

I'm sitting in my present day office going over photos and concert tickets from my past when suddenly I'm taken there. Everything gets blurry, I feel numb, weightless and warm and then my vision fades out. I wake to the smell of burning incense and the Dead playing softly in the background. I look around the room and see "the Big Five" standing around a large drafting table; they are working on some of the most incredible images I have ever seen. It takes a moment to realize that I'm in a flashback but I breathe deeply and enjoy it while it lasts. This time is full of excitement, social change, experimentation and music. Oh the music, that's where it's at. This time, the 60's, is like no other, change is coming fast and here in this room with me, these men, these designers will be at the forefront of the changing imagery. They will lead the design world boldly in to the psychedelic movement and change the relationship between graphic designers and musicians forever.

The world is in turmoil. The war in Vietnam is raging on the battlefields, in our homes on TV and has plagued our minds (Thames & Hudson). During 1963 and 1968 Lyndon Johnson's presidency brought on escalation in the war. UC Berkley becomes a center of the counter-culture that is arising. Then governor of California Ronald Regan had the President of UC Berkley fired. The March on Washington, led by Martin Luther King Jr. brought over 300,000 people together in protest for jobs and freedom. The riots in LA result in 34 deaths and bombing in North Vietnam leads to many more world casualties. The youth of America at the

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time could not relate to the government or their elders. San Francisco became the home for thousands of disillusioned youths who were seeking a way of life that was better and more enlightened than their parents. “They retained the counterculture elements of drug-taking and sexual freedom that had been embraced by the Beat Generation, but like them, they were disillusioned with the political system... They did not want to rebuild or even change society, but to remove themselves from it, becoming part of a world of love, peace, and flower power. And drugs such as LSD were one way for getting there (Thames & Hudson).”

When I remember where I have been in that room with the “Big Five” I think of the brilliant minds that composed the legendary group. Designers Wes Wilson, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, Alton Kelley and Stanley “Mouse” worked together and as individuals to make posters not only about concerts but about social and political change. Before the psychedelic movement, concert along with band posters were dull and unimaginative. They consisted mostly of layouts based on horizontal lines



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and rarely feature images or color other than red, black and yellow ink (Wrede). The psychedelic posters began to incorporate hand lettering and “Tended toward a greater organic unity of composition, and made much greater use of color contrasts (Tames and Hudson).” The posters began to experiment with text directly incorporated into an image. Excellent examples of imagery-text are Wes Wilson’s posters for The Mindbenders, the Chocolate Watchband, at the Fillmore Auditorium and his poster for The Association, Quicksilver Messenger Service, The Grass Roots, and The Sopwith Camel also at the Fillmore Auditorium. Both images use complimentary

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colors to flatter the text. The text is presented in an organic swirl that suggests a larger image of a face and a far. The posters require a longer time to read them than other traditional posters because of the detail of the font. Yet after the words are read the posters still hold one's attention because there is an overall design that is to be approached and studied.

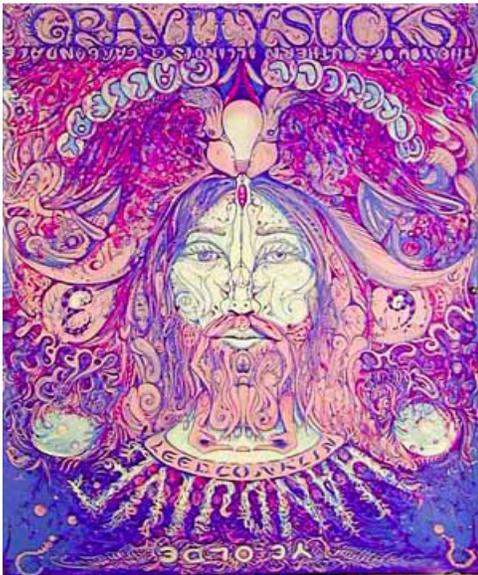
At this time the relationship between designers and musicians led to some of the most imaginative and memorable album art of the century. Designer Rick Griffin created the album cover for the Grateful Dead's album "Aoxomoxoa" in 1969. This is a beautifully designed cover, the images are colorful and suggestive. The text used for the Grateful Dead in a curved horizontal it mirrors and compliments the image below of earth and its many layers. There are trees and mysterious egg like beings growing from the ground. Rick Griffin also is the originator of the "Flying Eyeball" which he used for several posters including the Jimi Hendrix Experience, John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers and Albert King. The flying eyeball has a snake tail, wings and scaled arms. As a graphic this odd, trippy and imaginative image set the precedent for many other designers at the time and today.

A designer that also comes to mind is

Milton Glaser. Bob Dylan approached Glaser to design his greatest hits album in 1967. The album cover once turned into a poster went onto sell over 400,000 copies which was unheard of at the time. "The poster features Dylan's silhouette in black with his wildly dramatic hair looking exotic in electric colors. The expressiveness of the hair contrasts with the soft, geometric lettering, producing a sense of depth and vision that complements Dylan's music (www.ArtsAndCulture.com). This merging relationship between designers and their art portraying musicians has greatly influenced the imagery of music today.

Today there are bands like Tool who work very closely with their artist/designer Alex Gray to create cover art and posters that are reminiscent of psychedelic designs. Alex Gray is one of the most innovative and technically skilled artists of our time. He used paintings and drawings to showcase detailed forms of the human body. He focuses on life, death, birth, fear and many other emotions. For years now Alex Gray has designed the album art for Tool and subsequently the two have become well associated with each other.

Not only did graphic designers of the psychedelic period influence the album art of today but they have influence advertising for music. I have noticed the influence that psychedelics



have had on the successful iPod ad campaign. The solid black silhouettes that are shown in front of colorful patterns and complimentary solid colors are similar to the posters of the 60's. The silhouettes of people dance around in sync with the music playing, is in a sense a simplistic trippy ad. The similarities between the ad campaigns are particularly similar to Milton Glaser's Bob Dylan poster.

The relationship between graphic designers of the 1960's and their influence on the visual world as well as the music world are of great significance. The leaders of the time, "The Big Five", were the first of their kind to design with such imagination and wonderful color usage. The status and significance of the poster was reinvented and made relevant to the times and the society. Without the psychedelic design movement we would not have such innovative images to use as inspiration today.

**article by Rosemary Kelly
layout by Anastacia Spada**