



# Graphic Design: Record Album Cover

## Introduction

Graphic design is all around you. The booklet you are reading, the magazine in your book bag, the billboard across the street, and the cola can you drank from at lunch all were created through the talents, skills, and knowledge of the **graphic designer**. In fact, graphic designers are **commercial artists** that have specialized in an area of print communications. They work with **media** to communicate feelings, ideas, thoughts, and emotions that will promote, package, and sell products.

Graphic designers work in a variety of environments. Some work in advertising agencies where the focus is on producing advertising media such as newspaper and magazine ads. Others work in large manufacturing companies that produce a variety of products such as screen-printed fabrics, T-shirts, and other items of apparel. Manufacturers also employ the services of graphic design firms that specialize in package design for products of all kinds. One very specialized field of graphic design involves the design and reproduction of record album covers and compact disk labels.

In this activity package, you are going to design a record album cover and carry the design through to production. This activity is a comprehensive one that will require you to use many of the skills and techniques you have developed over the past several semesters of work in graphic communications technology.

## Job Description

A producer for a record label has signed a contract with your favorite recording artist for a new album. Your firm has been hired to develop the design for the album cover. The design will also be used for the insert cover on the artist's compact disk package. You will have to do some **consumer**, or **market research**, develop a design, create the artwork for approval, and then prepare the **final art**, including copy that will appear on the album cover.

The producer wants an attractive, full-color cover design. To be included on the album cover or CD insert are the lyrics for six of the songs, plus a biographical sketch of the artist. A photograph of the artist or group is to be included in the CD insert and on the back cover of the record album.

## Materials and Supplies

To complete this activity, you will need the following materials:

drawing paper, 12" x 18"  
tracing paper  
colored pencils  
non-repro pencil  
colored markers  
spray fixative  
watercolors & brush

technical pens, with India ink  
scissors  
drafting tools  
drawing board  
Rubylith  
X-Acto knife  
tag board, 12" x 12"

illustration board, 12" x 12"  
masking tape  
3 x 5 cards  
pica rule  
proportion wheel  
rubber cement or wax coater  
typesetting equipment

## Establishing the Format

1. Select the artist or group for whom you will develop a record album cover.

2. From the list of words below, select the one that best describes the personality of the artist.

quiet	provocative	cryptic
serious	sentimental	witty
loud	moody	playful
vibrant	serene	turbulent
sad	joyful	inspiring
flamboyant	lively	magical
humorous	intense	relevant
fanciful	spiritual	symbolic
sensuous	restful	conservative

3. Write down a sentence that describes who the artist's predominate audience is. Who buys the artist's recordings?

4. Next write a sentence that describes what the artist's image would be. For example, is the artist a heavy metal, rap, soul, or blues musician?

5. Consider the music style. What is special about the music that sets it apart from others that are similar?

6. Decide if there are factors make the artist popular other than the music itself.

7. Make a list of the artist's past performances, hit recordings, special awards, and special tours.

8. Identify any symbols or trademarks that are commonly associated with this artist.

9. Now decide what kind of presentation you think would make an effective album cover for the "Best of" album for this artist.

## Gathering Information

In addition to creating the design for the album cover, you must also produce the other information that will be on the cover. To do this, you will have to do some research.

1. Bring several empty album covers or compact disk inserts to class.

2. Look at the covers and inserts. Make a list of all the different kinds of information contained on them. You will probably find:

- Song titles and playing times
- Names of the artists
- Biographical sketches
- Company logos
- Label company information
- Names of producers and engineers
- Production and engineering notes
- ISBN codes
- Copyright statements

3. Read the job description carefully. Information you need to gather includes song lyrics, song titles and playing times, some background information about the artist or group, and all the legal notices that need to appear on the cover. Make a list!

4. Use all of your available resources to gather information about your artist. Use your 3 x 5 cards to take notes as you gather the information you need.

5. Your teacher will describe how this process will be accomplished, and give you direction to help put your materials into workable written form.

## The Design Process

1. Begin the design process with **thumbnail sketches**. Don't settle on your first idea. Remember to include space for all of the information that will appear on the cover. (See Figure 1.)

2. Decide on how many **frames** you are going to use. A simple cover is front and back, while more complicated designs have inserts, foldouts, and multiple sleeves. Be as creative as you wish!

3. After you have thumbnails for all the frames, begin work on full-size 12" x 12" **rough layouts**. (See Figure 2.)

4. After the roughs are complete, check your job description. Do you have all the required information located on the design?

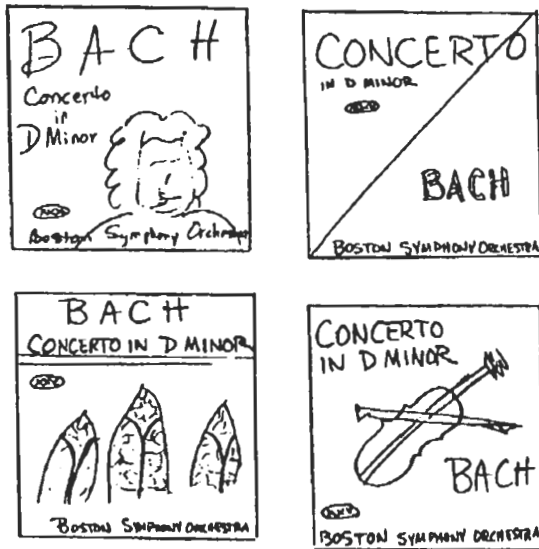


Figure 1 - Thumbnail Sketches

5. Now begin your full-size **comprehensive**. Use 12" x 12" tag board to make a **dummy** album cover. Cover it with illustration board or clean white tag board. You can use multiple frames, sleeves, or other creative ideas, but construct the blank cover with all its elements.

6. Complete the comprehensive in full color. The final comprehensive should look as much like the finished product as possible. Use **grieking** for any type on the cover that is 14 points or smaller. Larger **display type** can be set and pasted in position.

7. Photographs can be included. Create your own or use copies of existing ones.

### Preparing Copy

1. Refer to your design and identify each portion of **type** that needs to be set for the final **mechanical**.

2. Specify type **font**, style, and size for each line or section, including display type, text, headlines, and captions. Specify line width, leading, and column depth.

3. Use your word processing, typesetting, and composition skills to produce **typeset copy** for all of the written content of your cover design. Print out reproducible copies, or **repros**, of all text, display, and type.

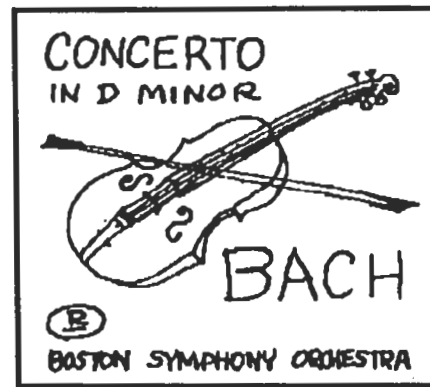


Figure 2 - Rough Layout

### Layout & Paste-up

1. Place a sheet of illustration board on your drawing table. Square the sheet, and layout an image area 12" x 12" for the front and back cover panels. Make additional panels as necessary. Use your non-reproducible pencil for all layout lines.

2. Place corner marks at all four corners.

3. Use your blue pencil to layout guidelines and placement boxes for all the elements of the design.

4. On the base art, ink in all black lines, rules, or art as required.

5. Cut, trim, and burnish into position all type, body copy, and display type that will print as black, using rubber cement or a waxer to adhere.

6. Cover your board with a tissue paper overlay to protect the copy.

### Color Separations

1. Begin by making a separation chart. Identify solid colors first.

2. Select the colors that will print as **solids** (100%) from the Pantone color chart.

3. Identify all tints by % and make a list, specifying color and percentage of **tint**.

4. Decide what colors will be printed as solids, as pure tints, or as combinations of colors.

5. Make a list of the color separations required to reproduce the design.

6. Use Pantone, or acetate overlays, to create the mechanical color separations as required. If possible, make color key proofs of your work.

## Making Your Presentation

1. You are going to assume the role of the graphic designer as you present your completed work to the client.

2. Gather your materials, comprehensives, mechanicals, and proofs.

3. Review your format; write an outline defining what decisions you made during the format and design process. Explain why you believe your design represents the artist. This is your opportunity to "sell" your client on your performance as a graphic designer.

## Safety

Be careful when using X-acto knives as the blades are very sharp. Always use a cutting surface; do not cut on drawing tables or desks. Store the knife with a blade cover.

Be aware of the materials you are using. Read container labels. When using glues and adhesives, read warning labels. Always dispose of materials properly.

## Vocabulary

commercial artist

format

graphic designer

consumer research

client

media

advertising agency

medium

graphic design agency

copyright

illustrator

bar code

ISBN code

## Ecology

A more ecological method of adhering art to the layout is to use a waxer, rather than rubber cement, as the wax will not give off fumes. When you need to move elements on a layout, they can be lifted easily, moved, and reburnished into position.

## On Your Own

1. Visit a record store, browsing through the album section. Look for unusual album cover formats, such as those using die cuts, embossing, foil embossing, or fold-out panels.

2. Collect album covers that represent different music styles, such as rock, country, pop, classical, or reggae, and bring them to class. Discuss the various cover designs. What elements did the designer use to represent the content of the album? Can you tell what kind of music is on the album from the cover design?



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## **TEACHER GUIDE**

### **GRAPHIC DESIGN: RECORD ALBUM COVER**

**Objectives:** Upon completion of this assignment, students will be able to:

- Identify in written terms the music style, performances, type of music, and personality of a musical artist or group to establish the format for a graphic design project.
- Research selected packaging to determine content arrangement, legal restrictions, and suitability for production of a record album design.
- Develop skills in research techniques, library skills in determining content, and note-taking skills for a research/writing assignment.
- Use the graphic design process to create a workable design for a record album cover.
- Use computer applications to set type, display type, and copy as required by the format.
- Illustrate the message using commercial art techniques and materials.
- Prepare camera ready art for reproduction purposes.

#### **Helpful Hints:**

1. Your students will really "get into" this assignment, so let their imaginations run wild. Encourage alternate solutions to the design, selection of content, and format of the package.
2. Ask students to bring in empty album covers and/or CD inserts; use them as a center of discussion on the varieties of music, design, etc.
3. Use examples of designs that "speak out" and telegraph a message as to what type of music is contained. Ask students why they feel that way.
4. Here is an opportunity to open some doors for alternative music listening. Bring in some "classical" or "theme" music. Allow your students to bring in music as well. Tell them they can play their selection if they are willing to listen to a selection of yours. Monitor the student selections for appropriateness. If you are not really up on classical or new wave music (Peaceful Solutions, Windham Hill), ask your music or chorus teacher; they probably will have a great selection. Here is another opportunity for some interdisciplinary exchange as well!
5. Arrange for a library visit when you are ready to do some research on music, music history, and background biographies. Also ask your students to bring in music magazines such as *Rolling Stone*.
6. Ask the librarian to explain how to do a library search to your class. This is an excellent way to get the students interested in the library. They will be working on a topic to which they can relate!

**TEACHER GUIDE**  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN: RECORD ALBUM COVER (Cont'd.)**

7. Teach students how to use 3 x 5 cards to take notes by category. Examples could be early childhood, formative years, early performances, awards, hit singles, hit albums, other artists in the group, formal education, and music experience. Have students use these categories to identify or research information about their artist. If you need help, ask your English Department Head to explain the process to your class.
8. After research has been completed, demonstrate how to create a topic outline. Then show your students how to write a paragraph as an example.
9. If you can schedule a computer lab for the word processing, do so.
10. Hang up examples of covers around the room or on the bulletin board. Create an exciting visual and musical environment!
11. Music videos are a great way to look at images and discuss what images mean. You will want to preview them first however. A TV/VCR with music videos playing is a creative atmosphere; use it! There are many excellent videos that work with this assignment. Check with your music department.
12. Here is a fun alternative. If your students know of a "group" in your school who have a band, have them visit your classroom or even do a performance live! Then have them tell your class about themselves and their music. Have your students design an album for them. They can pose as models for photographs. (See the studio photography assignment.) The group can be the "client" and can even select the winning design!
13. Work with your art department. If you have students who just cannot draw, they can "contract" it out. Get some art students to help out with illustrating. The art teacher is also a good resource for art supplies for this assignment.
14. When the work is all done, make arrangements for a "show". Display the finished products.



**MATH APPLICATION**  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN: RECORD ALBUM COVER**

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Student Name

In all types of jobs and occupations, you will need the ability to apply mathematics effectively. Here are a few examples of how math skills are used in relation to this activity.

There are many facets of the record industry, from large recording companies to small record shops. Working in either situation, you will need to use math to solve everyday problems.

Sometimes, in order to solve a math problem, you need to know information that is not given in the problem.

**Example:**

The owner of the Hot Tunes Record Shop purchased 16 new record cabinets. The entrance of the store is 36 inches wide. Each cabinet is 2 1/2 feet wide. How many inches wider is the entrance of the new store than each cabinet?

You need to know how many inches there are in a foot.

$$1 \text{ foot} = 12 \text{ inches}$$

So each record cabinet is 2 1/2 feet x 12", or 30" wide.

$$36 \text{ inches} - 30 \text{ inches} = 6 \text{ inches}$$

The entrance of the store is 6 inches wider than the cabinet.

**Write the hidden information; then solve the problem.**

1. One wall of the store is 12 yards long. If each record cabinet is 4 feet long, how many record cabinets can fit along the wall?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Each record cabinet holds 17 dozen records. How many records do the 16 new record cabinets hold?



**MATH APPLICATION**  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN: RECORD ALBUM COVER (Cont'd.)**

3. Kevin and the owner worked 10 hours each day during the month of August to ready the store for its grand opening in September. For how many hours did Kevin work during the month of August?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. A box of 72 record albums was shipped to the store. The contents of the box weighed a total of 36 pounds. How many ounces did each record album weigh?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. The Hot Tunes record shop is open from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. six days a week. For how many hours is it open each year?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. The shop holds a sale every other month. How many sales does the shop hold over a five year period?

**QUIZ**  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN: RECORD ALBUM COVER**

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Student Name

**True or False:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Even a gum wrapper design can be considered Graphic Art.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A package design can influence your decision to purchase the item contained in the package.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Making decisions about size, content, and arrangement refers to the format of the design.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. An ISBN code is used for inventory control and is important on package designs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Making a comprehensive is the first step in the design process.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Rough sketches are usually done full size.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A dummy relates to a doll used to prevent accidents in a design studio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Greeking is used for display type only.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A type font refers to a specific size of a type face.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A solid color is 100% in terms of density.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Burnishing type refers to changing its size.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Blue pencils are used because they don't reproduce lines on a mechanical.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Corner marks are placed inside the margins on a sheet layout.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Body copy is usually 14 points or smaller.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Screen tints are identified by a % designation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. A color key is usually done to check the quality of a color separation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. A comprehensive is usually done in full color.

**QUIZ**

**GRAPHIC DESIGN: RECORD ALBUM COVER (Cont'd.)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. It is always acceptable to use copyrighted art.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. A proportion wheel is used to determine the shooting percentage of an illustration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Rubylith® is a chemical used to clean rollers on a press.