Jim: Graham Humphreys, are you a witch, weirdo, goblin or goul?

Graham Humphreys: Weirdo.

Jim: Straight onto weirdo. Love it. There was no like wondering or anything. Um, why weirdo, if you don't mind me asking?

Graham Humphreys: Uh, well, you know, I just, I've never really kind of fitted in. I, I guess so, um, you know, never wanted to either.

Uh, so yeah, a, a weirdo

Jim: no. Fair enough. I think, uh, a lot of people within the horror realm can probably relate to that. I definitely can. . Um, . So I, I've read a little bit about you on your website and of course I know your art. Um, I think a lot of people would know your art, ? , but we'll, we'll get into that in a little bit, but before we do, could you just gimme a bit of, in information on your background, how you kind of, um, found your way into art and how then, how you found your way into, uh, you know, PO poster art.

Graham Humphreys: Yeah, certainly. Well, um, I'm from the west country.

Um, I went to art college in Salisbury and, uh, I studied graphic design and then, um, I, I tagged on the final year, uh, to specialize in illustration work. So, yeah, that's really, um, the background I guess though. And then, um, um, that was 1980. I finished there and, uh, moved straight to London and, uh, which is, you know, was essential really because it's the only place where I was gonna be able to find work.

Um, this, see clearly before we had, um, the internet and um, even a mobile phones of course. And, uh, so everything was. A little bit more complex then, um, in terms of trying to find work, you would just literally have to phone up people. Um, I didn't have a phone at the time, so I had to go to the local call box.

I mean, it's all , all but ridiculously crude and basic. But, um, that's how, how, uh, how I started just calling people art directors, magazines, whoever I would, um, that basic belt ramp to the call and just try to arrange appointments and then, um, you know, drag a folio along with.

My, my very, um, not quite so good college work and, um, just, you know, trying to break into the business.

But, uh, yeah, I guess, uh, um, the things I wanted to do, um, were, were record covers and, um, film posters. I mean, that, that was definitely the, um, the plan. And, uh, so I kind of achieved that fairly swiftly. I wouldn probably take about, um, a year or two years of sort of just, you know, doing, um, anything that came my way, which was.

Magazine work, um, educational publications, you know, just Brennan butter work. I, I would call that. Um, but, you know, it was, it's essential stuff. Cause I mean, you had to earn a living as well, so you basically take on anything you, you could get. And, um, so it wasn't until then 19 82 that, uh, um, I got the, to what I, I would describe as the, um, breakthrough job, which was, um, uh, working with Palace Pictures and.

Designed the poster for the Evil dead, and that that was really kind of where, I guess the career that people would know, um, would recognize, um, the starting. .

Jim: And then did it kind of go from there or was it kind of like a consistent be because the, you know, people trying to break into the, uh, creative industries?

You know, well freelancer friends that I know. It's like a constant kind of push. You can't take your eye off the ball all the time. Like what kind of. Um, place Was your career in after the, was it the Evil Dead UK release that you'd done?

Graham Humphreys: That's right. Yeah.

Just the, uh, UK um, campaign.

I mean, uh, you know, it was still a, a uphill struggle, you know, there's no doubt about that. I mean, uh, yeah, that was a lucky job. You know, it didn't pay that well. Um, but it was, um, it, it, it did sort of kickstart a little bit of a career, I guess, in, in, uh, I mean, you know, at the time it's.

Um, VHS was, was, you know, obviously big for everybody and, uh, um, because the Evil dead was released, uh, simultaneously theatrically and on vhs. Um, so, so that was kind of seen by a lot of people. And, um, I

did get, you know, a, a number of jobs where people just want me to kind of basically recreate the look of that.

Um, and cause I think, you know, did very well. I think people just think, well, you just copy, copy that, emulate it, and, um, whatever, you know, whatever you're churning out. Um, that will do equally as well. Of course it doesn't work like that at all, but, uh, uh, but yeah, so I, I, I think, um, after that it was, it was quite hard to, um, get away from that job for a little while because people kind of tend to pigeonhole quite quickly and done.

Mm-hmm. was bakes a cartoony kind of style and I did a lot of work like that. And, um, so it wasn't really until. , uh, I, I did, um, at Nightmare on Elm Street that . Yeah. That, that kinda showed that, uh, I, I, I could be a bit more versatile with the work I did and, um, you know, but even then, you know, I have to say that, uh, you know, here I'm 62 years old and, um, it's only been in the last sort of eight years, I think that, um, I've really able.

Not have to seek work. Um, it's just come, come and, um, I'm so, I've just been busier now than ever been in my entire career. But, so yeah, it was a big struggle at the beginning and, um, certainly up until, uh, I guess about 1990. Um, and then of course, you know, we, we, there was another issue that I had of course is um, uh, desktop computing kind of suddenly, um, took over the industry.

Uh, and, you know, people turned to Photoshop for. , they're sort of cover solutions and, uh, so yeah, so it was a bit more difficult just for that little short period. And I, I did run into, you know, use Photoshop skills and I did a lot of design. Um, and there was illustration work still coming in, but it was, you know, it's, it was not in a way that it is now.

Um, you know, because obviously there's been a, a bit of a resurgence, um, or interest in the illustration work. Cause I guess, you know mm-hmm. , after a while people just get fed up with the same old, you know, Photoshop solutions. And so, you know, there's a, you get and uh, um, A as always, you know, things come in cycles and, you know, kind of whole new kind of a i best generation, um, discovers the, uh, joys of, um, painted image, I guess all over again.

Of course, yeah. A lot of the work is digital there. Um, but it's still, you know, digital paint. I guess they, but you know, for myself, um, um, I

trained in, uh, you know, sort of traditional methods and that's what I still use. I think, you know, in, in some ways that's probably why I'm still getting work because, um, it, it doesn't look like it's digital at all.

Um, and, uh, I think people do appreciate the, um, the sort of the, the, the craft goes into paint on paper and, um, you know, the, the, the look get out of it, which is, um, very hard to recreate digitally. I mean, people do, you know, have ways and means of. You know, creating a of hand painted look, but, um mm-hmm. , you know, it is, it's, um, that seems like a bit of a faff, really.

I mean, what, why would you, how did you want to recreate it when you can actually just do it? You know,

Jim: I think if I was honest with myself, it's probably a case of if you screw it up, you just controls command zeds. Do you know what I mean? And then, and then you can have another go. But I think that's part of the charm.

Anything that's made by hand, whether it's illustration or calligraphy or you know, anything like that, is you can see the, the hours, months, and years that have gone into being able to make it. As beautiful as it is. Does that make sense?

Graham Humphreys: It does. Yeah. You know, that, that you, you, you made a very good point there as well that, um, uh, you know, it, it very much reliant on the experience of, of, of, uh, you know, the sort of 40 odd years, um, working.

So the, the work I do now is really some of all, all that time so into the illustrations might themselves, might only take it back three or four days. Um, but you know, that, that's kind of 40 years worth experience, you know, which allows me to do. . Uh, but yes, the, um, I mean, the thing about painters, um, on paper, I mean, obviously don't want spill water over it.

mm-hmm. , but, uh, everything gets scanned in, uh, uh, I'm sure digital delivery anyway though. So, um, there is the option to, um, do a bit of be touching if it's needed, um, and perhaps, you know, uh, create a bit more contrast, you know, things like that. I've, I've sure try not to, um, do too much to stuff once it's scanned in, because I think that I quite like.

work to be pure to, to what's actually, uh, the paint on the paper. And, um, mm-hmm. , you know, there's a bit of value, extra value as well, and as much that, um, you know, I can sell the paintings, um, at a later stage, they will remain my property. And, uh, yeah, if anybody's gonna be want to wanting to buy a painting, they're gonna, you know, want to look like that, the image they've seen in print.

Um, so yes, and the idea of, uh, retouching stuff is something I'll try not to do if I can avoid. .

Jim: Mm-hmm. . Yeah. No, that makes sense. Just, just jumping back to kind of that, that early point in your career when you were in London around the early 1980s, how did that Evil Dead's project come

about?

Graham Humphreys: Uh, well, like most things in life, you know, just being in the right place at the right time.

It's, um, yeah, sort of a, a very sort of convoluted thing. It was, um, um, I, I had some friends I'd known from art college and, um, um, you know, all these people kind of ended up working different companies, um, around London. And, uh, one particular, uh, friend was working for, um, uh, design agency in Bond Street.

And, uh, they, uh, well I used to go in quite a lot just in, I had a lot of spare to quite, and I just hung out. Um, every now and again, hey, just, I think it's literally just the secretary that was working there at the. Who'd taken an interest in, uh, what I was doing, and, um, she was very good. She gave me a list of, um, people she knew.

Um, she, she seemed to have, um, friends who were in the industry, uh, art directors and alike. And, uh, so she happened to mention, um, Palace pictures who'd, um, literally just, um, started business, um, based in the old Scala Cinema in Kings Cross. . Um, so she gave me their number. Uh, I, she made an appointment, went along and, um, shared the work.

And, uh, that's really where the evil dead, um, commission came from, just on the basis of barn, some of the pieces I had on the phone yet.

Jim: Fantastic. And what is the process like when you. When you kind of agree to, um, you know, do a project between yourself and the person that's, uh, kind of commissioning the illustration.

could, could you tell me a little bit about the workflow? Like how much input do they have versus how much input you have or you, you expected to kind of, um, present several ideas or sketches or scamps and then it kind of goes from there? Or what, what, what's that like?

Graham Humphreys: , well, yeah. Generally, um, speaking, when you get a commissioner, I mean, if it's a film, um, blu ray, cover, whatever, then, then you would, uh, expect to see the actual film. Um, first with now those would, uh, nowadays those come as, um, usually, um, you know, streaming, I'll, I'll just watch a film. Um, usually sort of, um, you know, it's just like a basic on of video link and uh, uh, I can take grabs.

Um, in the past it would be, um, you'd be sending a VHS tape or a, you know, cd, um, dvd, D . Uh, so yeah, you, you, you'd watch the film, get your ideas. Sometimes the client would have, um, specific elements they'd want to introduce something. Perhaps. If there's a well-known actor, actress, then no, obviously wants to feature that person cuz it's a selling point.

They'll, they'll obviously have an idea about how they want to market the film as well. So, you know, you would, um, concentrate on certain aspects. You know, probably there'll be, might be some sort of color, um, uh, requirement as well. Just, you know, to make it stand out the shells. Uh, but generally, I mean, nowadays people kind of trust me to do what what I think is, um, like for the job.

Um, but yes, I do, uh, um, present sketches, uh, usually. Probably between four, maybe 5, 6, 7, 8 ideas. Rough, uh, rough layouts. And then, uh, on the basis of those, um, wherever the client can be first, then I'll, I'll, I'll go straight to art work. So I don't do color, um, visuals or I used to do that in a past, but again, I think it's a question of trust that the client, uh, You know, expects me to, to, to know what I'm doing.

And, um, so yeah, so it's really, uh, uh, the sketch stage. I mean, when, when I see a film, well, I'm gonna have to watch it about three times, number one, just to, uh, get, you know, understand what the film is, um, what the, um, story is, and, uh, see where it's going. The second time will be just to really identify the, um, The best visual moments.

Um, and then third time I'll just initially go through it slowly and take lots of uh, uh, screen grabs. So if it's a blue right, they're not, I've initially got to do a, um, play on the TV and just take photographs of the, um, of the screen. Um, and um, yeah, I might take a box of 50 to a hundred pictures and, um, often just go to the internet and just see what else is available.

um, you know, in terms of images at all, I mean, you know, you, you can't find everything you need in, in the film sometimes and, you know, sort of extra stuff. You have to just, you know, find yourself or take your own pictures. And I've got a, you know, big library photographs I've taken over the years. And qu I'll be photographing my own hands, you know, for, um, closeups on the hands are quite expressive.

Um, you know, sometimes you go on the face. A bit foreground, um, uh, stuff going all is quite useful. Um, so yeah, I might need some props, I guess, though. And, uh, yeah, recently I did, um, a sort of poster for, uh, it was like a private commission for a group. . Um, they wanted a a a, their own be spoke poster for the Monster Squad.

And their were insistent, they had all, you know, all the five kids in there. And, um, you know, it was very hard to get, I mean, the film was quite, um, I, I just found it's quite blurry and, um, it's very hard to get, uh, you know, full, full body shots. Full body shots, and, uh, , you know, mostly you get closeups and you know, the, the, the smaller budget is on a film.

Then the more you just find that the um mm-hmm , these closeups and, you know, medium shots, you know, cuz it's just, I guess I don't want see, you know, it's, it's a way of saving money not to have too much fucking in camera, but, uh, I ended up having to, um, photograph myself for, uh, you know, all the five different poses and, um, you know, being of a small stature, , some, uh, could getaway being sort of like child.

And, uh, but you know, there was a sort of you larger kids and had to color up, play around of the photo shop and, um, you know, if you see the, uh, image, you'll notice that, um, all, all the kids are wearing the same trousers and shoes . Um, yeah. Uh, so yes. Um, ways and means are getting around, um, what, what reference you have and, um, and you're trying to disguise your reference material.

If you've got, um, if it's an older film and they're there, you know, they're, gimme a number of, uh, well, images from it, we, you don't want to do is

just keep repeating those same images, so mm-hmm. , you don't have to be quite, skilled at identifying, you know, what, what the best, um, refernce material is to use and, uh, you know, try not to do the, um, obvious stuff.

Jim: Is, is that something that you feel that you. Like, have a knack for you, or is that something that develops over time or how, how, how does that work?

Graham Humphreys: Yeah. I, I guess it's, uh, again, back to that experience thing that, um, you know, uh, yeah, over the years you've kind of learned how to, uh, uh, um, process the visuals, I guess.

And, um, and, uh, you know, be confident I suppose, about what you're doing. And, um, the confidence thing is something that, you know, it's really important. It's something that, uh, it, it, you know, it's still, you still get periods of, um, self doubt. Of course you do, but, uh, it's, it, you know, once you've got something in your head, you can, um, you know, you just, you just get it damn as fast as you can.

And, uh, I mean, I, I quite often, I, I'll actually dream. Um, the layouts because, uh, obviously if it jumps in my head, um, there's that little, uh, moment when you're waking up in the morning and, um, sometimes something will present itself and, um, you know, I tend to go with my gut instinct so that if something's being dreamt and it's probably, um, probably the right thing to, to go with.

So yeah, it happens. Uh, I, I'd seen no, probably 50% at the time or when I'm working on something, you know, this playing round in my head that that's really how I can compare. Um, and, uh, you know, concepts will. .

Jim: I

mean, hopefully that's a good indicator that you enjoy what you do, because I would imagine the vast majority of people in the world do not want to be dreaming about work.

Um, ,

Graham Humphreys: I don't want to be dreaming about it.

Jim: True. Well, yeah, sure. Yeah. Just, yeah. But

they're probably much better dreams than, you know, uh, some jobs that I've worked for. Sure. Um-huh. So, so with that, like, what is your, I mean, I, I imagine it's probably different with every commission, but. You know, do, do you have a kind of certain, uh, time of day that you like to work?

Or if things are kind of coming to you in the morning, are you, are you booking it out of bed straight to the studio to kind of get that? Down onto paper or what, what are are

your next moves?

Graham Humphreys: The bed is actually about five feet away from where I'm sitting . Oh, right. Ok. This room? Yeah. It's not, you don't have to go ready far.

No, I, I, I was working from, um, a studio space, you know, uh, within a company, um, you know, probably over the years, uh, Probably a good 30 atd. The, um, 40 years I've been working. So there was a, a bit more of a discipline. You actually, you know, you, you got off your arsen, got into a, you know, a location, you know, got digital sort of commutes and such.

Um, just since the pandemic and I've been working from home and actually it's been, I'm fine. So, uh, I relinquished the space I was using and um, yeah, I'm just a chi kind of where I was when I started, I suppose really in this same corner, , funny enough, I am quite disciplined about work. Um, everything has a deadline and, um, you know, you need to get it done and, um, you know, you have to respect the clients, you know, needs.

And, uh, so, uh, I, I tend to work, uh, you know, generally office hours simply because that's when, um, you know, people are gonna communicate with you, um, within their own hours. Uh, but yeah, of course I, I'll work into the evening if I have to, quite often on the weekends as well. I need to as. . Um, but yeah, you, yeah.

If you're free, do you have that little bit of, um, freedom to actually play around with those hours, I guess as, as when needed? Um, but yeah,

I'm, I'm, I'm, as I say, I'm quite disciplined about, um, hours and getting stuff done.

Jim: And is, is it, is there any kind of, um, like specific materials that you feel like you have that, that you really want to use?

Um, or are you quite. Flexible in, in kind of the, the materials that you're using or,

Graham Humphreys: well, over the years, I mean, you know, I trained at colleges, um, designers garage for all my painting. And, um, so that's what I'm still using now. Uh, I, I guess, you know, you'd play around with things and, um, and probably in the early days on, I had a sort of technique it developed, which used a bit of oil pastel work and, um, uh, colored, uh, colored pencils as well.

You know, just over the years I kind of just found that, um, I kind of dropped the additional stuff and just, you know, it's all purely, um, brush now and I've learned, um, but techniques kind of yeah. Has, uh, Evolved, I guess, over time. Um, but uh, you know, it's kept quite pure now. Um, I mean, I've got the, the other thing I've done is learned to, um, just stick with the basic set of, uh, pigments as well, where I'm having, you know, a huge array of, um, All the different color, greens and blues and everything.

You can't just stick to a very small number of, um, uh, uh, pure colors, which you can just mix everything from those. And also the paper I'm using is that I've been using for the last, uh, probably 30 years or so because it's just, you know, I know what works well, it's a burst on all surface, and, um, gives me all the textures that, uh, I, I like to.

And, um, yeah, so it's kind of a, it's a, it's a pretty prescribed thing nowadays. I mean, I guess the challenge is to keep the work evolving and, um, you know, try to repeat yourself too much in, in the way you approach things. You know, you, you don't look, uh, you want, don't want to have a formula such as this just gets, you know, you use over and over again.

But, um, that kind of is pretty reliant on the, um, subject matter anyway, though. I mean, the. Um, you know, the commissions themselves will shape what you do, um, and, and the subject matter will shape what you

do. Yeah. Like that's where, I guess, you know, you, you, you hope that things will look different.

Jim: Yeah, for

sure.

I like, uh, as you're saying with the pigments, and I imagine having just, um, an array of them, like every color under the sun kind of becomes a. Yeah, I think I've said this a few times on the podcast, like when you can do literally anything, like what do you do? You know, and it's kind of good to be, I don't think limited is the right words, but kind of more, have a more focused palette.

Um, that, that, that, that you kind of draw from.

Graham Humphreys: Well, what other thing is of course, is that, um, you know, all, all the work I do is, is ultimately for print. Mm-hmm. , um, I mean, some stuff yeah. Just goes online. Of course it does. But, uh, mostly, you know, that that's my job as an illustrator to, to, um, do stuff which is, uh, for physical media.

Um, so yeah, this posters, blu ray covers, you know, record covers, magazine, workbook covers, all that kind of stuff. I mean, I, so you have to be aware of what, what will actually translate into print, you know, because, um, you know, something had to learn. Um, um, and in, and sort of, I guess after leading college, really you, you realize that certain things just don't print very.

Certain colors. So you, you have to know what will reproduce well. And that nowadays I find that, um, I don't have any issues with, um, the colors I use. I, I, I have, uh, a couple of illustrative friends who, who struggle with this idea that, um, they work digitally, you know, they work in, um, screen colors and of course when once you confer screen colors, , um, you know, separate for print.

Um, you know, you go from red, green and, um, blue screen colors to, you know, blue yellow black and red and, uh, um, it, it just kills the, um, luminosity, um, right. And, and you know, certain greens to stone, you can't print certain greens. And, uh, you know, with, with processed colors when you go to print cost and.

Oranges, um, not, but look a bit dirty. And, uh, one of the things you learn is that, um, if you, uh, in certain colors, uh, against each other, you know, contrasting colors, um, what it will do is just actually enhance the, the look of those, um, Colors, which don't reproduce so well. So if you're using orange for instance, you can use, um, you know, some sort of blue against it or, or green.

And what it will do, just get the illusion of that, um, that color of orange is much brighter than it actually is. So that's another thing I've learned over the years was the, the color palettes themselves, um, from adapted to, to, um, maximize the kind of the look on. ,

Jim: it sounds kind of like, um, a similar principle to like cooking or baking.

Like you've got the ,

like

Yeah, like the, the different kind of flavor profiles that balance each other out, but just, you know, obviously visual rather than, and I hope people aren't eating your paintings, uh, , but, um, but yeah, I guess, I guess that's, you know, everything's about balance really, ultimately when it comes down to it.

And yeah, I imagine that's, another one of those things that just you, you learn over, over time.

Graham Humphreys: Yeah, definitely. I mean, uh, no, I think it's a very good analogy and, uh, uh, yeah, certainly. Um, obviously I have my own approach to, to the work I do and, uh, yeah, my own preferred ways of working and um, yeah, there, there are sort of, uh, color palettes, which, uh, reoccur

and simply because I think, you know, that they seem to work for this sort of subject matter. I mean, um, you know, when you're looking at horror films and. There are colored tropes, I guess, and, uh, you know, you can't sort of escape those, um mm-hmm. , but sometimes, you know, it's, it's, it's interesting to kind of work against, uh, um, what's expected.

So, uh, you know, for many, many years, um, you would see a lot of blue, uh, you know, night night colors, I guess moonlight colors, uh, in horror films. And I always, you know, tried to do stuff which was not, you know, basic nighttime colors. So, uh mm-hmm. , he'd work against that. Um, yeah, for me that's kinda more interesting.

I guess. I, I tend not to use a lot of blue in the work, um, simply because it's, um, you know, natural colors are, uh, I'm too comfortable, I guess. I like to use unnatural colors.

Yeah. Yeah.

Jim: And I guess I think you've got a really good, um, eye for, uh, different skin tones as well. Uh, particularly the, what we do in the shadows, uh, poster.

that kind of, you know, is, is is there an element of, because you, I I, you know, this is just pure speculation. Like, I imagine you want it to be distinctive, but it needs to kind of stand out and have like another worldly kind of look to it. It needs to be kind of, you know, eyecatching and, and stuff like that.

Like how, how do. Balance that, um, or you, I mean, you may have already answered that question, um, in what you were saying just now, but, but yeah. Could you, could you kind of gimme a bit of an insight into

that?

Graham Humphreys: Well, when you use that example this now, and that's a good, good one to use because, um, you know, when you've got, uh, sort of four big head shots, On a poster to, um, then, uh, you know, if you're just using flesh tones, then you know, you can of just end up with this kind of big, fleshy, fleshy mess, really.

Sure. And, uh, you know, the idea is that, um, you can, you can, um, use colorways just to, uh, you know, uh, signify different characters. And, uh, you know, that thing is the, I think, you know, the human mind is very good at, um, um, you know, unpicking stuff, you know, Somebody's faces are, if you painted blue and another one green and little and purple, then you know, the, the brain still, uh, sees, you know, recognizable human form and, um mm-hmm.

you know, it's, it's, uh, it doesn't have to be fresh colors to be, you know, human. Um, should we say. Now, I, I probably something I learned from looking at film posters when I was a lot younger. You know, I realize that quite often, um, you know, we're around than using natural colors, um, you know, that there'd be sort of heightened, a heightened reality.

And, um, you know, it, it's, again, I think the, the brain's probably capable of, um, uh, recognizing, you know, human form without some having to have a pure, you know, human colors. . Mm-hmm. .

Jim: And speaking of, uh, inhuman colors, one of my favorite posters of yours, um, is for one of my favorite films of the last maybe 10 years or so for, uh, psycho Goreman.

Um, oh yeah, yeah. Uh, really love that film. It's, um, just hit me by surprise completely. And it's kind.

It's really

interesting because it's that mix of, um, new and kind of older styles of filmmaking in terms of the, um, uh, the practical sets, the practical costumes and the practical effects that they did. Um, I, I just kind of wanted to ask you about how, I'm trying to figure out how to word this.

Apologies. Um, you know, you started with Evil Dead and you've done Nightmare on Elm Street. Um, House of a thousand corpses and you know, you can kind of track horror films through your posters. Like, could you gimme a bit of an insight or just any thoughts that you might have on kind of where horror was when you started and where it is now.

Like, it'd be really interesting to hear from your perspective what things are wildly different, what things overlap, what things are exactly the same. Like what, what's changed?

Graham Humphreys: Um, yeah, that's an interesting, uh, question and it's, um, I'm sort of struggling to kind of think where I can take that. I mean, I, I guess that, uh, our audience expectation has changed, um, significantly over the years.

And, uh, you know, what's interesting for me is that, um, I, I've just seen. So much of, uh, an interest in the films in the 1980s, you know, as, um, uh, you know, a lot of reissues of, of facts of, I suppose, a golden age for

a lot of people, you know? Um, and remakes, of course from that era. Mm-hmm. . Um, and, uh, it, it is interesting cause I, I, you know, I've had my work, um, identified as being, you know, quintessentially of that.

which, uh, I don't think it is because when I was doing well work in the 1980s, I was, I was referring back to, you know, posters being only posters from the 1950s and sixties, uh, forties perhaps even. So that, that's really where my, um, my, my kind of, um, um, I guess my exploration was at the time. And, um, I guess because, um, you know, you kind of take all these influences and make them your.

So I guess that's where, um, you know, identifiable style might have evolved, I guess loaded up. So rather than you were dead looking like it was a paste, the 1940s in the 1950s, um, it kind of just took on its own. Kind of, uh, texture if you like. And, um, so I guess that that kind of makes it part of that era.

And, um, you know, for me, um, um, a lot of those, uh, horror films in 1980s quite, you know, visceral and, um, and that's why, you know, as far as I was concerned, they needed, uh, heavily textured, um, illustration and technique just to kind of try to. , um, I guess emulate the sort of, uh, the feel of the film. I mean, it's, you know, for me, I've never liked, um, glossy illustration work.

That's not to say that it's, it's bad, it's just that that's not my preference. So, for instance, when I was at art college, you know, people were, uh, really fascinated and, you know, everybody wanted to do airbrush works, you know, just kind of hyper real, um, kind of look, you know, people just love the idea of, you know, being able to.

I, I'd recreate the look at Chrome, you know, um, and, and this kind, sort of smooth, um, you know, to me un unrealistic kind of look, I guess I, I, I just really didn't like that to wonder. It is, you know, poorly probably because of, um, the era that, uh, we were in, you know, probably 19 76, 90 77, and, you know, um, recessing to see punk rock and, um, you know, that, that was such.

The, again, it's like a texture, I guess a music texture. It's kind of of aggressive and rough and, um, um, was, you know, very, um, unlike the sort of prog rock, I guess, which was, uh, quite dominant at the time mm-hmm. , which, you know, describes being, it's like the airbrush music, you know? Mm-hmm. and more interested in the punk rock stuff.

And, um, that's really, uh, Probably how, how, how my illustration style, uh, developed. But um, you know, I guess looking over the, uh, sort of 40 decades of my work, um, certainly if you look at Night Man El Street, that poster against dead you can see is a huge difference And mm-hmm. , that's the way responding to, to the films at the time.

And, uh, yeah, probably, um, you know, you mentioned Psycho Gorman. I really don't know how to place that really, because. You know, I was just doing what I thought was right for the film and um, um, probably there is a sort of a n to classic posters from the 1980s and, um, other people's work. This this would be, and yeah, an element of B stuff, you know, from the sort of, um, fifties and sixties.

I mean, that there's an element of that in the, anyway, they, so, um, so yeah, I'll kind of, yeah, draw some wherever I think, I think the. reference will, will work best and, uh, you know, every job respond to, in a different kind of way for that reason. Um, so, you know, in terms of ha have films changed? Well, they have, I guess that, uh, technology is driven.

Mm-hmm. changed. And also, as I say, once again, audience expectation as well though, because, um, you know, I think that, uh, uh, it, it's, it's, I'll go to the Fright Fest every the year in Lester Square. So each year you get a, this kind of, uh, you do kind of see a kind of a, um, a general trend in films. Um, and, and it's very much influenced by, um, probably, you know, Real world, um, issues.

Mm-hmm. might be going on the time. I mean, I, you know, filmmakers respond to, to, to, to what goes on around them. And, um, um, you know, horror films are a great metaphor, uh, for, for, for things that we, um, you know, fear and, uh, um, you know, can quite process I guess though. And, um, it's a great way to. How we deal with fear and um, you know, it's can be sort of, uh, quite cathartic and think too to what something, um, which, you know, has, its, its genesis I guess in, in, in something which, um, has been disquieting.

So, you know, we, over the years you'd see, um, probably lots of, uh, films with the sort of body horror, then maybe another year of pm sort of home invasion would be the big thing. And, um, you know, obviously relates the fears of, uh, stoked by. Know, Brexit and Donald Trump, I guess in the whole immigration was just a forefront, everybody's mind.

And, um, but yeah, blood horror, I guess, you know, when, during the 1980s when, um, the, um, you know, AIDS was, it was a terrifying thing for a lot of people. And I think that, um, films responded to that. So he had a lot of, uh, uh, body horror and, um, you know,

disease led stuff for both of a better way of putting it. But I mean, I, I think, you know, the ZO genre. It's very much, um, uh, an answer to that as well. Um, you know, sort of, I guess people fear of death and, uh, you know, seeing the living dead is, you know, quite, um, quite an interesting kind of metaphor for so many things.

So this sort, uh mm-hmm. living death of people, kind of, you know, seem to exist in sometimes though, I mean, um, I think Romero's, uh, trio Films color, you handled that very well, though this sort of, uh, especially I think, um, a dawn of the Dead, you know, this call of, uh, setting in a shopping mall, there's, people are just surrounded by this consumerism and, um, yeah.

Sort of this kind of like state. But yeah, I think, I think that's, that's really how, how films change and evolve. It's really, you know, a response to, you know, the times and done. I'm sure, you know, we're gonna be getting a lot of responses to. Um, Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I mean, that, that's gonna play out in horror films and, you know, we'll see that around next year, two years probably, how, how that plays out.

Mm-hmm. .

Jim: Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Like one, one thing that I did wonder was if you'd ever had any pushback from the, um, you know, B B F C or, um, MP A for any of the posters or, well, I don't, I don't really. , if they're the body that kind of decide about, uh, those. But I, I'm sure there is a body, um, for kind of advertising and promotion like with.

You know, talking about the eighties and the nineties and stuff, a lot of films were banned, like the video nasties and stuff like that. And I dunno if you worked on any of those specifically, but, you know, around around that time where horror was kind of becoming more and more mainstream, like, did you have to rejig any of the work that you had done before it could go out?

Graham Humphreys: Well, largely, um, I was kind of aware of. Would be acceptable anyways. I mean, you, you, I think in your own mind, you

kind of, you, you, you kind of have your own, uh, parameters, I guess, though you kind of know what's going to offend and what isn't. And, um, there are certain things you, you, you don't do because you know it's gonna be in a public space.

And, um, certainly, uh, VHS sleeves, um, at the time, uh, there was, uh, an advertising standard set up, especially for VHS covers. Mm-hmm. and. So they would have to be passed. Now you get all, uh, some logo on them. Um, and yeah, so certain things he couldn't do, uh, um, at the time. But I mean, I think the only, the only will I had two.

Um, two jobs I worked on, which did, um, and, um, come a bit of a corporate in some ways. Uh, one of them was, um, Freddy's Revenge, Street part two, uh, and only really on the advertising, um, around cinemas, um, particularly Lester Square. I notice they did big hoarding and uh, for some reason, I think, I think can't remember exactly what year.

Jamie Bulger, um, you know, murder Happened, but I think it was part, in part because of that, which obviously kickstart the um, uh, video, um, stuff. But, uh, um, they, they, cause it had a school bus on it, you know, it's just, they come, I had, they had to remove the Sure Word School, us and also, um, and just to.

Taylor even further removed the, uh, knives from, um, Freddy's hand. It was called Just Little Bit Stupid then, because a whole point poster. Really. And then, uh, we did, um, a poster for, um, Peter Jackson as, um, brain Dead. Mm-hmm. , uh, which was a, I mean, that, that was a very fit poster. It was a, it was photographic post, so I, I worked on it.

But, um, yeah, there's no illustration involved there at all. It was just a still from the film, which was. A very bloody, um, still Of course. Yeah. Whole thing is absurd and humorous. That's the whole point. And uh, so the main character was kind of, you know, had a sort, uh, I guess it was like a strimmer or something he was using and he was just, you know, she's completely covered in blood and there's blood flying everywhere.

Mm-hmm. just a very bloody ketchup basically. And, uh, and the. The London Underground Hall set of, uh, rules and regulations to, to what would, um, be acceptable. So for instance, you couldn't show people smoking cigarettes. Mm-hmm. certain things just weren't allowed. And they, they, um, refused to, uh, uh, use the post on the underground,

which of course was actually the main arena of that we, uh, we're actually advertising on.

Sure. So, The, um, there was no time to do anything else. So, uh, the, the only solution, uh, was to just simply not use the Red Ink on the poster. So ended up being a green poster and that was ly acceptable. So, uh, yeah, very silly. But, um, cuz yeah, the image was the same. We, everybody could tell was just a very bloody image.

Mm-hmm. . Um, but it's just in ingrained rather than red .

Jim: Yeah. It's funny isn't it, like the strange solutions that you need to come up with sometimes just to kind of. Bend to the rules. Um, but yeah, I think, you know, you see that in film as well. Um, , uh, you know, certain sequences being put in black and white, uh, so that they can get past certain, uh, review boards and things like that.

Um, you, uh, you mentioned, uh, punk music just now and, uh, you've recently done, um, I think is it recent work that you've done with the Damned for the

Graham Humphreys: recent release? Yeah. Yeah, that's right. That's, uh, yeah. Um, new record coming out in April. Yes. Uh, I, I mean that, I mean, I'm, I'm, you know, big fan of the Damned and, uh, have done bit and pieces for them over the years.

Just, um, you know, t-shirt designs and such, like, and, uh, I guess this is the first time I've actually done a, an actual record cover for them. But yeah, that happened because, um, um, singer Dave Vayan wasn't very happy with the direction the record company were taking in, uh, taking the. Towards, uh, he just wasn't happy with the, some visuals he's being fed.

And, uh, uh, because we'd done a bit of work together, um, I think particularly the, uh, night of thousand vampires, um, event they did at Paladium Theater. Uh, we did a poster for that, which was a, you know, pretty much in this sort mode of a sort 19th, 1930s, I think that was the, uh, uh, concept 1930s horror film. Mm.

Look, so he, he, you know, I think there was mission of trust there that he, he knew that time I could probably, um, represent his own vision of the way things should look. And so this year has to draft in the last

minute, just before Christmas. And, um, Todd Beck be two weeks before the, uh, cover had to go to print.

And, um, so he showed me what had been done already. Mm-hmm. , uh, he wasn't very happy with it. And, really, um, making use of the title. There was a title treatment, which was basically the name of the album, darked Delic, but picked out in, um, same style as the Hollywood sign, that that kind of, uh mm-hmm. fault and, and that kind of arrangement.

Letters as well. The, so, uh, um, so that was something that had to appear already. But, um, you know, it is kind of very much about, um, having a picture of the band and just how, how, how, you know, that that would. Um, alongside the, the logo and his idea was that, uh, um, the light source should be the letters themselves as if they, they were cut out of a, you know, uh, uh, some sheet or something and that light source was behind and shining through.

And his reference point was, um, um, jaw con. , we just see that logo in the beginning, just a light color shining through, just being picked out. Mm-hmm. . Uh, and so there was that. And then, um, I, I, I just found another John Carpenter reference, which, um, seems to work quite well, which is, um, um, the poster for in a America of Madness, which, um mm-hmm.

actually, it's, uh, uh, it stuck a shot of a book, you know, uh, see from the top and with the pages kind of flicking. And, um, the, the flicking of the pages actually have some of the imagery from the films. , um, kind of emanating. And so really that, that was the, uh, um, the idea for that. And actually the course.

The other thing is, um, referring back to, uh, uh, what we're doing in a shadow is that piece of . But again, I've just picked out all the different faces in different colors because, um, that just seems to be a natural way of, um, you know, avoiding just, you know, tall flesh tones again. Mm-hmm. . Ah, sure. So, yeah, so, uh, I know it's been a bit of ancillary work on that as well because, um, because I guess the, um, a lot of the themes in, in, in record and, um, the whole darked delic thing with this Hollywood sign, uh, it will, yeah, there, there's sort of a lot of film reference there.

So, um, When the record company sent just as a proper promotion for the, um, lp, they would wanted to do a kind, like a fake film poster, I

guess, um, in the psychedelic world, which, uh, you know, they were, I mean, um, one of a couple of references I was given, um, were, um, they've been Avengers TV series for instance, and, uh, uh, and uh, in a sort of film wall.

And, um, there were some, uh, couple of videos made for, uh, um, to promote the, um, some of the tracks on the . And, uh, so there were some images already, uh, i, I could actually draw on, but my main inspiration was, um, it was a beautiful poster for, uh, film, um, thing to die ball. Uh, and uh, so that was kinda my, my sort of inspiration source for that.

And, uh, so yes, so as a poster as well, which, um, To, to, to add to the old B color. Nice.

Jim: Is there, is there much of a difference in working with, um, uh, you know, musicians and filmmakers, or is it, um, or would you say record labels and studios?

Graham Humphreys: That, that, that's actually, that well was used to come there. There were egos, of course.

They're not egos

Jim: in filmmaking

Graham Humphreys: at all. There are lots of egos in filmmaking. when the camera used to, but yeah. Um, Uh, I guess with, with bas, yes, it is a different kind of thing. Um, but interestingly, any band that comes to me for a record cover are we working with a band, for instance, um, Gama Bomb, who are an Irish color, the flash metal band.

Mm-hmm. . But all their, uh, all their reference points are, are, uh, in film. So in fact, actually, uh, you, you kind of find you, you are approaching record cover works in the same way you, you are approaching film poster works. I mean, I. There's kind of a narrative thread somewhere in there. And, um, uh, and you know, Fred, if you look at, um, we know the Iron Maiden comes always used, so darkness.

Mm-hmm. main character Eddie, um, over and over again. Yeah. And in the same way that, you know, well it works on, uh, sort of, um, the Fright Fest poster each year. You know, got a character I use each time.

Interestingly, gall have their own little, um, sort mascot character being appeared on the, uh, certainly the last tea covers I've done for them.

And, um, so I guess, yeah, there, there are, uh, I mean, to that extent, you know, there, there, there is similarity that I find and I, I probably just tend to approach those things like as if they're films anyway. Mm.

Jim: Mean, over the years you, you've done a lot of incredible work.

Um, is there anything that kind of sticks out as like a lesson you've learned or did you have like a. A penny drop moment of like, oh, that's how I should approach this. Whether it's the kind of business side of things or the, um, or the illustration side of things. I, I, is there like one moment that kind of sticks out for you that you've kind of, that's feel, that you feel like has kind of changed your approach or the way that you go about things?

Graham Humphreys: . There were a couple of things. Uh, I was really relate back to the early days, I suppose. Um, for instance, when we did the poster, um, you know, I made the title very much part of the artwork. So it was painted on mm-hmm.

uh, and it was you an essential, um, Part of the layout. And uh, I think that's something I, I realized was probably a mistake. Um, but it was fine for the, you know, cause it was basically just intended for the UK market. But there were other projects where, um, it was pointed out that, um, if they went to other territories abroad, there would be a, a language change.

And then, you know, the change. And so I, I, I, I realized actually painting a title onto. Place was not a good idea. And um, and, and then, yeah, the other thing we did have with Howard, the evil dad and Nell Street, um, because in both instances I was commissioned to. Quad, um, format posters, and then of course they were gonna be using, um, they were hoping to use same artwork, of course, for the VH VHS covers, but of course, the, you know, the format's completely different.

Diego from landscape to portrait. Uh, so in those instances, I had to recount, um, um, the posters, uh, which, you know, be done quite fast and. Um, you know, not, not great results. I don't think. I mean, I, I think it's evil dead, evil Dead too Notman, Ry uh, whereas Freddy's Revenge actually began life as the, the portrait format.

Mm-hmm. , um, uh, and then had to be repainted for, um, or post it, um, in slightly from form. Uh, yes. But, uh, um, so he said, kind of knowing that, uh, , you know, some stuff has to, um, reappear in, uh, in, in different formats. Mm-hmm. , um, it, it's kind of knowing that there are ways and means of dealing with that, which I didn't understand, you know, at the time.

Mm-hmm. , um, even now I still get occasional jobs where they say, well, this will also have to work as a sort of, you know, banner across the website as well as, Portrait format, you contract, you have to kind of work out ways of, um, making an image work so it could be reconfigured. Sure. Um, so I, I've done a few times.

Jim: And finally, like, is, is there any like a piece of advice that you might pass on to somebody who's. You know, picking up the pen or the paintbrush for the first time. Someone who's maybe looking to make a career out of illustration. Um, you know, any, any bit of wisdom that maybe has been passed down to you, uh, from, from somebody else

or,

Graham Humphreys: well, firstly I'd say is don't bother because , I drink on the competition.

uh, the, the internet of course. You know, the illustration has just changed, you know, so much over the last 40 years. It's, you know, in terms of who commissions where it gets commissioned. I mean, and you know, in the early eighties, uh, there were a lot of agents who were, you know, illustration agencies and, um, everybody was on their books would be busy all the time and, you know, and a lot of illustrators churning stuff and yeah, just guess styles have changed and.

Requirements have changed and, uh, you know, stuff has gone online now. So, uh, possibly, um, you know, book covers, uh, magazine work, all that stuff is, um, you know, kind of, no longer are they, the quantity that used to be so that, you know, the, the need for commissioning. Has changed. And, um, I do find that mostly people are responsible for a commissioning illustration work.

Probably, um, uh, less familiar with the, um, with the way kind of a, I guess, um, how do we put this where, um, I guess they're not, they don't understand the process. Mm-hmm. so much. Um, now because, you

know, there's not requirement of the job. I guess they, you know, you kind of commission something that gives the image, uh, and that's it.

Um, whereas in the eighties, you know, was very familiar with, um, they, they had very good working relationships with illustrators, knew exactly how illustration was done, and, um, you know, what, what, what was possible, what wasn't, and. Understanding, you know, how long things would take to do if they wanted, you know, a very good job, you know, quite often just have to allow mm-hmm.

time, you know, the artist time to create that work. Whereas now I think people express stuff instantly and, um, or less, you know, inclined to, um, give you that kind of a, that breathing space. Um, so I, I, I, yeah, again, you learn how to do, do work fast. You do, um, I guess the minimum amounts you can get away with in order to create the, the maximum image, um, effect.

And, uh, you know, that's not cheating at all. It's just literally, you know, you do what you have to do to, to get to where you need to be. But you don't go bit any further than that because that's just like, um, indulgence really though. It's just not, you know, he's not very patient. He anymore, um, than he would.

with the image you've already created. Um, but yeah, again, it, there is a, it's, it always goes back to saying about trust, that the client, you know, has to trust you to deliver the job that's best for that particular subject and, you know, best for their, their, their requirements. Um, but in terms of, um, advice, you know, people starting out, you have one thing I did.

Very fast is that you can't pick and choose your jobs. Mm. Um, if you gym, if you're being freelanced, you, you, you have to be to accept that you're gonna be doing stuff that you're not gonna get excited about. And, um, you know, that certainly was the case for the first 20 years of my mm-hmm. , uh, career as such.

Um, but, um, doing a lot of work, which, uh, I wouldn't even guess that I'd be, you know, doing stuff for educational stuff especially was, um, very old because stuff had to be very visual and, um, very specific and, um, you know, it was, uh, you, you scramble around I think for reference for stuff. I mean, you know, for instance, remember, it's just a classic example would be, um, yeah, that the client needed an image.

Sort of, uh, uh, I think it was like so specific. It was like a 12 year old boy falling in front of a train in Cairo. Um, was like it . He had to kind of, you, so there were the guy trains in. Don't think I had to kind of find images of a train station in, in, in Cairo. And across the, the trains themselves, I have a particular look and then it's like making sure this boy looked like he was 12 years old.

Know how, how, how would they be dressed and stuff like that. So yeah, it was a very specific thing. And, um, uh, yeah, so, so I, I learned pretty quickly that, you know, you, you, you should expect to do, um, unexpected basically and not be precious about, you know, your work. So, uh, alright. You know, it's only in the last, okay.

Again, so about eight years that I've actually just found myself. Pretty much the work I like doing and not having to, um, promise myself doing other things, which, um, you know, perhaps I wouldn't, would be enjoying so much. So that's just a luxury, uh, situation and um, that's really just come about cuz of, um, I've been doing such a long time , uh, I guess people will come to me for, for the work that I like doing, um, because they know that's, that's, you know, that that's what they want at the end of the.

Um, but yeah, I, I've got a, a new book coming out. I had one, um, act a couple years ago and it, I, I was very specific that, um, in, in the last book and this new book as well, that I've got a stage by stage of a job so that people can see how, um, exactly how I work. Um, you know, there's, there's no, um, mystery to it at all, though.

Not very happy. Um, show people what the working method is, because I think it's important if that, um, Franks a reason you, your last me is the advice. Well, the advice is in that, um, that section of the book hopefully, which, which will, um, allow people to, uh, get an understanding about ha ha hang, you know, a real life job works.

Um, I mean as regard as where illustration is, commissions now, I mean, yes, obviously, , um, you know, um, physical media. Yeah. Blue, white covers, things like that. Record, cover work. Um, some, you know, certain amount of poster work. No, it's not, illustration's not mainstream in film post really anymore. Mm-hmm. , uh, you know, it's, it's appropriate for some things, I guess say, but mostly it's gonna being sort more independent, um, uh, sort of film area and that that's, you know, the budget's gonna be a lot lower, but.

you know, you can probably play around and experiment a bit more and have more fun, uh, in, in the sort of independent sector anyway to, uh, but yes, I think the big growth thing has been in the last few years is in gaming and, um, that's really where a lot of illustration work has gone. Mm-hmm. , um, it's remained, you know, um, developing games, one of visual work that has to go on, um, to, to, to create those worlds.

I guess though, in, in. . Um, so yeah, it's really kind of understanding where your market is. If you want to, if you want to be, you know, success, successful illustrator and actually earning a living, you have to understand where that work is going to be and actually tailor your work for that island, for that market.