

Classic Posters - The Cataloging of Posters

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by Michael Erlewine

There were a few people out there that were really into posters in an organized way from the early on, folks like Eric King, Paul Getchell, Jacaeber Kastor, and Dennis King. These guys not only liked posters, but they collected them assiduously, and more important, they organized and cataloged their collections. In other words, they wanted to know how many there were in a series and in what order, and what variations of each one were printed. This never crossed my mind. In those days, I could have cared less.

Eric King produced the first serious catalog of some of the major poster venues like the Family Dog and the Bill Graham series, complete with detailed analysis of the variants and reprints. Dennis King, another acknowledge expert, not only organized the material for his own use, but has run a sophisticated poster shop for decades, the D. King Gallery in Berkeley, California. "Sophisticated" here means treating these posters as art and historical documents, not just as memorabilia.

Thanks to these people, the art of collecting has taken shape and has been organized to the degree it is. And later in time, came people like Paul Grushkin, who published the first and only comprehensive book on rock posters, a book which almost single-handedly catapulted rock posters into the status of collectables.

Another important historic figure is Phil Cushway, who under the name ArtRock,

consolidated the poster market, maintained a large retail store, and by kind of cornering the market on a number of key items, helped to establish a floor price for most posters. Cushway published full-color catalogs promoting poster purchasing and collecting, and generally helped the buying and selling of posters to become a recognized business. This was on the West Coast.

On the east coast, Jacaeber Kaster, who was an early collector and is an accomplished poster expert, did something similar, creating an upscale gallery and market for these items as collectable art in New York City.

Those of us who collect posters today owe the above group our thanks for pioneering the way. To this list should be added many other experts, people like Walter Madeiros, and Greg Davidson. More recently, Ben Komins.

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