

Classic Posters Interview with Phil Cushway by Michael Erlewine

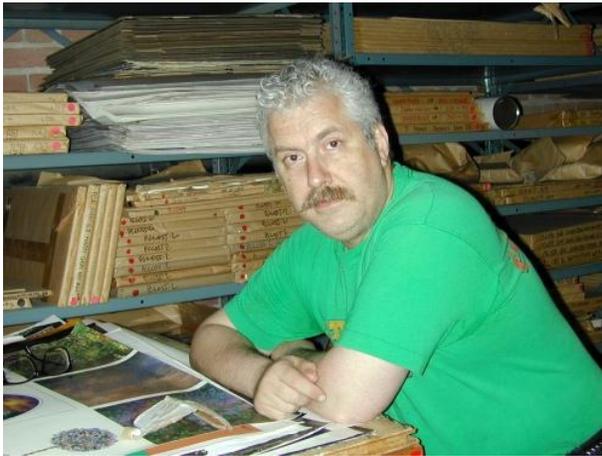
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Getting Into Posters

Michael Erlewine: Okay, let's just get the basic information that I get from everyone. I need your date of birth and a year.

Phil Cushway: February 18, 1952.

Michael Erlewine: And your given name.



Phil Cushway

Phil Cushway: Phillip Dion Cushway. Place of birth is Pasadena, California.

Michael Erlewine: All right, the main thing we want to know is how in the world did you get into posters on this scale? How did that all come about? Just take your time, because that will be what interests people a lot and then we will talk about the business of it.

Phil Cushway: Okay, how I got into posters. I had bought a church in downtown Detroit to turn into a nightclub.

Michael Erlewine: What church was it?

Phil Cushway: I don't remember.

Michael Erlewine: Where was it?

Phil Cushway: Right on the other side of the Chrysler from the Fox Theater. I

can't remember all of these roads, because I don't drive them anymore. You know how, when you move, you can't remember streets from the last place very well until you are back there. Okay, and I was looking for things for the walls, and I came across the idea of posters.

Michael Erlewine: What year was this?

Phil Cushway: Around 1985. Then I had bought a magazine, a "Relix Magazine." and it had an interview or something with this book that was going to be coming out called "The Art of Rock" by Paul Grushkin. That got me interested and I flew out to . . . and this is all a little bit hazy, as to what sequence this was . . . but I flew out to San Francisco where my sister lived, and Gruskin introduced me to Ben Friedman and John Burns at Haight Street Graphics and other people like that, and I started buying posters. Either after this or right before this, I can't quite remember the sequence, I wrote a letter to "Siouxsie and the Banshees," a hand-written letter, asking if I could do some posters, because what I wanted to do was create new posters, you know, for the new bands. This was during a period of time when there weren't any posters being created. They responded to my hand-written letter and I had comps done by Stanley Mouse, Victor Moscoso, and Rick Griffin actually.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, I would like to see some of those.

Phil Cushway: Oh, the Rick Griffin one was fantastic, well, Griffin and Randy Tuten.

Michael Erlewine: Do you have a picture of it anywhere?

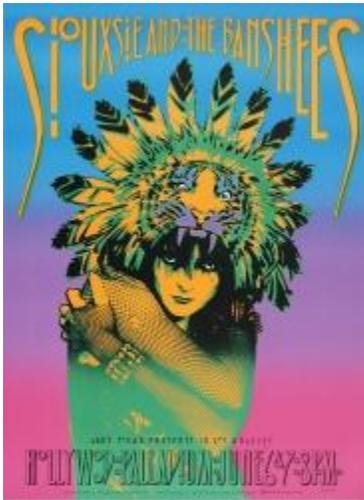
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Phil Cushway: No, but I have the original art.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, maybe we can get a picture of it. I think that would be wonderful for people to see.

Phil Cushway: Yeah, it is a picture of Siouxsie and it is fantastic. I'm rather glad it was never published, because that way I have the only one.

Michael Erlewine: How about the Victor Moscoso? I would like to see that.



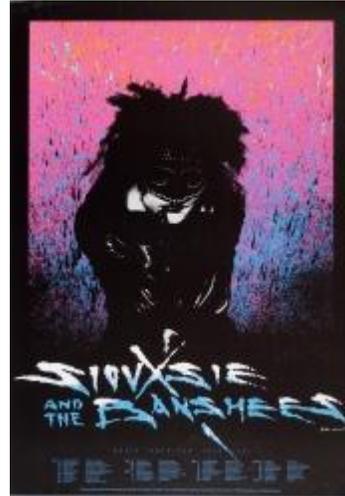
Siouxsie and the Banshees

Phil Cushway: Victor, yeah, that was PCL #1, the one with the headdress. And, working with Siouxsie, she probably had the best natural eye of any performing artist I would ever work with. Stanley Mouse's was based on a photograph and I found photographs when I went over to England. Victor did a very unusual one; this was obviously, you know, a very, very punk band. This was less than ten years after punk was born. Victor came up with a fantastic design. It was an Indian Headdress. It was 60's but also very, very 80's and very, very punk.

Michael Erlewine: Right, it is a beautiful piece.

Phil Cushway: Yeah, and then, Stanley did a piece that doesn't photograph well. It doesn't show well, but it is actually fantastic in real life.

Michael Erlewine: Yes, I'm looking at it. I will show them a picture of this.



Siouxsie and the Banshees

Phil Cushway: Okay, the lettering was done with a magic marker and paper toweling. I think it was a suggestion of a teenager at the time and they blew it up on an overhead projector and traced it. That is how he got the lettering. The background he got with his airbrush by holding up a paintbrush dipped in paint, and then had the airbrush blow over it, creating this splatter effect that he has in the background. When you look at it, it is a very, very different style from the smooth languid lines of his earlier work. It was very punk and very, very different.

Michael Erlewine: Yes, it is not recognizable as Stanley Mouse, right off.

Phil Cushway: No, but it is absolutely fantastic.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, it is a beautiful poster.

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Phil Cushway: Okay, so then I started publishing more posters.

Michael Erlewine: Where was this at? Where were you located?

Phil Cushway: I was in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Michael Erlewine: So, you were in Ann Arbor. Where in Ann Arbor?

Phil Cushway: Okay, I had gone to school in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Michael Erlewine: Studied what?

Phil Cushway: The Classics.

Michael Erlewine: Just literature.

Phil Cushway: No, like Classical Greek.

Michael Erlewine: Really?

Phil Cushway: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: So, you learned to read Greek?

Phil Cushway: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, Latin too?

Phil Cushway: No, I never got started on the Latin, but I started on the Greek and I was going to be a Classics Professor.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, I don't think anyone knows that.

Phil Cushway: That is what I wanted to be. I like language. I like etymology a great deal.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, me too for that matter. I've got all kinds of books on etymology.

Phil Cushway: Really?

Michael Erlewine: I have a lot them. I like word roots. I have the complete Oxford Dictionary, the whole thing.

Phil Cushway: Really, that is a good dictionary; it gives all of the correct roots.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Phil Cushway: Yes, Oxford is usually very, very good. Okay, so anyway, where were we?

Michael Erlewine: We were talking about being in Ann Arbor somewhere.

Phil Cushway: I started off at my kitchen table and started publishing posters and I published the posters at Tea Lautrec, which was the original printer for many of the Fillmore Posters, and I was also buying posters from Ben Friedman and everything. I would have boxes of them.

Michael Erlewine: You were still in Ann Arbor?

Phil Cushway: I was still in Ann Arbor. I flew out to San Francisco. I bought posters, brought them back, and then I boxed them underneath my bed and pretty soon that was what my passion became.

Michael Erlewine: Where did you get money for this? You just had some money?

Phil Cushway: Well, it wasn't a lot of money for this back then. It just wasn't a lot of money. Back then, buying posters from Ben Friedman, they were like five and ten dollars, with very few over ten dollars. I would buy posters and then I just fell in love with the posters. They have a strong aesthetic quality. They are tactile. They are beautiful. There is a utilitarian purpose to them, so they are not just a pretty picture. They tied it in with music. I like music. They tied it obviously with art and I liked art. So, I rented an unheated basement in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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Michael Erlewine: Where?

Phil Cushway: 225 East Liberty, below Afternoon Delights and Muffin Shop.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, exactly, I know where that is.

Phil Cushway: I started buying posters, and it just became a passion and then, because I was in Ann Arbor, I couldn't have good distribution there, because I didn't have a large enough base to really sell a lot of posters. I started thinking about putting out a catalog. Then, I started putting out catalogs. Then I got a toll-free number and then I started taking credit cards. I liked putting out the catalogs.

Michael Erlewine: And, you were still making posters?

Phil Cushway: Yeah, I was still making posters. I did an R.E.M. poster. I had to fly down to Athens, Georgia and everything. I remember when I started my line, I had one Siouxsie poster, and I had to call stores all over the country, asking them to carry my poster line with one poster. It was a lesson in rejection. Anyway, so then I became more and more interested, and I would be buying posters from Ben Friedman and then reselling them through the catalog or however I could, and I tried to develop a mailing list and everything like that. Then my desire was to become the biggest and best in this field, and I guess it gave me direction, because I had a lot of drive at that time. So, I knew the only way to do that was to move out to San Francisco.



R.E.M.

Michael Erlewine: What year was this?

Phil Cushway: We planned the move and the actual date was around February 1, 1989. By that time, you know, Gary Grimshaw had joined my staff as my art director and did a lot of really great work.

Michael Erlewine: And this was in Ann Arbor?

Phil Cushway: Yes, this was in Ann Arbor. He is probably the most underrated artist in the 1960's in my opinion. He is equal to the big five in San Francisco are Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, Wes Wilson, Stanley Mouse, and Alton Kelley.

Michael Erlewine: What about Randy Tuten? I think he is as underestimated as Grimshaw.

Phil Cushway: No, I think that Gary is more greater. Gary is a very, very fine artist.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, I know, but so is Randy Tuten and Tuten is the most consistent artist and, along with Grimshaw, the most prolific..

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Phil Cushway: Okay, so anyway, by that time I had already bought out John Burns, who had, I don't know, around 50,000 posters or something. He had a lot of stuff. I started buying up any printer I could, just any stashes I could. Before I left Michigan, I bought out every Michigan piece I possibly could and at a time when no one really sought them out, and certainly no one would pay the kind of what everyone thought to be crazy money that I was paying.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, that is interesting. And this was what year again?

Phil Cushway: 1988. So then, we moved out to California February 1, 1989, and it just happened at that time that I think it was a place called "Image Conscious," I think was the name of the company. They moved out and we moved in, so we were right above Tea Lautrec. I used to love to run down and look at the printing press go, particularly with my posters, and ask them millions of questions, which they were kind enough to answer. Two original printers. I can only remember Joe Buckwald, Marty Balin's father, came in and the other guy has passed away now of a heart condition. I can picture him, but I can't remember his name anymore. Even Levan Moscofian came by. You know, when Rick Griffin came by, and all of the artists came by. They were still doing posters there, and Rick Griffin worked on a couple posters downstairs on the light table; things like that. So, my focus then was to buy out Ben Freidman and that took quite a while, but I bought him out in May 1990.

Michael Erlewine: And what kind of quantity are we talking about?

Phil Cushway: He had, God, 700,000 or 800,000 plus pieces of inventory. Because what he had done was, I believe it was the spring of 1969... He had a choice of buying a building that he was in at the corner of Grant and Columbus, but he liked posters a lot and so Ben, in a period of six weeks, bought the poster store in Berkley, which I guess went under, bought out Chet Helms, who had tax problems. This is all based on what Ben told me. Friedman gave him \$10,000 and then Bill Graham \$10,000, because Bill was moving his warehouse. So, Ben had bought out those three large stashes at that time, and Ben was a rather eccentric man, who sold his posters one at a time out of the store. He never built a traditional distribution system. And my desire on all of this was to acquire as much as possible and you know, consolidate it. If you will notice, in all of my catalogs, starting from the beginning, we always listen to graphic artists and not just like putting Led Zeppelin, etc. We would put down the graphic artists, because I felt this stuff was art, American folk art, and at that time, was tremendously under valued. Because I look at a poster, not from the point of view of a collector wanting this particular item for their collection, but from the point of view that it is art. It is beautiful. It captures a time and it represents a time. It reflects the music, and I compared it to and always thought of the Belle Epoque posters of the turn of the century France, where you had people like Toulouse Lautrec, Jules Cheret, and on and on. They did posters for things like women's corsets, chocolate, cigarette papers, but yet those posters have come to be recognized, you know, as highly collectible, absolutely as art in a

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different concept. And that is how I felt about the 1960's posters.

Michael Erlewine: So, you bought out Ben Freidman. You had a little place above Tea Lautrec Printing.

Phil Cushway: Do you want me to go on?

Michael Erlewine: Well, yeah. I think it is an interesting story.

Phil Cushway: Okay, so I bought out Ben Freidman, I bought out John Burns, I bought out any printers I could and any stashes I could. I bought out any artists I could.

Michael Erlewine: What does that mean? Who are some artists you bought out?

Phil Cushway: Well, like Gary Grimshaw. I bought out everything he had. You know, I bought out everything I could from Stanley Mouse and from any of the others that I possibly could. I usually tried to buy out everything that they had. And, you know, at that time it wasn't worth that much, but I believed in it. I believed in the art. I was willing to stake my future on my feelings and passion for the arts. I just felt this is really, really great stuff. I did a lot of direct mail, which I felt was a very effective means at that time.

Michael Erlewine: And it worked?

Phil Cushway: Yes. The catalogs we did were not traditional catalogs, like with a white background and with products on the page and a kind of staid look. I went for much more color, for much more of a variety, putting in little tidbits, trying to make them, you know, trying to create a more whole piece of cloth with the posters involved. I continued publishing. I was an exclusive publisher for Frank

Kozik for 1992, 1993, and 1994. I published Coop and Piz. I like publishing, I like paper, and I like printing. They were my passions as well and plus I liked to create a process of publishing, buying some of the posters I liked, but I liked the creation of them as well. I've printed silk screens, lithos, letterpress, and any method of printing, I've done. I also like having done a wide variety of bands, like we've done a lot of punk bands like the Damned, Siouxsie, and also James Brown. Then traditional bands like The Doors and The Grateful Dead, a lot of different kinds of styles of art that marry to the music in different ways.

Michael Erlewine: So you have a real series here?

Phil Cushway: Oh yeah. A wide collection of bands. And one of the reasons I liked that was because, when you think about rock-n-roll, one of things I always thought about was the sheer variety and diversity of what rock-n-roll is, from James Brown to Nine Inch Nails, Jimi Hendrix, Beatles, to Beastie Boys and you think about just the sheer unbelievable diversity of the number of bands that have come and gone, the number of bands that have come and stayed. It is truly astounding and it is astounding under the single umbrella of rock-n-roll and the art that has come forth is very diverse as well, reflecting a lot of different periods and a lot of different mediums. I've enjoyed the entire process.

Michael Erlewine: That's cool. That is really good. Just as a sidebar, can you supply at a given time a set for me to photograph the covers of all of the catalogs?

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Phil Cushway: Oh yeah. There are only two of them that are really rare. I never even thought of that, yeah.

Michael Erlewine: I mean, I can send them back to you. I just think that they are a thing in themselves, in the history of posters.

Phil Cushway: Yeah, a lot of people collect them.

Michael Erlewine: I don't need to collect them, but I do want to document them.

Phil Cushway: The first one was black and white

Michael Erlewine: But that you did it in a different style. I think that is something that we could have a little bit of a sidebar on somewhere.

ArtRock Locations

Michael Erlewine: Okay, how about the history of the places you have been in? Let's just run through some of those and the space and how you store stuff. What are the most posters you ever had, you think at a time?

Phil Cushway: In Ann Arbor, Michigan, we had 900 square feet that served as offices, shipping area, storage, and gallery. The next place we moved to was above Tea Lautrec Printing. I think that was 5,000 square feet. We had a lot of posters there, and I kept on buying posters, and then from there we moved to 1153 Mission Street, which was 8,000 square feet, and I don't know about storing posters. It eventually got to the point where I had to have a pallet jack and now at the point where I have a hi-lo. I have pallet racking. I put a lot of the posters on pallets and then put them on there with a pallet jack.

Michael Erlewine: How much space do you have now and where are you located?

Phil Cushway: Oh God, I have over a million pieces of inventory and I'm at 893 Folson Street right now, in a 5,000 square foot beautifully natural sunlight place. I also made a point of always having a gallery, because I feel the stuff should always be presented in gallery format, because it is art and it needs to be presented as art.



ArtRock Gallery

Michael Erlewine: Now, how do you present it? Do you frame them all?

Phil Cushway: I used to frame everything and now we are trying different methods, but yeah, everything is framed and we are having rotating shows. Different shows like the "Art of the Dead" that is toured all over the U.S., including the Rock-N-Roll Hall of Fame. I have had shows on blotter acid art. I've had a Stanley Mouse show, a Alton Kelley Show, and numerous others.

Michael Erlewine: What shows are coming up?

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Phil Cushway: The shows that are coming up are going to be a Blotter acid show and a show on Gary Grimshaw.

Michael Erlewine: When is the Gary Grimshaw show?

Phil Cushway: I don't know, I've been so busy with everything else; the move has taken a lot out of us.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, Gary is busy too, as you probably know.

Phil Cushway: No.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, he is pretty much jammed. He is doing a bunch of stuff for Levi's.

Phil Cushway: Oh really. I'm happy for him.

Michael Erlewine: Something like that. He has a new place, with overhead light and great big workspace and he seems very happy.

Phil Cushway: Yeah, his wife is very, very good at decorating spaces actually.

Michael Erlewine: And taking care of him.

Phil Cushway: Yeah, she really has a touch for design.

Michael Erlewine: Let's ask you this? Where are you going from here? What do you see in the future of posters? Let's talk about that for a second. What are your plans other than, of course, you are going to continue.

Phil Cushway: I can't say.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, you can't talk about it?

Phil Cushway: No.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

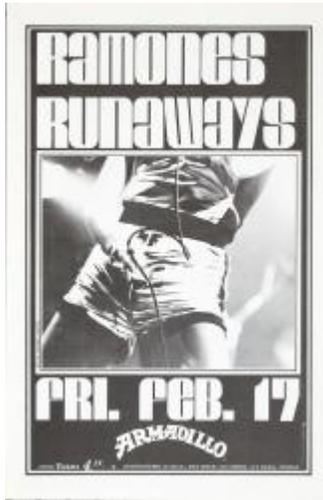
Phil Cushway: You will understand when I tell you why. I'm sorry.

WORKING WITH THE ARTISTS

Michael Erlewine: Okay, well, you covered a lot of it without my even having to ask questions. Let's talk about your work with artists. You talked about Frank Kozik a little bit, but you didn't mention Mark Arminski, which I know you want to.

Phil Cushway: Okay, working with artists. I grew a passion for the new artists and it is hard to break an artist, and by that I mean having an artist be collectible and everything. And what I found through a period of time is, I think, I helped break Frank Kozik and Mark Arminski, Alan Forbes, and others. The catalog was very instrumental in that and a large mailing list. Promoting the art would be paying for the publishing, shows, and everything else. Also like getting the posters, so that they have real value. In my opinion, I think that the artists have to have a poster go for \$250 or more before they are really considered collectible and actually most posters start at \$15 to \$20. Now, that being said, one of my personal favorite posters is actually an 11 x 17 black and white flyer for Ramone and the Runaways. I love the flyer because the image on it is a quintessential image of rock-n-roll.

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Armadillo Poster by Cliff Carter

Michael Erlewine: Is this one you published?

Phil Cushway: No, but the thing I think I like so much about it is that it is only worth about \$15. The reason why I say that is, although I have been consciously and deliberately trying to raise prices up so that the posters would be more respected, which when the collectors who already have the posters are happy to see it go up in value. Collectors that don't have the poster get angry because they haven't bought it yet.

Michael Erlewine: Who did the art and what date?

Phil Cushway: I have no idea.

Michael Erlewine: What does it look like again?

Phil Cushway: A woman grabbing her crotch. It is an Armadillo poster.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, an Armadillo; I must have that. Oh yeah. I have it. I'm looking at an image of it. The Ramone and the Runaways, February 17th.

Phil Cushway: It is one of my favorite images, because it seems to grab the

essence of rock-n-roll and it has no value. I love that about that, because I have been responsible for trying to get prices up on rock-n-roll posters.

Michael Erlewine: How do you do that, because the business aspects are something I'm really going to concentrate on this site, trying to help people invest in this material.

The Business of Posters

Phil Cushway: Actually, you are asking two different questions there, but what I did was try to consolidate all of the inventory, so it was controlled product and therefore a control of the price. It was one thing in the beginning, as there was no real control of pricing. You have to have a steady market and a steadily rising market in order to make things collectible. When people buy something as a collectible, they want to see it go up in value.

Michael Erlewine: Right.



ArtRock Archives

Phil Cushway: That is a process and an art of itself. So, let me go back to my story about the cheap poster. One reason I like it is because it is cheap, because I like people to like things in art

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that they like in and of themselves, and not because they are worth \$250 or \$1000. I think part of it is it gets me back to the roots and the beginning of it, that you loved it because you loved it because of the art and not because it was worth a million dollars. I've always tried to do that. A lot of my art right now, some of it is not worth anything and I like that. Some of it is quite valuable and I like that as well.

Michael Erlewine: Right, that is cool.

Phil Cushway: Okay, collecting posters. When I got into this, I thought I was too late. I remember moping around, saying I was five years too late. I was five years too late. I don't know if you ever think of it like that, because you are where you are where you are and this is kind of the way it is. But I think there are a lot of opportunities for collecting now of undervalued things. I think that a lot of the Frank Kozik stuff between 1992, 1993, and 1994 (his best years) are going to increase in value. I think Mark Arminski's classic designs are going to stand the test of time. I think that Alan Forbes is doing a lot of really great work. I mean, you look at his work. A lot is done in ink and brush, which is you know: no computers. His black line work, I never thought I would ever say this, is as good or better than Rick Griffins I think, and over time, are becoming collectibles because some of these posters have reached \$250 to \$300 in value and will increase more.

What's Happening Now

Phil Cushway: On the new sense of where we are at is that there has been a shift. The shift has been, previously everything was venue driven. The Fillmore Auditorium, The Avalon Ballroom. The Grande Ballroom -

particularly, if they were numbers. People would want to get numbered sets.

But now, it is different. Kozik did a lot of far reaching things and one of them was that he broke with doing a silk screen. The silk screen is a cost effective method of printing low runs of say 500 or less, and he did silk screens as did Andy Warhol, for example. But again, taking more of an art field, it is limiting the quality done and it also shifted things in terms of the artist. The other thing that has happened is that the licensing issues and rules governing name and likeness have changed, strengthened, and altered considerably particularly here in California, where you have Hollywood, so that the necessary approval process for many bands is arduous and difficult. And I'm not trying to stay this in a negative way, but most performing artists with the exception of like, Siouxsie and a few others, do not have a strong sense of graphics. They may have a strong sense of graphics, but it is not like a Stanley Mouse or Rick Griffin, that's what they do.

Because of this approval process, it has made it more difficult to put out posters, because of name and likeness rights. How are bands to relate to individual artists, rather than a business or series, because they are relating to someone like Mark Arminski, who has, you know, never made a million dollars. Sometimes, if they have a personal relationship with the artists or personal relationships with the artists who have a venue, where they can circumvent the approval process. Also, like when talking directly to an artist, it is an art piece. There is less commercialism. The bands realize there is not going to be a large volume done and an artist can

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spend more time in the approval process than can a larger business that is publishing a lot more items.

Michael Erlewine: Now are we talking about tribute pieces at this point?

Phil Cushway: No. We are talking about like a poster for "Queens of the Stone Age" and Alan Forbes knows the band members of "Queens of the Stone Age." So if he is going to do an album cover or something for them, he can get the approvals he needs a lot easier direct through the band, and so there has been a shift from venue-driven numbered series to the artist and that is again bringing it back to the artist. A lot of artists like Arminski and Kozik, they all use their own numbering systems. It is an artist numbering system and that is the fundamental shifts that have occurred over the last 10+ years.

Michael Erlewine: What about the tribute pieces? You produce a lot of tribute pieces.

Phil Cushway: They are called "Phantom Posters."

Michael Erlewine: Is that what they are called?

Phil Cushway: Yeah, that is what "Paul Grushkin" told me they are called. Like for example, I wanted to do a Beatles poster but hey, the Beatles were disbanded.

Michael Erlewine: Did you have to get permission for this?

Phil Cushway: Absolutely, they have to be approved by the members of the Beatles.

Michael Erlewine: Do they get money from it as well?

Phil Cushway: Oh yes, you pay a royalty.

Michael Erlewine: Can you give us an idea?

Phil Cushway: I can't repeat that.

Michael Erlewine: Generic, maybe not just you but anyone. There must be some number.

Phil Cushway: They can be anywhere from 10 to 25%. 10 to 15% is difficult.

Michael Erlewine: Okay, that is what we needed to get, so people can start learning about this. Okay, so the tribute pieces and how have they sold?

Phil Cushway: Spectacularly. And one of the things that surprised me was like one of the posters I did was the Sunflower Poster PCL 068. It was a poster with art work done by Michael Everett. This was 1995.



Grateful Dead Sunflower Poster

Michael Erlewine: The Grateful Dead one?

Phil Cushway: Yeah, so we did a turtle poster and we also did the sunflower. The sunflower poster, I published 10,000 of them. That is a lot of posters.

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Michael Erlewine: It is.

Phil Cushway: Yeah, that is a lot of posters. I sold almost all 10,000. Despite the fact that I sold that many of them, those posters are worth \$150.00 to \$200.00 a piece.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, no kidding. What have you been publishing lately?

Phil Cushway: We are publishing one for Stanley Mouse and it is a poster for the Signe Anderson benefit we are having this Saturday.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, I saw the picture. That is beautiful. I want to get one of those.

Phil Cushway: You already saw the image?

Michael Erlewine: The image was online. Someone sent it around. Maybe it was the temporary image for all I know.

Phil Cushway: Isn't it great?

Michael Erlewine: It is beautiful.

Phil Cushway: It is going to be tricky to print.

Phil Cushway: And one for Mark Arminski for Cynthia Plaster Caster, and I still do stuff, but not on a consistent basis. I don't know how soon I'm going to be doing it consistently. I will take it as it comes.



Cynthia Plaster Caster

Michael Erlewine: Right, so you have done a stint of that.

Phil Cushway: Yes, and I do love publishing. I love it. It is just a lot of difficulty, because of the approval processes.

Michael Erlewine: And that is getting the bands more involved than ever right? What about something at the Fillmore? How does that work?

Phil Cushway: Well those they don't have approved, but they don't sell them.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, they just give them out.

Phil Cushway: Yes, see when the bands don't approve them, you end up with a lot better art.

Michael Erlewine: You don't carry the New Fillmore series. Right?

Phil Cushway: There are some good pieces in there. I'm more excited by like the Delanorock, Lindsey Kuhn, who actually worked for me a long time ago. His work has improved tremendously. He does really good stuff. Factor 27 is quite good and then there are people like Mike King out of Seattle. There are

Classic Posters Interview with Phil Cushway by Michael Erlewine

as good artists now as there was then, period. People say oh, waah, waah, the old days, bullshit. A lot of stuff today is as good or better than it was then.

Michael Erlewine: Gary Houston (Voodoo Catbox is good too. Yeah, so you are providing a lot of information. I'm trying to think of what my question is. You have given me a lot to go with and I think it is important. Let's talk about the trend in terms of these things, the collectibles. Is it going up? Is it holding steady?

Phil Cushway: Posters have always gone up in value.

Michael Erlewine: Let's talk about that for a minute.

Phil Cushway: I think it is because they have a lot of real intrinsic value. They are an American folk art form. They are true American folk art. The artwork stands in and of itself, regardless of the music. Some posters for example like FD-85, which is for Vanilla Fudge, and it features a photo of Wyatt Earp's wife. That poster sells extraordinarily well, despite the fact that no one buys it because of Vanilla Fudge.

The other thing that is happening more and more is I think that the art is standing for more and more than the bands on the art. Obviously the Grateful Dead will always be a classic piece. However, there are other posters that are going to come up because the people love the art on them. I think that is another shift that is happening right now. Posters have always held their value and always risen steadily in value. It is a true collectible and it is only really being collected in the United States and to a much lesser extent, Germany, Japan, and England. As the entire world economy is always constantly improve

in bits and starts, they will be collected all over.

Michael Erlewine: What about Japan? Are they interested in posters?

Phil Cushway: Yes, they are interested in posters, but right now what their rage is, is that they like cartoon driven stuff like Frank Kozik . They like that stuff a lot. They also like quality printing, as does Germany.

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