

Standing on A Beach / Staring at The Sea: How the Sleeve Art Made for The Singles of The Band the Cure



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Abstract

Graphic design as a visual design discipline provides pre-print solutions by organizing the main two elements: type and image. Every graphic design presents a product or a service, and an album cover as a graphic design product presents the music and the musician besides protecting the recorded medium. Music as an art form based on sound and silence has been recording since the end of the 19th century for collecting and distributing the music to the masses. The primitive sleeves created for titling and protection turned into tools of labeling, offering and presenting as form they got and the materials they have been made of. Among its similar the 1986 released compilation album of the English rock band The Cure, *Standing on a Beach / Staring at the Sea* certificated by five times with platinum and six times with gold and critically acclaimed as the one of the finest albums of the „80s. The aim of this paper is to put forth the making of the sleeve art of the singles of the band The Cure with its unique attitude, which also shows the tight bonds among various graphic design elements like line, color, tone, light and shades and music. Does the sea as black and white in the background, the Figure old and thorn and the lettering in far behind have a relation of the music the band The Cure is made?

Keywords: Graphic design; Sleeve art; The Cure; Sea; Design elements

Introduction

Music as an artistic expression and cultural outcome [1] has been packaged with different kind of sleeves since it has been recorded for re-listening. Initially these recordings made for professional purposes only like record studies, collecting and archiving. On primitive sleeves it is fair enough to have the written information only like the date, place and names of the performance and the performers. But when it comes to the times of mass production and selling the music, the circumstances have changed. From that time on there is a new component: the buyer, someone who is both a listener and a collector, a fond of music so a fan of the performer / performers. As a conclusion the primitive forms of sleeves created for titling and protection only turned into tools of labeling, presenting and advertising surfaces for graphic design to organize. Graphic design as a two-dimensional design discipline organizes type and images according to the product's needs, usage and functions [2]. Graphic design serves to sectors like food industry, every kind of media, pharmaceutical industry, fashion and many others with its own elements shape these types and images under the guidance of its principles. In this paper, music industry has been chosen as the sector graphic design

serves. Among its contemporaries the 1986 released compilation album of the English rock band The Cure, *standing on a Beach / Staring at the Sea* chosen to examine [3]. Because it has been certificated by five times with platinum, six times with gold and critically acclaimed as the one of the finest albums of the „80s.

The sleeve art of the album with its visual elements organized according to visual principles of graphic design accepted as indicators of the auditory experience the album promised to. So, the aim of this paper is to put forth the making of the sleeve art of the singles of the band The Cure with its unique attitude among various visual elements like line, color, tone, light and shades; the visual principles like balance, hierarchy, unity / harmony, dominance / emphasis, similarity and contrast and the band The Cure's music especially in this singles album [4] (Figure 1).

The Study

The study has begun with the examination of the album's musical content; has continued with the visual examination of the sleeve art; resulted with a comparison of the two and concluded by finding out the similarities and contrasts. If the similarities

are more than the contrasts, it can be said that the sleeve art is consistent as physical form and content. If the contrasts are more than the similarities, it can be said that the sleeve art isn't consistent as physical form and content, or it has another aim or meaning. Besides being a musical album, standing on a Beach / Staring at the Sea album labeled as genre post-punk, new wave and gothic rock [5] Post-punk as a style inspired by punk's energy, but left the rock clichés behind. Drew influences from art rock's tendency towards sonic experimentation, linking radical content to radical form; the lyrical surreal imagery and soundscape are used to evoke and signify one mediated phantasy

[6]. Transformed music into an epic of timelessness [7] combined with electronic styles like dub, funk and disco accepted as black, post-punk is under the effect of art and politics. On the other hand, the second one, new wave was more complex as music and lyrics also different than blues and rock & roll; but under the influence of many other styles. And finally the third one, gothic rock with its darker sound than the post-punk and new wave with minor or bass chords, reverbs, dark arrangements or dramatic and melancholic melodies in a combination with themes like sadness, nihilism, dark romanticism, tragedy and melancholy [8-10].



Figure 1: Group Portrait of the band The Cure in 1986.

Source: <https://www.udiscover-music.de/popkultur/>

zeitsprung-27-7-1986-sticht-ein-mann-bei-einem-cure-konzert-auf-sich-ein

The thirteen songs combined for this album are Killing an Arab, Boys Don't Cry, Jumping Someone Else's Train, A Forest, Primary, Charlotte Sometimes, The Hanging Garden, Let's Go to Bed, The Walk, The Love Cats, The Caterpillar, In Between Days and Close to Me. While emotional sensitivity is obvious on some of the titles of the songs, the same emotional sensitivity easily can be seen when reading / listening the lyrics of the rest. As a single compilation album it marks the first decade of the band The Cure from increasingly dark and tormented music to dominant, melodic bass lines, whiny, strangled vocals, and a lyric obsession with existential and almost literary despair: Gothic new wave [11]. Songs based on the limited number of the musical instruments, which are six-strings bass, acoustic guitar, Smith's voice and the string sound of Solina – the synthesizer [12-16]. Taylor in his 2006 dated study titled The A to X of Alternative Music defined The Cure music as initially began alongside post-punk bands that were driven by punk spirit, but soon withdrew into themselves and developed a stillness which begat a sense of epic power and serve them well for three albums, conforming them as leaders of the goth scene. Unwilling to be typecast, Smith explored the possibilities of pop music and over the course of another four albums reconciled the frivolous and bleak aspects of

their music in a way which might have inspired Pixies amongst others. On the front cover of the album in left hand side of the Figure 2, a black and white realist photograph seen. It is visually clear and plain; the viewer can easily perceive what captured. An old man face seen in a beach, which is almost empty in front of an open sky. He is looking directly in the eye of the viewer closely. He is old, thorn and melancholic in his eyes. His face with the wrinkles and grey striped hair creates a textural contrast with the plain black jacket of him and the sky but creates a textural harmony with the grains of the sand and the rocks. Besides its lack of colors, the photograph's dominant tone is light grey in a combination with pitch black, which increase the emptiness effect creates the feeling of loneliness and melancholy. While the horizon on the photograph placed a little above of the center point of the cover, the head of the figure divide the surface into two equal halves vertically. But the eyes are centered horizontally for a better eye contact, which makes the photograph much more realistic and effective. As seen on the compositional examination on right hand side in Figure 2, there is a grid system consists of equal units both horizontally and vertically. Because there is a diagonal organization an asymmetrical balance established to create inequality concluded in tension.



Figure 2: Sleeve Art: The Front.

Source: Author's Collection

Two amorphous rocks easily can be seen on soft plain light grey sand with their black grounds and white tops. These two rocks have two functions: First they are leading the eye on and send it to the back to the horizon, then to the thin grey line and finally above to the tiny typographic elements, which are the title of the album and the name of the band. The tiny sizes of the letters both suites the thin lines and textures all over the photograph. The typography organized as a one line sentence in same size, type and manner suits both the horizon, the rocks, the wrinkled forehead, the eye & the eyebrows and closed thin lips. So all the visual elements mentioned suit each other as structure and distributed all over the surface not equally but similarly. On Figure 3 the back of the cover seen as a lighter real life photograph without any figures but another interestingly amorphous rock. With its low saturated coloring, emptiness, amorphous rock, grained textures, semi-diagonal composition and tiny lettering this back cover suits the front cover very well, so with the content very well. Approximately same leveled horizon in a combination with the semi-diagonal seaside matches the front cover. The giant amorphous rock / s create / s a heavy weight balanced with the dark stripes of the barcode and tiny lettering of song list centered vertically. Tiny lettering's second function is to lead the eye to the endless horizon to nourish the emptiness effect. Inside the booklet there are three different approaches seen both suits the same design attitude with some exceptions inside the general loop like

low saturated tones, diagonal compositions and texture the most dominant element: On Figure 4 the details of the songs placed as tiny and as white as they can be on a dark grey submarine. Very darker but diagonal composition created by degrading tones and textures; very lighter but centered and equally distributed list, getting wider at the bottom like the lighten tones of the sands, and finally another type of information than being the A & B side songs signed the bottom of the surface. The second approach can be seen on Figure 5 as a black and white submarine photograph. On a flat darker surface fishes perceived with their reduced tones equal in size but unequally distributed in an open composition diagonally, which contrasting and dynamic. Although the photograph consists of three tones and a plain ground the attributes mentioned prevent the photograph to become dull. The third approach can be seen on Figure 6 as the middle two pages of the booklet in form of another sandy photograph. After many suspicions about the previous photographs whether they are black & white or very low saturated now it is very obvious. A semi-saturated realistic photograph placed with the covers of all the single albums of the band in this compilation. Like the sand waves distributed unevenly the covers placed like creating two uneven loops. With the black leaves surrounding from three different directions the covers mainly create a diagonal composition, which keeps the dynamism and tension in high levels.



Figure 3: Sleeve Art: The Back.

Source: Author's Collection

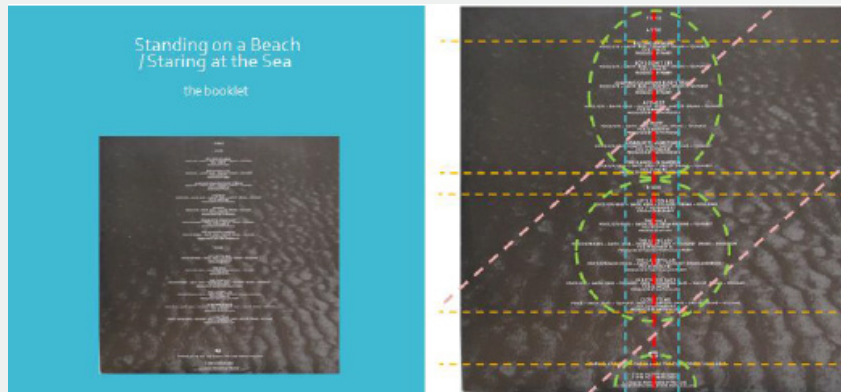


Figure 4: Sleeve Art: The Booklet.

Source: Author's Collection.

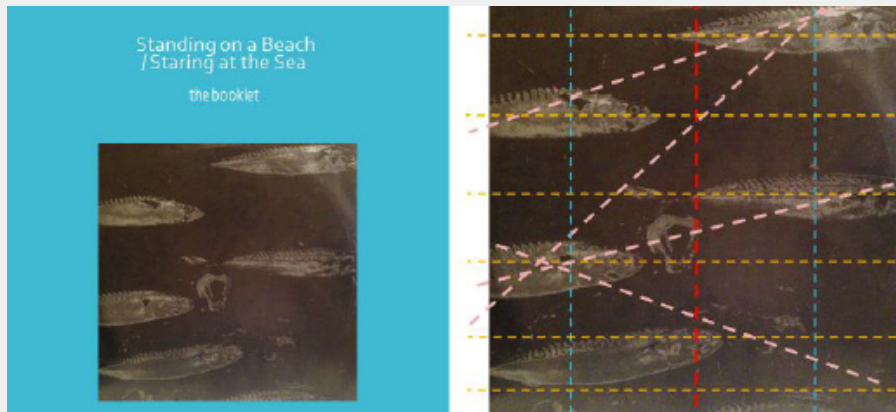


Figure 5: Sleeve Art: The Booklet.

Source: Author's Collection



Figure 6: Sleeve Art: The Booklet.

Source: Author's Collection

The semi-saturated coloring as a definition isn't enough to explain the interesting colour distribution seen. A special fluorescent illuminating effect circulates all over the sand but the covers. The fluorescent pink, purple, yellow and blue touches of

colours on mainly black and white single covers are contrasting the interesting tones of the sand cooling up, warming down and degrading horizontally wave by wave. On the Figure 7 the two CDs designs seen under the titles of A and B. Because of the high

amount of the lettering a plain grey background has been chosen. To let the design plain and clear white are the letters, and same as fonts, but different in size. A hierarchy established among the information and this hierarchy leads the sizes and the placements of the words. Like in every other pages, the front and back covers

of the sleeve the typographic elements aligned centred, evenly and symmetrically distributed. There is only one typeface used, which is straight, plain, and sans serif with unchanging thicknesses, which balance the textures, asymmetry and fluidity, and be legible enough.



Figure 7: Sleeve Art: The CDs.

Source: Author's Collection

Results

Musically darker sound with minor or bass chords, reverbs, dark arrangements or dramatic and melancholic melodies in a combination with themes like sadness, nihilism, dark romanticism, tragedy and melancholy. Visually all the faces of the sleeve art are black & white or low saturated can create hopelessness, sadness and being in bad mood. All compositions made are diagonal or semi-diagonal, so asymmetric and asymmetrically balanced can create tension, chaos and tragedy. The horizon and vertical center used to calm all the designs can create emptiness – loneliness effect. Many kinds of contrasts created by size, tone and texture concluded in dynamism can be the reflection of the rebellion to the mainstream genres and the power to change it.

Conclusion

The study has begun with the examination of the album's musical content; has continued with the visual examination of the sleeve art; resulted with a comparison of the two and concluded by finding out the similarities and contrasts. Because the similarities are more than the contrasts, they are harmonious, it can be said that the sleeve art is consistent as physical form and content.

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