

Classic Posters Interview with Gigposter's by Michael Erlewine

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Clayton Hayes, gig posters, interview 14 February 2003, sound recording.

Michael Erlewine: Cool. Well, let me ask you some questions. What I want to do is write a little interview with you, telling people about gig posters and all the stuff your doing, how it got started and stuff.

Clayton Hayes: Well, I've always been...well, not always been, since early high school, I've been playing in rock bands and always kind of been in that scene.

Michael Erlewine: What kind of music?

Clayton Hayes: Mostly punk-rock music. Yeah, so I was always part of the scene, and I was always interested in local art, you know, gig posters from here, which are nothing special, but it was always something. I'd go to a show and I'd take a poster down and I'd come home and put it on my wall, that kind of thing. They're just photocopied posters, pretty much, not even the silk-screens that we see today. Calgary's not a huge city for that sort of thing.

It's big enough, but it just doesn't seem to have that much interest... it has some nightlife, but not near as much as other big cities and states and stuff. So, it's mainly photocopied posters and stuff here. Even that attracted me, so that's how it started with my interests in posters.

Michael Erlewine: And that was about when?

Clayton Hayes: Oh...early 1990s.

Michael Erlewine: So you started collecting then?

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, I just started collecting posters, regardless of their artistic quality for reasons of historic... like I went to the show and I wanted to remember it. You know these were great bands, things like that.

Michael Erlewine: Did you make any attempt to catalogue them, or organize them in any way?

Clayton Hayes: No, it wasn't probably as big of a deal as what you would think, more or less just a hobby, to get whatever I could and have fun with it.

Michael Erlewine: Cool.

Clayton Hayes: Then I decided to, like I wanted to computer program, and I went to school for that.

Michael Erlewine: What languages do you know?

Clayton Hayes: I work in Java, and I do PHP. Right now I'm concentrating on website design and PHP and MySQL Databases.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, that's a very good thing to do.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, and that's why I got interested in building a dynamic website for a reason and gig posters just seemed to fit, and I decided to go ahead and build a site where I could display them, and display some other images of how people use their posters from around the world.

Michael Erlewine: And when did gigposters start?

Clayton Hayes: It was January 2001.

Clayton Hayes: It has it's own whole site to it now. I'm really happy with how it turned out.

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Michael Erlewine: Also, you have some useful messages boards, right?

Clayton Hayes: Yes.

Michael Erlewine: Tell me a little about that, because I think that's one of the most popular things. At least when I've been interviewing some of the other artists, like Frank Kozik, and Jermaine Rogers, and people like that. They all talk about hanging out there. It's pretty cool what your doing. Maybe describe it a little bit, so I can share with other people.

Clayton Hayes: Okay, well it just started to grow from the beginning. I didn't know about every artist out there, of course, so I would just search the net and I'd find certain people, like Max Fisher from Maximum Fluoride, and people like him. I would just email him and say, "Hey I started a new website. Are you interesting in, you know, sending me any posters and stopping by?" So I slowly did that and I started emailing a bunch of people like Jermaine. As they started coming, you know, they never really had a place before where they could talk about things and discuss the poster world with people outside of their local community, unless they were already very successful. For most people it was a great place for them to talk to other artists.

Michael Erlewine: And you get a lot of the poster artists there, right?

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, most of the designers are the active ones. There are tons of visitors, but the people who stop by who are just looking don't usually spend time to stop and chat.

Michael Erlewine: Who are some of the artists that hang out there that I might be familiar with?

Clayton Hayes: There mostly the newer artists, that I'd have to say, like Frank Kozik, Jermaine, Justin Hampton, Emek... trying to think of the bigger name ones that are bigger today. There is some other ones, like Mark Arminski.

Michael Erlewine: Mark's a friend of mine. He is a great guy. Have you met him?

Clayton Hayes: No, I've never met a single designer in person.

Michael Erlewine: Maybe you should consider going to Flatstock in Austin.

Clayton Hayes: I am. I am going to go down to Flatstock.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, that will be a great trip!

Clayton Hayes: They actually paid for it.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, wow.

Michael Erlewine: How does gigposters make money?

Clayton Hayes: It doesn't really make that much money at all [laughs]. That's the thing. It was never intended as a moneymaking thing

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, that's what I did with All-Music Guide (allmusic.com), same thing.

Clayton Hayes: So I make a little bit of money off of banner advertising, which really it just covers the server costs.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, pretty much every designer that is listed in the designer section participates in the forums.

Michael Erlewine: What are your plans with it? How do you see gigposters growing?

Clayton Hayes: I think it will pretty much just continue to grow and become a massive archive, Historically, gigposters

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has helped artists grow and has so many features and qualities, that I think it will just self-sustain itself and just keep going. And it pretty much pays for itself, no problems. My work and my involvement will, you know, pay off a little bit some day as far as... so that I'm not just wasting my time updating the site every day [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: No, I think your doing something good. I will do my best to try to promote it, to tell people about it on our site.

Clayton Hayes: Oh yeah.

Michael Erlewine: We will list your URL. I'm an archivist. My interest is in archiving posters in terms of every last one, just like I did with the All-Music Guide. Someday, if you have time, check out allmusic.com, or allmovie.com. You'll see there are hundred of thousands of albums/films there. Like Yourself, I didn't take advertising. And it was started before the World-wide Web existed, just on the Internet on what used to be called "Gopher Sites."

Clayton Hayes: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: And I also didn't sell any CD's. I think they do now. Like yourself, I'm a systems programmer.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: My theory is, which I'd think you'd appreciate from being in Calgary, is that this is the tip of the iceberg. There are thousands and thousands of small cities that many of these acts got to.

Clayton Hayes: Right.

Michael Erlewine: And there must be posters for those gigs.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: And no one has ever dug them out. So I think there must be an enormous number.

Clayton Hayes: Oh yeah, for sure [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: And we haven't even begun to do it.

Clayton Hayes: Honestly, I'm still blown away by how successful my site is. It's just every day I look at it, I can't believe I did this. I can't believe how many good posters are out there. Like I just didn't know there were so many people involved and I don't even think everyone that was involved knew, that there were so many other people involved either. It's just crazy.

Clayton Hayes: I guess I should mention the American Poster Institute;, I'm not sure if you know anything about that that Frank Kozik is starting?

Michael Erlewine: I do know about it. Frank talked to me. I think that is a wonderful idea!

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, they made me a board member on that.

Michael Erlewine: That's great.

Clayton Hayes: So, I will have some say in the new poster institute, whatever they are planning on doing. It's so new that they don't really have plans yet.

Michael Erlewine: I interviewed Kozik about it and I think it's really important to be organized in that way, and be able to pass on techniques, teach people how to do things.

Clayton Hayes: Yep.

Michael Erlewine: Does it take you a lot of time to do your site?

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Clayton Hayes: No, that's the advantage of my site is that I don't do that.

Michael Erlewine: Anyway we can cooperate, I'd be happy to help you. Certainly I'll send everyone I can to you site.

Clayton Hayes: I don't have much knowledge in the poster business, but I'm slowly growing, like your saying. I could barely even name the names [laughs]...just because I started out as the programmer. I'm the computer guy.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Clayton Hayes: It wasn't 100% out of pure interest for the poster world, at the time, but it has grown into that, for sure.

Michael Erlewine: Well, you get into it, right? And you get to appreciate the work that goes into the posters, right?

Clayton Hayes: Exactly.

Michael Erlewine: Are you the main guy who works on the site?

Clayton Hayes: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: I'd like to meet some of those Texas artists, because they have kind of a gotten short shrift. One of the things I'm trying to do is to bring attention to a lot of these smaller venues, like the Texas venues.

Clayton Hayes: Right.

Michael Erlewine: Anyways, maybe I'll show up there, I don't know.

Clayton Hayes: It would be nice if you did.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah. It would be fine to meet you.

Clayton Hayes: Looks really like it's going to be an amazing time.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, I think it will be, I think it will be.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, it is a lot of work. I've found there are so many features I want to add to gigposters, but [laughs] it's already enough work, you know

Michael Erlewine: I know it.

Clayton Hayes: It's really hard, because there are things that I want to do too. Without help I can't do it. That's kind of a why I'm leaving things the way they are for now.

It seems my my site kind of grew it's own, on it's own. It became it's own thing and it seems to be more of a forum for growing and emerging artists kind of site.

I know what you mean, for like. I haven't seen any submissions from any of the older 1960's artists, you know. there's the odd one in there, but very few.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Clayton Hayes: If your site has a ton of those, I mean it would be great, you know?

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, well, I'm going to document the new guys too, with whatever I can put together. I don't know how interesting it will be. It might be interesting to someone like you. Because you'd be able to go and see stuff in chronological order and all this kind of stuff.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, yeah.

Michael Erlewine: And what year they did this or that, and you'll find examples of original art and... more academic I think. I'm trying to raise the awareness of posters beyond being seen simply as memorabilia. We are talking about collectible art.

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Clayton Hayes: Right.

Michael Erlewine: So, anyway, that's the plan. But I just do it because I feel like it, probably the same way you did.

Clayton Hayes: Yeah, I just enjoy what I do, as long as I can put food on the table, I'm happy.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah. Well, thanks for taking the time to speak with me.

Clayton Hayes: Thanks for interviewing, this is great, everything you said is wonderful, I can't wait to see what you do.

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