

# Screen Printing in Gig



## Posters

Print Screening has become a really prominent technique in the making of posters. Gig posters in general are created to draw your attention promoting the music you're about to see. It has eventually developed into the prized merchandise of many, becoming the purest form of modern design. In the film produced by Avalanche Films directed by Scout Shannon 'Just Like Being There', it begins to talk of Gig posters in more depth, focusing on the print screening techniques which is where i will be beginning my research.

'If you cant read the text on the poster,  
dont worry, its not for you'

They start by mentioning how Gig posters in general should transport you to the feel of the music. 'If you cant read the text on the poster, dont worry, its not for you'. There should be a deeper understanding to a poster that connects you with the music, as well as creating a link between the true fans of the music. Jermain Rogers mentions how in the 'early to mid 90's the poster movement just started', with Gig posters taking more of a centre stage on the merchandise aspects of Gigs with promoters contacting the bands/musicians with the intention to create merchandise. It became a lot more influential for the gigs themselves so screen printing began to increase in popularity.



## Designers

Steve Walter being a very accomplished screen printer (with his own successful business 'Screwball Press') mentions in the movie how you 'can learn more about taking a poster apart to then recreate it'. This diverse approach helped keep him recent in a time of modern design. He started printing in 1990 for a couple of bands with his first major project being a sum of 2000 magazine covers for a friend, which he considers to be his longest and most tiring project he did, as he had little knowledge of the screen printing process. He still claims however that: 'After twenty-two years, i'm still learning stuff, which is what i like about it'

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Jay Ryan is another influential graphic designer whose work has a very unique and iconic feel, bringing him much success in his designing field. He said he begins with a more tactile approach, choosing to be 'more the craftsman than

designer' in his own work. He actually started doing some freelance illustration for one of his friends at Screwball Press and then moved onto his own workshop 'The Bird Machine'.

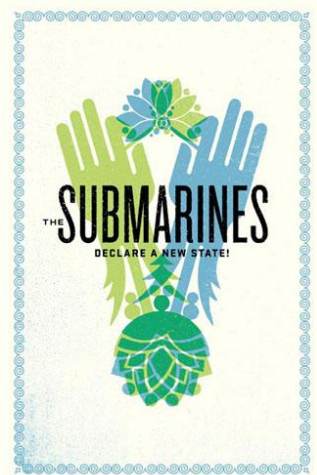
'more the craftsman than designer'

He enjoys the process of creating a print with the changes that go along with making one. He never knows what the result will be as this is the part of the process he enjoys, where it's forever changing. He believes that the most valuable piece of advice he got was to never listen to the voice that says 'no, don't do that, it's dumb'. Quantity over quality and then go back and analyse those pieces to create masterpieces.



Aesthetic Apparatus is another successful company led by 2 designers, Dan Ibarra and Michael Byzewski. They started this company by sharing a love for both music, design and art whilst missing how 'contemporary graphic design depended less and less on the role of handcrafted and hand-production'. This then inspired them to move

the opposite way to the way others were going, trying to find a way to include more hand-craft into their design discipline. By forging both their love for music and design they ended with a successful business in Gig poster designs with screen printing as their technique of choice as a 'logical result'.



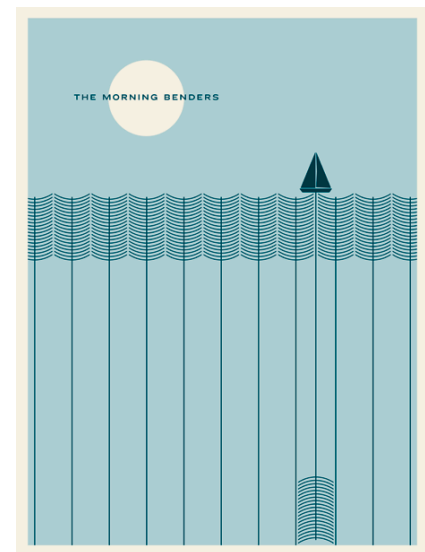
## 'manual labour of the art world'

In the film they mentioned how they are most influenced by test prints they make, doing the exact opposite of craft and precision. They repeat this process of reprinting the prints to then create a 'thing of beauty'. You 'always need test prints', with screen printing being the 'manual labour of the art world' you've got to be prepared to work hard for the results.

Another example of a print screener is Jason Munn but he chooses to focus a lot more on the computer side of the technique, creating a more precise and angular print, unlike the other designers I have mentioned so far. In the film he



states how he starts off in pencil and paper, coming to a solution about what he is going to eventually design, however, he believes that this limits what you can do so moves to the computer to continue work on the project. This makes him somewhat more reliant on the computer base side of things but he believes that this just opens different



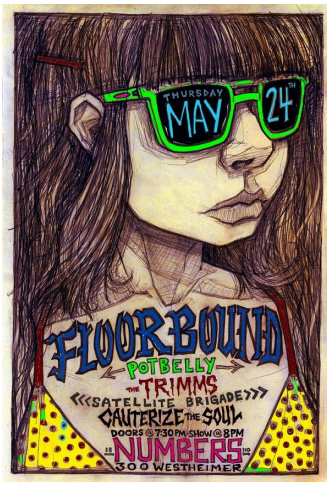
doors not available to the only hand-crafted posters. His poster style do have alterations throughout time, changing slightly with him describing his newer ones as having a 'simpler look, but

stronger in concept'.



‘simpler look, but stronger in concept’.

# Gig Poster Design Trends



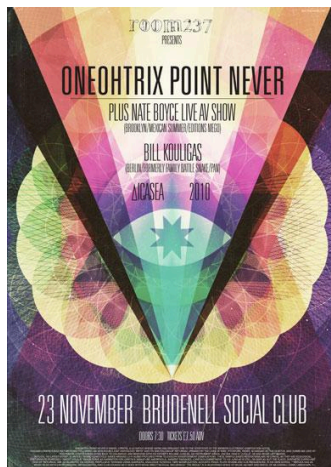
Gig posters are notorious for being able to allow a multiple of techniques in publishing and producing for the graphics designers to express their own creativity. Some have evolved from older techniques to more modern styles, with others mixing and matching, and then some experimenting with completely new media. The choice of technique is completely individual to the designer alone, which helps create the vast array of Gig Posters we are now open to, and have readily available.

In an article called 'The Art of Rock: Design Trends in Gig Posters' by Cadence Wu, it helped highlight the main areas (technique preferences) from which a Gig Poster can be produced.

Hand-drawn can be seen as possibly the more simplistic 'earlier' style of gig posters, with it being more individualistic than possibly some of the other styles.

You can then have Screen-Printed which also shows an older side to design, with a more tactile approach to the work. In contrast to both these, is the Digital Art technique. It can be seen as a modern approach to creating a gig poster, possibly allowing a lot more freedom in the precision of details which can become difficult with more tactile techniques like the Hand-drawn and Screen-Printed.

Its also alot cheaper and quicker (maybe even easier) to produce in this day and age. The Geometric technique is another example of a design preference based along the idea of precision and digital media, but changes slightly from digital art by focusing on the geometric shapes more than anything. The last stylistic preference



would be the Typographic technique which highlights its idea in the title. It focuses on the text within the poster, incorporating the rest of the design around the text. These can all be considered the main preferences of designers in our modern age, but that's not to say that they don't mix. These different areas can be mixed to create a great varied gig poster, which allows for gig poster's to never cease evolving in design innovation.

# Jay Ryan



I've chosen to develop my insight into one of the designers I wrote about previously, Jay Ryan. He talks of how "The past five years have been really key to having posters as a medium go from this side effect of having a band play to something that has [its] own audience and can stand alone".



From this I wanted to analyse some of his work, focusing on the different elements he uses within it.

'posters as a medium [have gone] from this side effect of having a band play to something that has [its] own audience and can stand alone'

Doing some background research I was interested to see how he actually completes his work and his work progress. He starts but roughly drawing out an idea. Drawing, then rubbing



it out, drawing again... this is repeated many times before he is satisfied with a rough outcome.

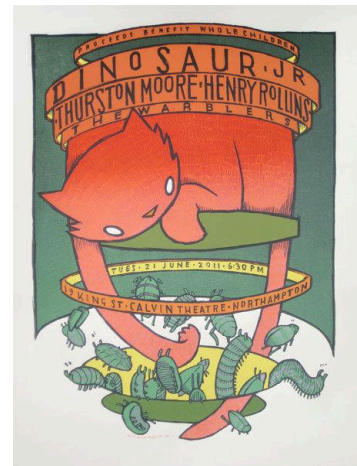


When the drawing is completed he goes to Kinko's, where the drawing is transferred onto an overhead transparency. The next step happens back in the studio involving him cutting rubylith (a mask used for making screen prints) putting it on top of a homemade lightbox. This exposes the image onto a polyfiber mesh screen before he turns on the light box, gently placing a swath felt on the screen, securing it with books. This will begin to burn the image onto the screen. The timer will then go off for the screen to be collected and hosed down with water-soluble emulsion that coats the screen. This will then leave an open mesh where the image was openly cut on the rubylith. Ryan then places the screen into the press where the ink will be pushed through the open mesh, creating 1 layer at a time. He will repeat this process several times, feeding each sheet of paper

through by hand, mentioning how 'The printing is part of the design process... you decide what happens as you go' Ryan normally prints on average 350 original posters from each of his sketches, to then be sold online for the majority.

## 'The printing is part of the design process'

In this poster we can see how he uses the contrasting complementary colors red and green to base the poster on, limiting the variations. This allows a clear hierarchy to take place, as our eyes are drawn immediately to the striking red cat. After capturing our attention our eyes then move to the main type located at the top of the page. The typographic elements which have been selected are also limited, with only a sans serif typeface being used within the poster. All the type is black so it can be drawn away from the page, allowing clear readability against the ordered background. However we see that the weight of the type is light/medium, so doesn't overcast the whole image of poster. There is also a variation of type size throughout the poster to create a sense of diversity within the type. The poster also chooses to use 'warm' variations of the colours schemes, giving off a more inviting and happy feeling. The simplistic style of this poster also allows it to utilise some of the white space located around the outside of the image, further enhancing the 'screen printing' feel of the poster.



This next poster I chose was one of Jay Ryan's more successful works. He chooses to focus on an analogous, monochromatic colour scheme, moving within the yellow spectrum. The overall style is

'messy' with a hand-drawn quality about it, although portraying an 'ordered' outlook. Due to the background being a striking yellow, your eyes are consequently drawn to the more 'murky' title and creatures on the poster. The hierarchy works well as it keeps to the pre conceived ideas of what 'traditional' positioning on a poster would be (title on top, main focus point like a picture or drawing, then information), even though in this day and age it is a lot more relative in what you can create. This allows our eyes to be automatically drawn to the top of the page with little thought, but the typefaces coloring also helps guide us.

## 'you decide what happens as you go'

Although at first glance the poster seems to keep to a monochromatic colour scheme, in reality Ryan uses a hue closer to blue origins than a yellow. This would then make the contrast subtle but from one glance go unnoticed. The typeface used for the title has a thick weight to it and is a sans serif, although it could also be described as a display type from the handwritten texture. This then correlates to the type used at the bottom. This group of text however uses a thinner weight keeping the contrast visible but also enough to keep the readability. It still uses a handwritten typeface to keep the poster within its theme, although due to the fact it's a screen print done by hand its understandable why a 'handwritten' typeface has been used, as no digital interference was used. Size is another factor used within the poster, as the smaller typeface is obviously lower in the hierarchy as well as the lower positioning on the page giving it this status. The alignment used within the poster helps keep this ordered image, with everything keeping within a specific alignment, although to keep its hand-drawn feel it still allows small breaks from the alignment but always balancing it out to keep the structure.



## Design houses

### Modern Dog

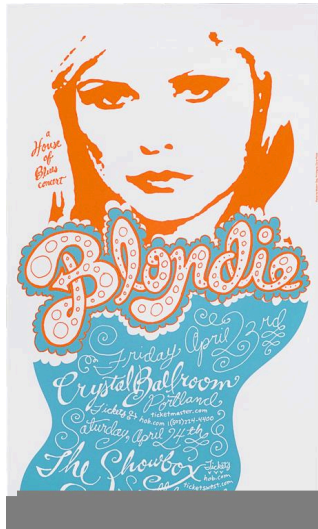




Established in 1987 by Robynne Raye and Michael Strassburger, it's an example of a successful business, producing numerous posters for the music industry as well as moving comfortably into different industries like advertising and packaging. Their approach allows them to work for a diverse clientele, keeping the business current and active. Although the businesses remarkable rise in praise and credit could be seen as a planned business, it all started with little intention from the two to turn it into a formal business at all.

## 'do it yourself extemporaneous attitude and aesthetic'

It started with them working alone, doing work for fringe theatres, acting as their own illustrators, letterers and production artists which helps explain the 'do it yourself extemporaneous attitude and aesthetic' shown in their work, even now. This theme brought them much success



in the difficult industry in which they work, with more competition coming from all directions in our modern age. However the success of the business has allowed both Raye and Strassburger to share their knowledge of the business with Robynne Raye going into more than 17 years of lecturing and workshops, both nationally and internationally. She now works teaching classes on typography and packaging at the Cornish College of Arts in Seattle, which she has now been doing for over a decade. Although her success as an individual designer goes further with her being recognised by every major design organisation in the U.S, with her posters being represented in permanent archives such as the Library Of Congress, Hong Kong Heritage Museum and the Warsaw National Museum among many

others, alongside Strassburger's who also has his posters in these archives.



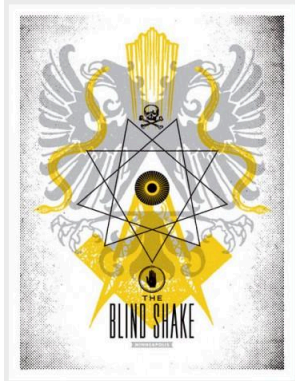
## 'recognised by every major design organisation in the U.S'

He is also a teacher at the same college but has been recognised on different platforms such as the Graphic design Magazine in 2006 labelling him as the "People to Watch", whilst also gaining recognition





from every major U.S design publication/organisation such as AIGA, Communication Arts and American Center for Design 100.



## Aesthetic Apparatus

Here is another design house which became successful through its individual style and style of business. Dan Ibarra and Michael Byzewski began their business through a mutual love of printmaking and music in 2002 after meeting each other in 1998 whilst working at Planet Propaganda in Madison, Wisconsin.

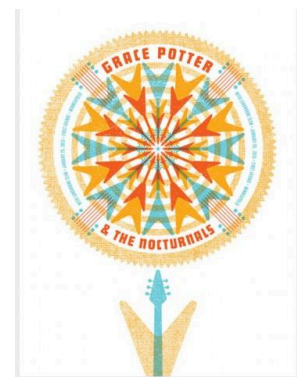
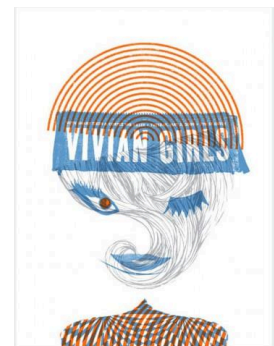
‘[they have a] unique morphing style’

They started making limited edition homemade posters which then led to the 2002 creation, which marked a part of a new generation of gig-poster designers, with their work being a constant area of attraction. They developed a ‘unique morphing style’ which they apply to a diverse range of projects spanning identity, packaging, illustration and editorial work, with them personally silkscreening posters in the studio.



‘We love the tactility of ink on paper’

They tend to use abrupt juxtapositions, found imagery and interesting typography. Technically they are defined as a “commercial art and printmaking studio” but they sum it up, saying how their work is too commercial for ‘fine art’, and studio too messy for ‘graphic design’. They stress how they aren't puritans. ‘We love the tactility of ink on paper, and we also love the shared cultural experience of a well-educated national campaign’. Its refreshing to see a printmaking business that doesn't feel the need expand purely for profit, but stay small and personal to keep their work organic and fresh.



‘Basically, we’re humans - complex, creative, and up for a challenge - and we’ve constructed a studio that reflects that.’

## Summary

As i've shown in this investigation, posters have had a revitalised life in our modern age and the industry is still a prominent and functioning part of advertising. Gig posters specifically have become less of an essential factor in the advertising of bands, but more a form of merchandise. This has lead to poster businesses becoming more successful in their fields, with specific styles and techniques unique to every one. Screen printing is a technique I was keen on researching as its a technique which is starting to be frequently used in major design houses such as Aesthetic Apparatus and Modern Dog, with it also being used within works such as Jason Munns and Jay Ryans. The time consuming technique has its own defining look. Even though it can be argued that the process could be replicated easily on computers, many have chosen to still take the 'old fashioned' approach. The research i've carried out has given an indepth insight into screen printing within posters and also focuses on the successful design houses and designers in the Gig Poster industry.

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**Jay Ryan**

<http://insidetherockposterframe.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/artist-and-screen-printer-jay-ryan.html>

### **Design Houses**

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