

Classic Posters Interview with Unflown by Michael Erlewine

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Unflown: I've been drawn to visual arts all my life; however, growing up in a rather rural community, I had no concept that it was practical to make a living at art. I studied photography at a community college. where I discovered "graphic design." With my Associates Degree in Photography, I went on to university to study design and unravel my heart.

In Bellingham, WA, I began shooting bands, starting up a semi-legitimate music-monthly with some fellas, while going to school and working at a photomat that was known by its giant plaster frog on the roof. The bands gave me a whole new perspective on what you could do with your drive to create. Bellingham breeds amazing folks, a lot of talent. I made my first flyer for one of the bands in town, Federation X, through their encouragement, and burned it (for effect) on their communal stovetop.

Art Chantry does his legendary work for Estrus, located there in Bellingham, and he saw the concert photography I was publishing in our cruddy newsprint magazine. I began working with Estrus after I got a postcard from them saying I had a good eye. Needless to say, Art Chantry has always been one of my biggest influences for his dedication to low-budget, powerful visual design.

Unfortunately, I had very little exposure to poster art in Wenatchee, beyond your early-computer desktop-publishing.

There weren't many bands in town and posters were rare. Around 1990, trips to Seattle did introduce me to some flyers that I stole away to my bedroom, but most of the work at the time was pure typographic crap.

Michael Erlewine: What kind of art influenced you?

Unflown: Everything.

Michael Erlewine: What was your first concert-music poster?

Unflown: Federation X and the Narrows at the 3B Tavern in Bellingham, 2000.

Michael Erlewine: Please describe the media and size/formats you have most used?:

11x17 photocopy. Am doing some silkscreen, as it comes up.

Unflown: Michael Erlewine: Who are your favorite current poster artists?

Unflown: Seriously, I'm just impressed with the caliber that the genre has been seeing lately.

Michael Erlewine: What are your favorite bands?

Unflown: the Lapse, Bob Dylan, the Eels, Cinerama, Shellac, Pacer, White Stripes, Johnny Cash, Tom Waits...

Michael Erlewine: Any poster shows of your work?

Unflown: October 2002, Portland, Oregon. "Paper, Scissors, Rock!: 25 Years of Northwest Punk Poster Design." at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. December 2002, Philadelphia, Penn. "Artifacts of the Improbable" at the Trocadero. May 2003, Seattle, WA. "Paper, Scissors, Rock!: 25 Years of Northwest Punk

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