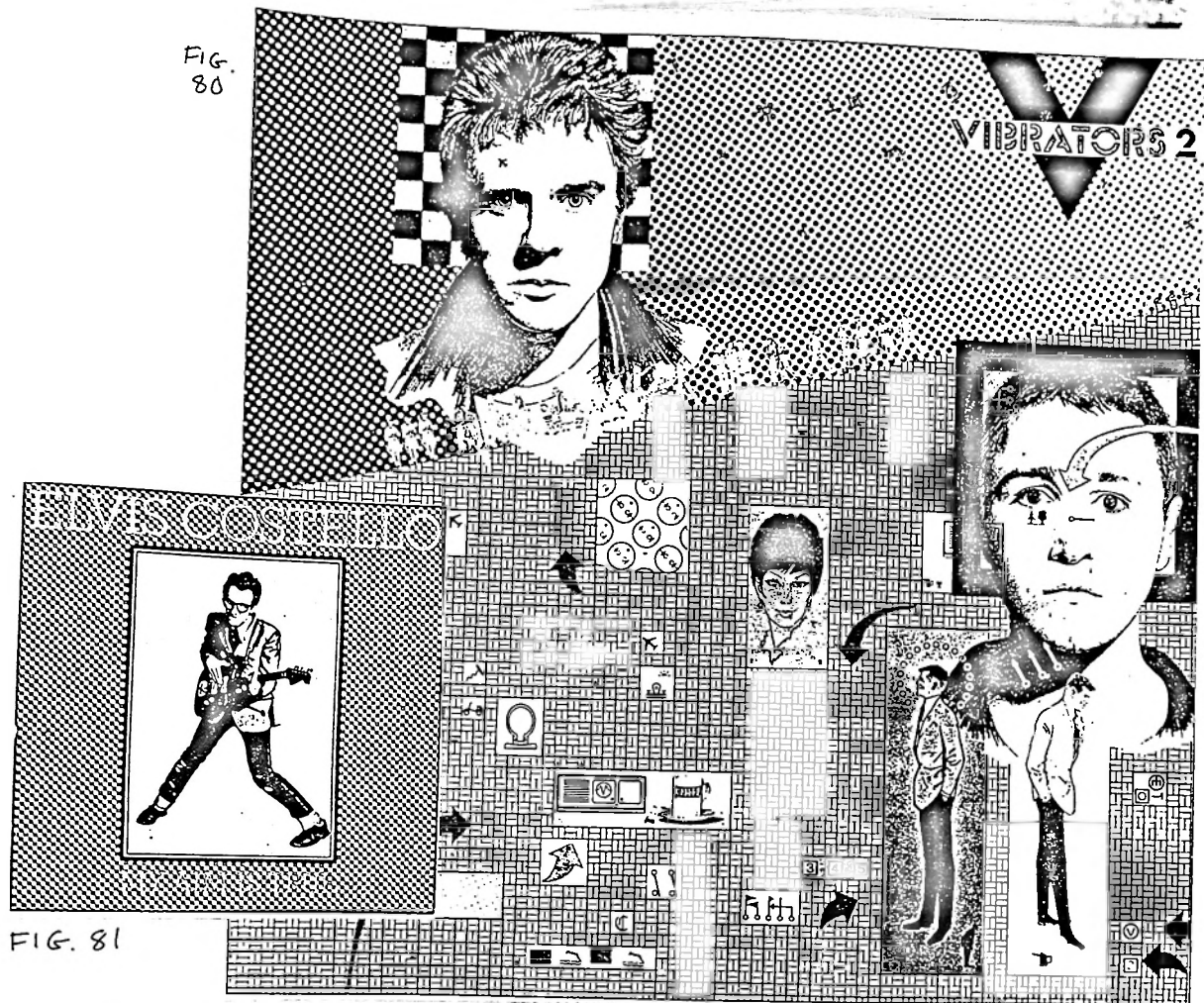


FIG. 81

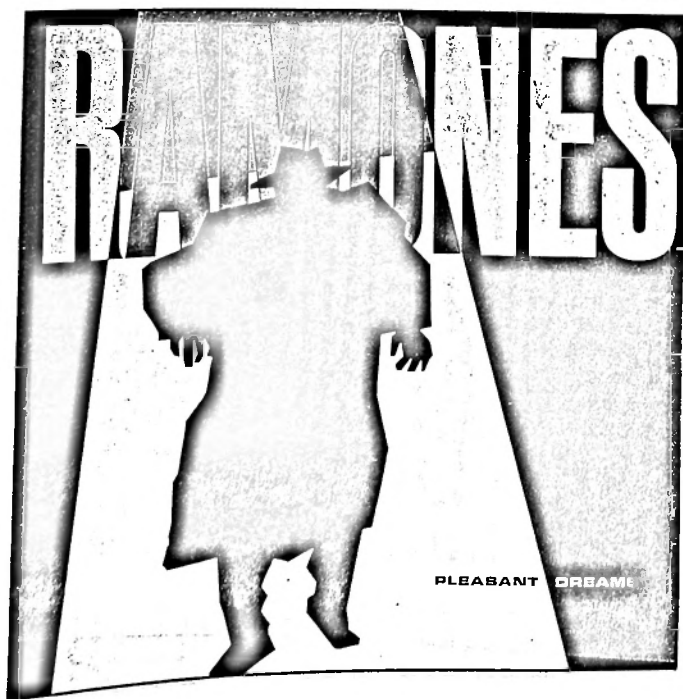


FIG. 83

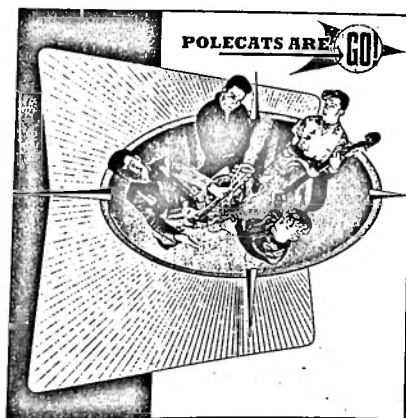


FIG. 82

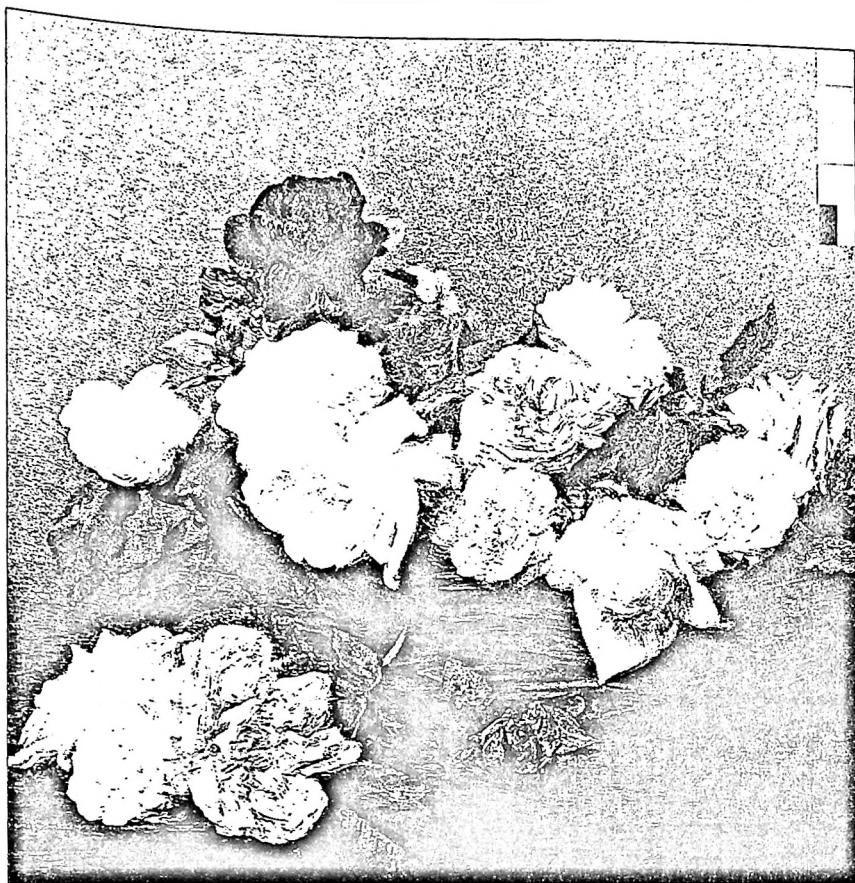


FIG. 84

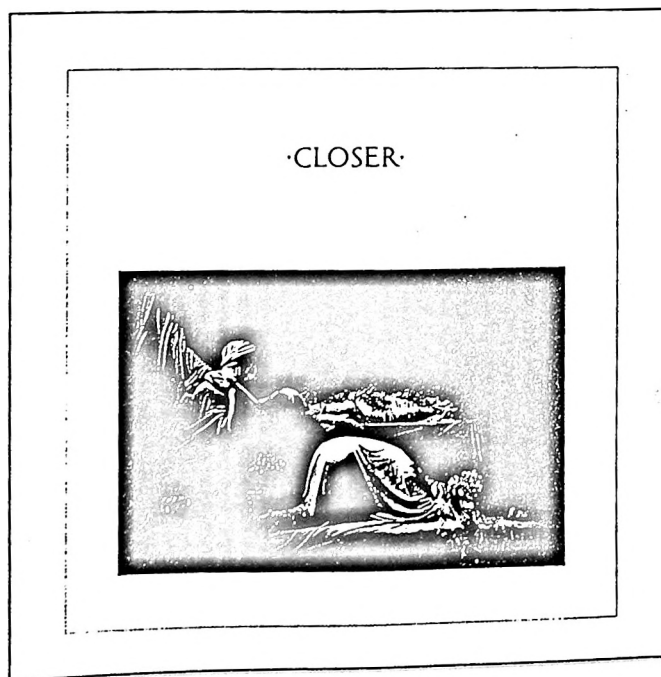
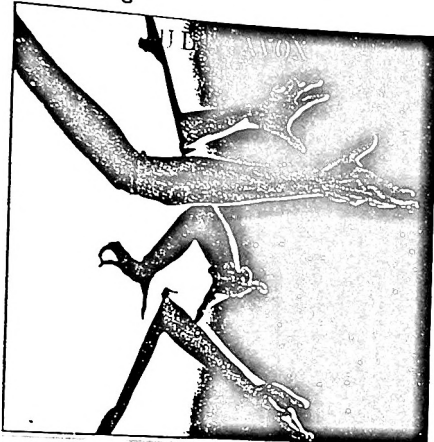


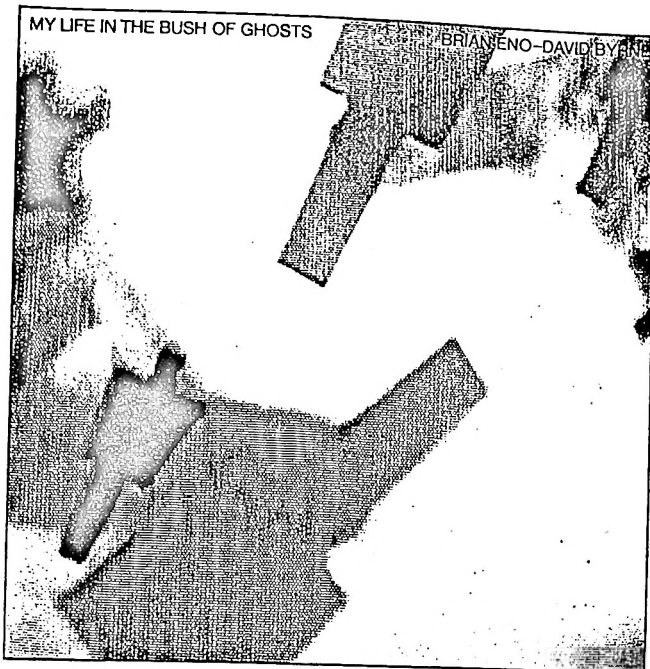
FIG. 85

FIG. 86



MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS

BRIAN ENO-DAVID BYRNE



FINGERPRINTZ

FIG. 7



"DISTINGUISHING MARKS"

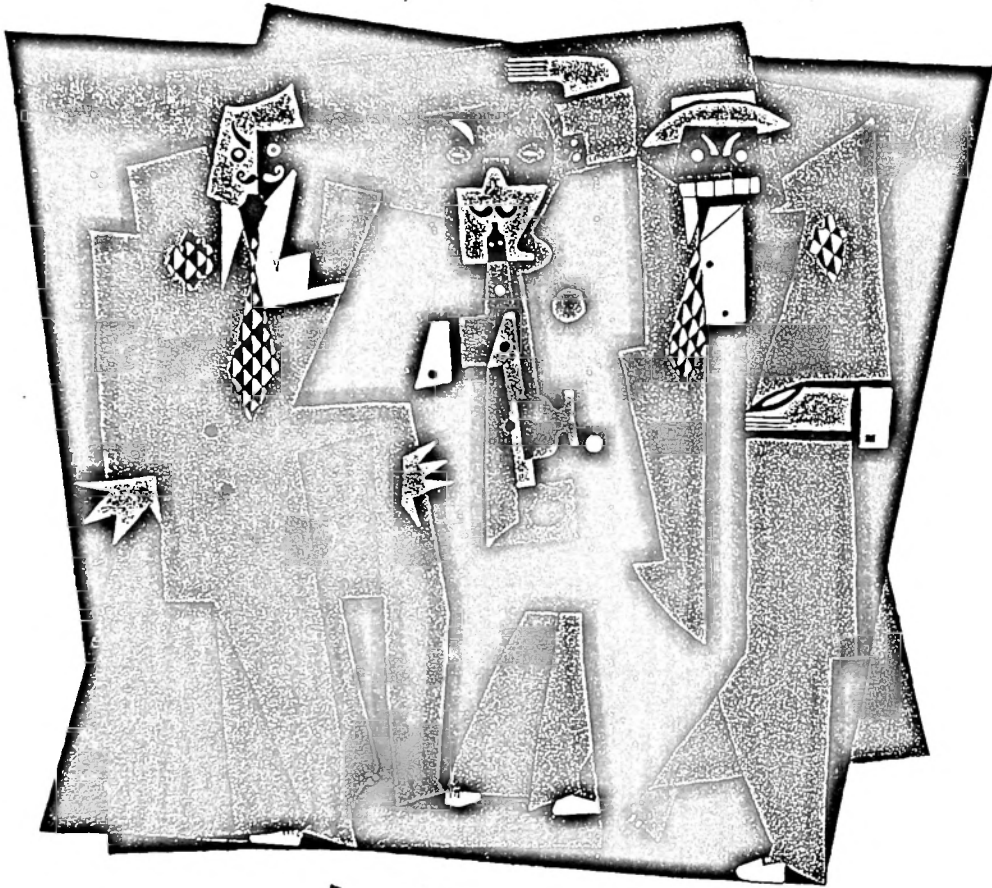
FIG. 88

knowledge of the subtle and austere packaging style developed by Peter Saville. At first glance, Savilles design is a straightforward reproduction of an existing oil-painting. However the oblong shape of the stilllife has been carefully cropped to suit the square format of the album. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure a high quality print, and a colour code along the right hand edge adds an element of abstract art. There is also the act of selection itself ; Fantin Latour seems to be an obscure choice, and it is hard to understand the link between the visual and the title of the album. But the sleeve certainly calls the attention of the thousands to the existence of his work and also demonstrates that almost any work of art from the past can become part of a corporate image.

Saville's work is an example of the early eighties movement towards classicism and simplicity. This was achieved by a conscious use of space, empty borders, plain but elegant type, either by itself or in conjunction with simple photographs, possibly pretentious on occasions but invariably tasteful (fig. 85 - 88).

In terms of record imagery today, Peter Saville is not alone in his borrowings from fine art. In fact, there are numerous examples. Musicians and musical instruments were popular subjects as far as Picasso was concerned, so it is not really surprising that his work increasingly serves as a reference point for contemporary graphic design.

— Blue Rango & La Turk —



ME AND MR. SANCHEZ

FIG. 89

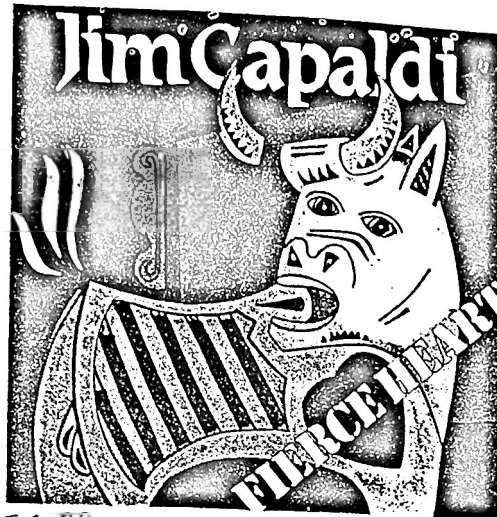


FIG. 90

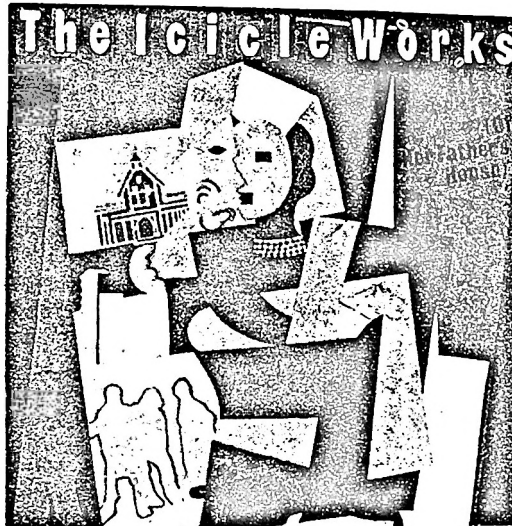


FIG. 91

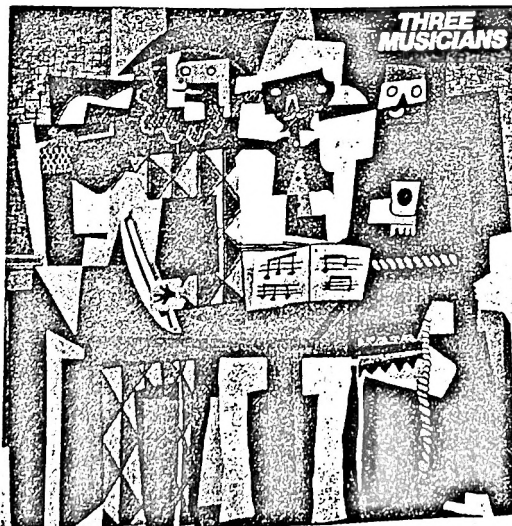


FIG. 92

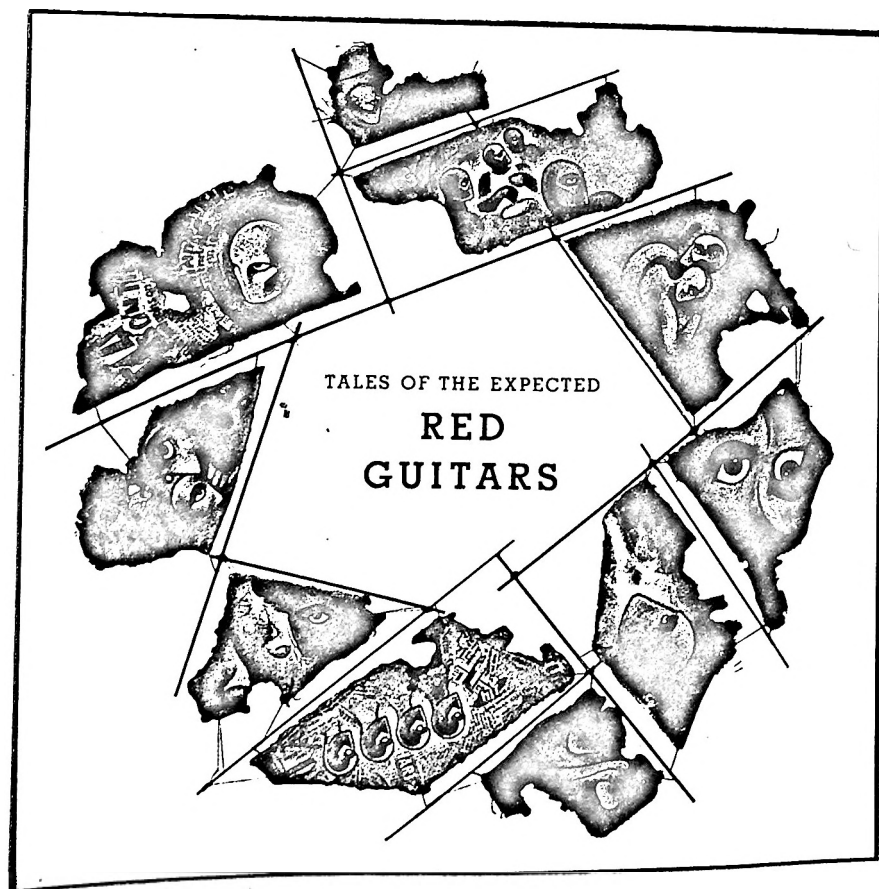


FIG. 93

Picasso's painting 'Three Musicians' appears on the cover of a 1972 album by a two calling themselves 'The Three Musicians'. The same highly decorative late cubist work was also reinterpreted by designer Chris Sullivan for the cover of Blue Rondo's 1981 record 'Me and my Sanchez'. The bull from Picasso's 'Guernica' (1937) is incorporated into a new design by Rocking Russian (Design) for the cover of Jim Cappaldi's 1983 album 'Fierce Heart'. Also the top half of Picasso's 'Italian Women' (1917) has appeared on the cover of the 'Icicle Works' 1985 album called 'All the Daughters' with minor changes by the designer Jacuzzi (fig. 89 - 92). These examples illustrate the different ways in which historical material has been employed, for record cover design today. Many more designs have merely derived ideas and approaches from fine art movements and artists used them as a starting point to produce images which, while being derivative, are quite different in character and quality from the source material. For example Keith Breezon designed Red Guitars 'Tales of the Expected'. The album title may promise that the story lines of the groups songs are 'expected' but the visual treatment certainly isn't. The style borrows heavily from the Dadist painters, and the cover illustration would not look out of place in a retrospective of 1930's German paintings or collages. Simple typography pushes the viewers attention outward to the half-formed images swirling around the visual centre - the groups name. The forced perspective makes the arrangement canted, as if orbiting in a plane slanted 45 degrees away from the viewer. The small renderings of faces and eyes invite closer inspection. (fig. 93)

In the early eighties there has been a growing awareness of, and an enthusiasm for corporate identity. Every facet of the original sleeve was to be more carefully corelated with general merchandising. In addition, the sleeve itself was to include every every element including logo's, catalogue members or other necessary minutiae in the overall design. Manchester art student Malcolm Garret (who began his work with the 'Buzzcocks') pioneered an approach whereby each and every item produced by an artist for the promotion of a band and their music i.e. a record sleeve, a T-shirt, a badge, would be clearly identifiable as part of an overall design scheme. Garret was one of a group of English artists to emerge after Punk. He worked for Radar Records before setting up his own agency 'Assorted Images'. Garret, Kasper de Graff and the other six partners of Assorted Images always regard themselves as working for the band, interpreting its needs visually as the band does musically. They are responsible for the sleeve designs of many bands of the eighties including 'Duran Duran', 'Culture Club', 'Simple Minds' and the new 'Yes' (see figs. 94 - 97)

Garret was asked what kind of link existed between the visual impression created by the designer working for the band and the music. He said ;

" But it is not just music in reality. The fans are also, for example, interested in what the musicians look like - and thats not just a question of photography. Its a question of presentation of photography. So just a simple David Levine photograph of 'Boy George' will say one thing, but it does not say as much about Georges character as David Levine's photograph

of Boy George in the context of a 'Culture Club' graphic presentation. And from the graphics you get some overspill back into Georges clothes. The whole design process is a constant feeding backwards and forwards of themes and ideas ; so its very difficult to say, ah, that's what happens Because its just a constant process." (5)

Does he see the album cover as a crucial vechicle for artistic expression ?

" It is 'the' vechicle because it gets into the living room, as opposed to some art sanctum. It's on the streets , it's in the shops, it's in the home, and it stays around for a very long time. The most important aspect of it is the psychological one. the 12 inch square is just right when you hold it at arms length ; it's absolutely perfect viewing space, in feel sahpe and size " (6)

An album well worth mentioning is XTC's 'GO2' album (Virgin 1978) designed by the company 'Hipgnosis' (see fig. 98) It is one of the most notable records of this time. This design consists of closely typed white text on a black background. This witty text discusses the nature and commercial functions of record covers ; it is therefore highly self-referential.

Different artists make different records ; the same artist makes (or attempts to make) a different product each time he makes a new album. So there is a commensurate range of design, a plethora of varying approaches to cater for the great variety of available music. Rock n' Roll is not like Jazz music, its admirers are different and demand different designs. In addition, the instigators of the designs, usually the bands, artists, or art directors, are perhaps more artistically minded than clients of other forms of commercial art. There may exist a great sympathy and consequent encouragement for imaginatitive interpretation.

Humor, esotericism and experimentation are thus more likely to be encountered. The 12 inch square is the only limitation.

This is a RECORD COVER. This writing is the DESIGN upon the record cover. The DESIGN is to help SELL the record. We hope to draw your attention to it and encourage you to pick it up. When you have done that maybe you'll be persuaded to listen to the music - in this case XTC's Go 2 album. Then we want you to BUY it. The idea being that the more of you that buy this record the more money Virgin Records, the manager Ian Reid and XTC themselves will make. To the aforementioned this is known as PLEASURE. A good cover DESIGN is one that attracts more buyers and gives more pleasure. This writing is trying to pull you in much like an eye-catching picture. It is designed to get you to READ IT. This is called luring the VICTIM, and you are the VICTIM. But if you have a free mind you should STOP READING NOW! because all we are attempting to do is to get you to read on. Yet this is a DOUBLE BIND because if you indeed stop you'll be doing what we tell you, and if you read on you'll be doing what we've wanted all along. And the more you read on the more you're falling for this simple device of telling you exactly how good commercial design works. They're TRICKS and this is the worst TRICK of all since it's describing the TRICK whilst trying to TRICK you, and if you've read this far then you're TRICKED but you wouldn't have known this unless you'd read this far. At least we're telling you directly instead of seducing you with a beautiful or haunting visual that may never tell you. We're letting you know that you ought to buy this record because in essence it's a PRODUCT and PRODUCTS are to be consumed and you are a consumer, and this is a good PRODUCT. We could have written the band's name in special lettering so that it stood out and you'd see it before you'd read any of this writing and possibly have bought it anyway. What we are really suggesting is that you are FOOLISH to buy or not buy an album merely as a consequence of the design on its cover. This is a con because if you agree then you'll probably like this writing - which is the cover design - and hence the album inside. But we've just warned you against that. The con is a con. A good cover design could be considered as one that gets you to buy the record, but that never actually happens to YOU because YOU know it's just a design for the cover. And this is the RECORD COVER.

FIG. 98

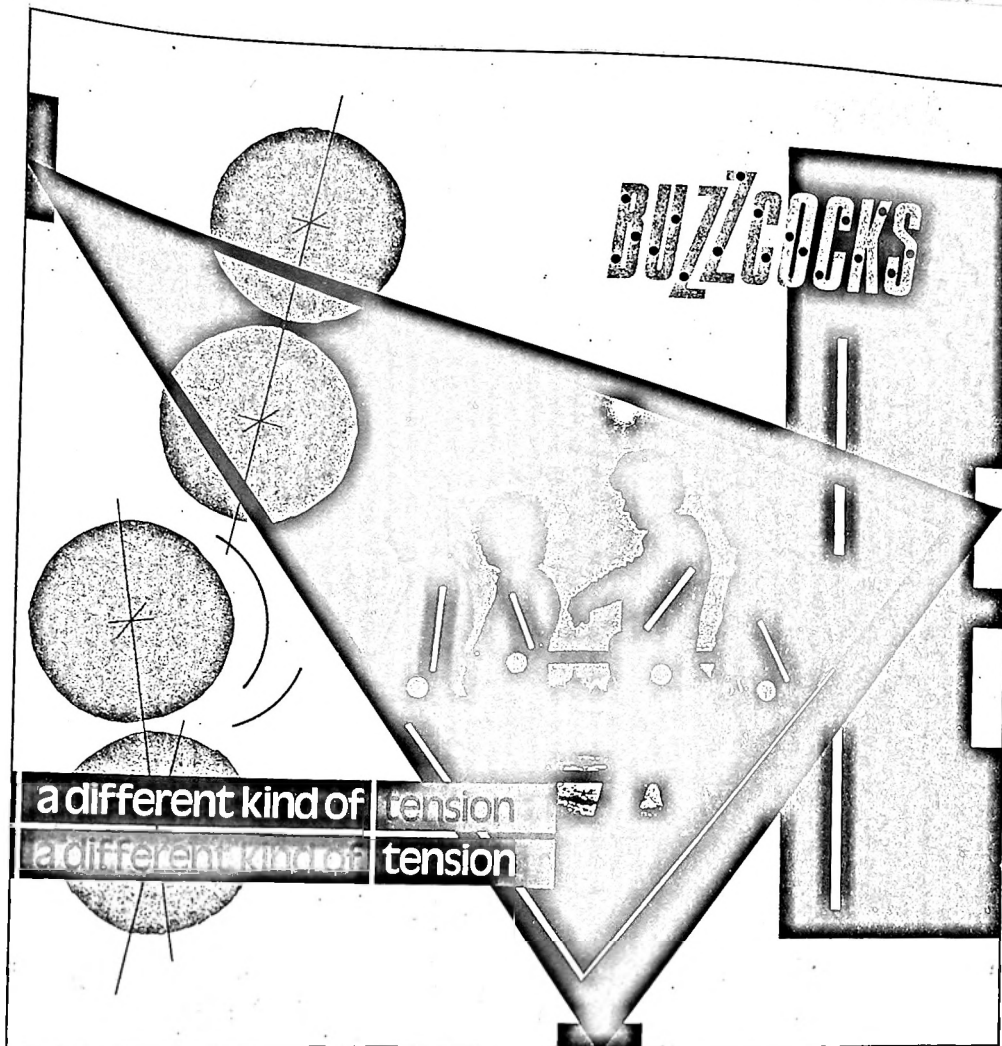


FIG. 94.

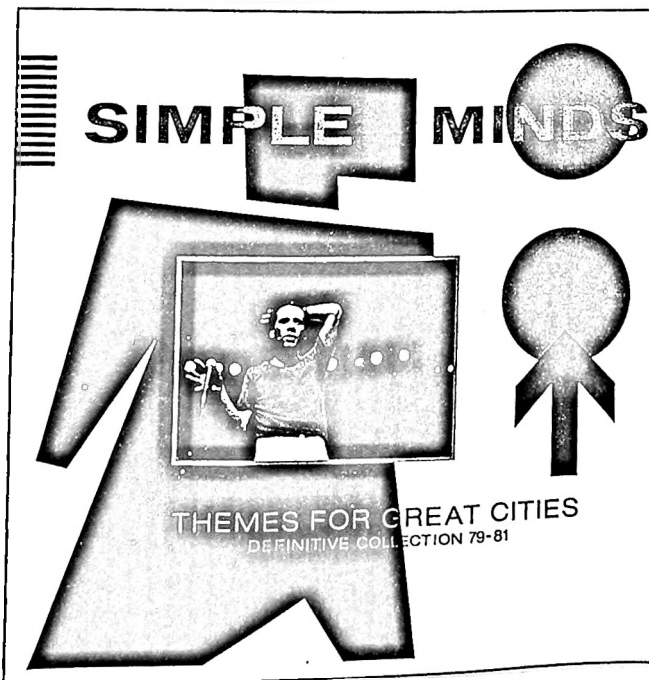


FIG. 95

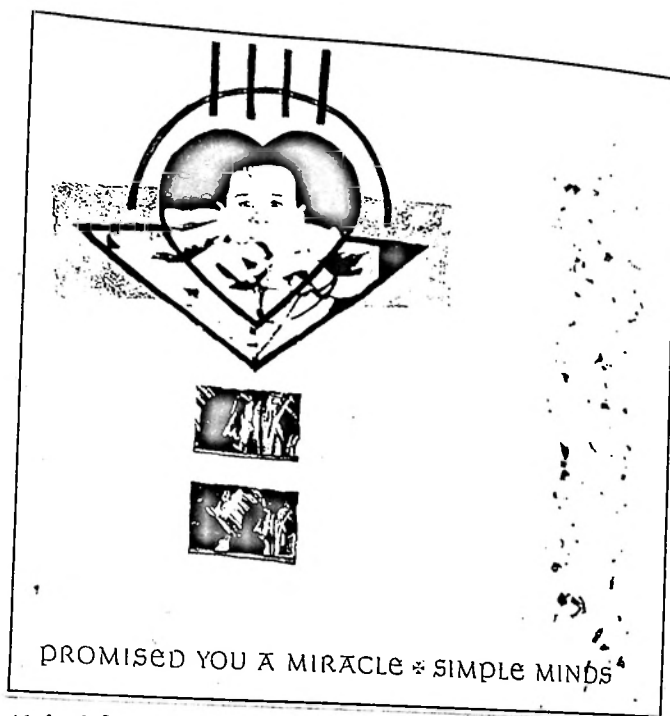


FIG. 96

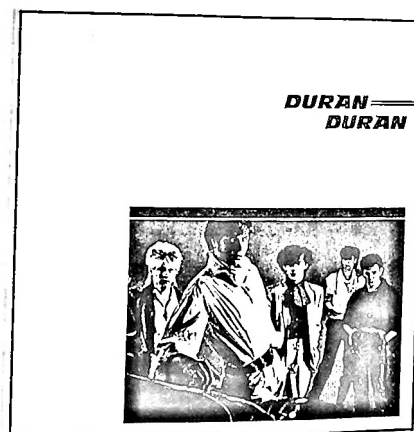


FIG. 97

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have looked at record covers in a broader context than simply that of functional album packaging. This wide range of design has emerged for several reasons. The basic function of the cover has tended to guarantee it room space, unlike, say, the packaging for food or perfume which is thrown away when the product has been consumed, where it is entirely disposable. This entails some consideration of the design as having, possibly, a long term quality. In the advertising world one persumably has to be wary of any low key mesages in case they miss their targets and the products remains unsold. But record sleeves are also advertising tools. The product is advertised and promoted visually on the sleeve. Thus other forms of cover designs may forsake lasting appeal for a quick flash of impact and a rapid sale.

The visual influences that contributed to the importance of sleeve design from the fifties onwards were few but cover a wide spectrum of contemporary culture. Movies, fashion photography, modern art (especially Surrealism and Collage) and fantasy and Sci-Fi illustrations appear in unexpected combinations. The attitude of tounge-in-cheek sophistication that made this possible was largely fostered by art directors, who set high standards of professionalism and incidentally encouraged specialisation among young designers. All this has given rise to

the emergence of the album cover as an important medium in its own right.

So where next for the visual image of rock and pop? The most important development since the 1970's has been the rise of video. Some groups are now signed to labels on their ability to be 'effective on video'. The vast majority of promotional videos seen today show little original imagination. Just as album artwork often reflects and even pays direct homage to various schools of painting, so promotional videos borrow past and present cinema T.V. techniques. The development that may well be on the horizon is the desire and ability of graphic designers and photographers to work on video with bands in the same way as they work with them on an album sleeve. But the thought that the creativity that goes into designing a cover could be extended to embrace each and every track of the album in a moving image may mean a vastly different look to the music scene of the 1990's.

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