John Coltrane- *Blue Train* - 1957
If you wanna understand the nature of cool, check out any of Reid Miles's 500 designs coupled with FrancisWolff's photography, which set the tone for eras to come.

Beatles - *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* - 1967
Designer Peter Blake and photographer Michael Cooper combined two mediums for memorable satire.

Jimi Hendrix- *Are You Experienced?* -1967
Photographer Karl Ferris's fish-eye captured the signs of the times.

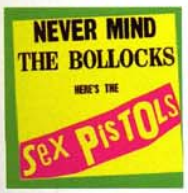
MC5 - *Kick Out The Jams* - 1969
Poster artist Gary Grimshaw carved out a look in paintings that captured the raw energy cf Vietnam-era Garage Rock and Roll.

Grateful Dead- *Aoxomoa* - 1971
The look of the Dead has created a genre of its own thanks to artist Rick Griffin, who also designed for the Eagles and Jackson Browne.

Rolling Stones- *Sticky Fingers*-1971
Andy Warhol designed covers for artists ranging from the Velvet Underground to Billy Squier, but his status as pop art icon is captured in this Stone's cover.

Led Zeppelin- *Houses of the Holy*-1973
Conceived by Hipgnosis designers Storm Thorgenson and Bo Powell, whose long list of credits includes Pink Floyd and Bad Company.

Funkadelic- *One Nation Under a Groove*- 1978
Pedro Bell's classic continuum of George Clinton's scenes of Afrocentric science fiction created a genre of its own, with Overton Lloyd and Stozo adding to the look.



Sex Pistols- *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*- 1977
Designer Jimmy Reid's no-bullshit boldness came to represent everything fresh and appealing about Britain's Punk movement that inspired a generation of leather and spikes.

Blondie- *Parallel Lines*-1978
Playing on the cool images of the Swing era, Deborah Harry stands on piano keys, cutting her mark as the vintage blonde bombshell in this design by Ramsey Communications.

THE ART OF MUSIC

WORDS: *TAMARA WARREN*

Eighth grade. Feet shuffling, lockers slamming, bells ringing. Standing before me was the boy with unkempt hair, high-top Converse kicks and pounds of bad attitude. He carried a marked-up Trapper Keeper with "the Sex Pistols" scrawled in a script that spoke a new language of design to me — cool and mysterious. It was my introduction to image, and I was into it — the look of music.

Soon after, we took a trip to the record store. I strolled with the boy nonchalantly through the aisles. He passed by the cassette tape section to my amazement, searching for vinyl...(Remember, it was 1988, y'all, not 1978, and not 1998). There it was, recreated on a 12-inch canvas, the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks*. I thought he had discovered a brand new concept, not a movement that predated my birth. But he schooled me in the gritty texture of his favorite bands — the Clash, the Ramones and the Descendents— images my boy lovingly emulated.

I caught on quickly, ditching the boy for an affair with 12-inch art. I began rifling through the dreamy paintings used in my parents' lingering Earth Wind & Fire and Elton John collection, as well as digging through my own childhood records to find pensive photos of smooth Pop stars like Michael Jackson and Prince. I sought out cover art posters for my walls. The work changed with my various phases, and so did the look — bold primary colors of Hip Hop represented by the abstract designs of A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul, to psychedelic fluorescent swirls of my retro phase with the Beatles and the Doors, and onto the brazen D.I.Y. look of local bands and DJs' designs.

Little did I know that, like so many other teenagers into the musical subculture, I was becoming a humble art collector. Cover art is a merchandising and retail bonanza that continues to evolve with each new format of music, but the most striking album cover images stand as timeless works of art.

A testament to the relevance of album art is the touring exhibit, "The Greatest Album Covers That Never Were," featuring the work of 100 fine artists like Mark Ryden and Shag, imagining Frank Sinatra and Pink Floyd from their own 12-inch perspectives.

Music archivist Michael Ochs dreamed up the exhibition. Ochs authored the book *1000 Record Covers*, which details the history of album covers. "My cup of tea is the stark images. They just stand on their own," expresses Ochs of his collection.

The Michael Ochs Archive is the largest existing collection of Rock memorabilia that licenses images for CD reissues, magazines, books, TV shows, and museum use. "If you look at it

as a continuum, it is the perfect cross-section of youth cul-ture," Ochs says.

Ochs began collecting memorabilia in the 1950s. "Back in the '50s, there were no videos. (Cover Art) was our whole image of who the artist was." He names Little Richard as t quintessential record art subject of the time. "It was the f time they showed a sweating black singer sing, and that's what Rock and Roll is all about."

A record label's purpose is to market its artists. However, artists sometimes want to control their own images (eg. Annie Lennox's nude proclamation on her new album, *Ba* Landmark art results from either a designer given the free dom to interpret the project or a designer/artist collaborat falling into place.

Benjamin Wheelock is art director for TVT Records, most recently conceptualizing the Yin Yang Twins' album *Me a My Brother*, with a comical photo of the artists that has b altered with a streetscape in the background.

"Most of what we have done has been photo based," say Wheelock. "There are a few times where we've hired ou painter to do some work. It's a little trickier that way. Yo don't necessarily have control when you hire someone to illustrations." Wheelock has worked on a range of album covers by artists such as Seven Dust, Naughty By Nature Guided by Voices and DJ Hurricane.

"It's very specific," Wheelock continues, "It is really just about getting across, however you want to do it, what th album is. And that means different things for different st of music, in whatever way it's trying. Sometimes the best

thing to do is to go a completely unexpected direction – OutKast did that."

"The starting point is listening to the album, what they were thinking and what the songs are about. You just sit there and play around with it."

Notably, fine artists like Futura, Winston Smith, Derek Hess and Gary Grimshaw are standouts for their seminal designs. Linkin Park sought out graffiti artist Delta to design their latest album, *Meteora*. The cover actually depicts Delta at work with his spray can. Delta, known for introducing 3-D perspective to graffiti art, has also designed for Rima, Dub and Warp Records.

"The concept on projects are based on talks with the artist and label owner, and listening to the music. Obviously trying to go with the flow and atmosphere of the music," Delta says.

"The sleeves that I feature on my website were definitely the most enjoyable to do. I have done a lot of Hip Hop sleeves, which were also nice to work on, but most of the *Hip Hop artists I have worked with had a very set idea of* what they wanted...less space for experimenting."

Artistic freedom seems to be x-factor for artists who specialize in design. Some work individually, some are housed at record labels and other collaborate with groups of designers.

Ehquestionmark, a British collaborative of artists, conceived *Ghetto Pop Life* by Danger Mouse and Gemini (see YRB Aug/Sep 2003 pg. 44) on Lex Records, a pop art piece with a gold, black and white depiction of a cat and mouse. "We had complete creative freedom...we even got to name the series so the concept worked as a whole," says designer Bhat.
"Art is in the mind of the beholder - highbrow or low. We see music packaging as an art form. It'll never be perceived as highbrow though, due to commercial complications. There's a few masterpieces out there, and a hell of a lot of talent too."

With the increasing popularity of music downloading, it might appear that the era of album art is coming to an end within the DJ culture, but many in the industry are optimistic that this format will enhance the genre.

Simon Halliday, head of WARP Records America, sees JPEG files as the fertile ground for a new direction in label art that could be used for posters and Web pages. "If it develops online, it can go more into detail. The digital world will really take over."

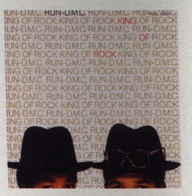
Halliday feels that visual images are a key part of a musical page. "An album can project an image of what you're *trying to get across. Music to me is nearly everything,* but you need something else, and an MP3 doesn't seem sexy enough," Halliday says.

While the Rock stars are credited with these images, it is the artist who creates the package.

So perhaps we need to give this crop of artists a little bit more love. Where would Rock stars be without an image? Just ask any eighth grader downloading their music with an attitude.

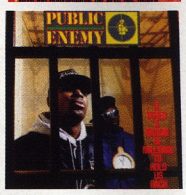
Kraftwerk- *Computer World*- 1981
Karl Klefisch created the man- machine look that coupled industrialization with Kraftwerk's flair for robotic references.

Run DMC- *King of Rock*-1986
Run DMC spread Hip Hop images with Andrea Klein's art direction and EJ Camp's photos of the genre's leading ambassadors.

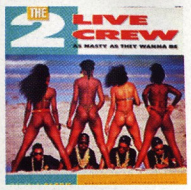


Dead Kennedys- *Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death*- 1987
Winston Smith's satirical art created a new direction souped up by the sarcastic nature of the Dead Kennedy's' brand of Punk.

Public Enemy- *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*- 1988
Glen E. Friedman's photography has captured the images of dozens of bands, including the Beastie Boys, Slick Rick and Slayer.



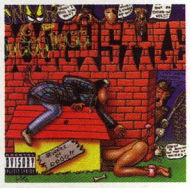
2 Live Crew- *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*-1989
These sexy booty shots forever changed the meaning of "bad ass"teasing the boundaries of sex and music.



Nirvana- *Nevermind*-1991
Who could forget Nirvana's baby, representative of a new direction in punk and expressionism designed by Robert Fisher?

Cypress Hill- *Black Sunday*- 1993
Cypress Hill introduced a gothic branding that served as a model for the merging of Metal culture and Hip Hop, under the vision of Jay Papke.

Snoop Dogg-*Doggystyle*- 1993
Kimberly Holt created the look and feel of Dr. Dre's empire. Her clever use of branding and comic intertwine.



Goldie- *Saturnz Return*- 1997
Peter Saville is a legend in cover design from his work with New Order and Joy Division. His work makes you think *"museum"*.

U.N.K.L.E- *Psyence Fiction*- 1998
Graf pioneer Futura 2000's cult status as a toy designer and visionary takes shape with these familiar characters.