

Classic Posters Interview with Steven Cerio by Michael Erlewine

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Michael Erlewine: When and how did you get interested in art?

Steven Cerio: My first contacts with art were the illustrations in the 1975 unabridged edition of the Random House Dictionary, and the store-bought mural on the shower wall that I stared at when I took baths. What peaked my interest in posters wasn't a rock poster, it was hand-drawn supermarket-window posters for the "Super Duper" in Liverpool, New York, where I grew up. When my dad told me they were made by hand, I was blown away. My love for type had begun as well.

By the time I arrived in New York City and the venerable Jacaeber Kastor hired me at the now legendary Psychedelic Solution Gallery, my interest in posters had more than peaked. I had been in NYC for only 3 days, and I found myself around icons like Rick Griffin, Robert Williams, Robert Crumb, Victor Moscoso, Randy Tuten and S. Clay Wilson, to name only a few.

Michael Erlewine: What kind of art influenced you?

Steven Cerio: Dr. Seuss and cereal boxes, primarily. Alexander Calder, Stuart Davis and Philip Guston have been influences. Rory Hayes, Mark Beyer and Gary Panter as well.

Michael Erlewine: What concert-posters artists influenced you?

Steven Cerio: Lee Conklin's Santana cover really rearranged my molecules. It led me to surrealism before I was 10. I still follow surrealist ethics (not Magritte-esque irony). I love all of Lee's

work as well as Rick Griffin and David Singer's.

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

Steven Cerio: It was for Codeine, Flyashtray and Galaxy 500 at Coney Island (August, 1989). After that I did flyers for Monster Magnet and White Zombie before their bigger record deals.

Michael Erlewine: What are the main venues you have done posters for?

Steven Cerio: The Fillmore and Cleveland Flats. Many of my posters were done at request of the group or manager.

Michael Erlewine: What are the main bands you have done posters for?

Steven Cerio: My poster work for The Residents is always a big thrill for me. I've also done film and animation with them. They are always years ahead. It's always a challenge and a joy working for them, since they use no boundaries.

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

Steven Cerio: My originals have always been brushed ink on acid free printing paper. I then either scan the line into my PC or copy it to acetate. The acetates are painted on the backside with cel-vinyl paint while the scanned images are opened into Photoshop. If the job needs to be prepared for screen printing, I do the seps by hand on occasion, but have recently begun separating the color layers in Photoshop. With the use of a Wacom tablet, I've been able to keep a warmer, more hand made appearance.

Michael Erlewine: What other poster artists have you collaborated with?

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Steven Cerio: None really. Closest I've come was working closely with Mark Dancey on the promo and gallery dressing for a two-man show we did at C-POP in Detroit called "Iconosphere."

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

Steven Cerio: Mark Dancey and David Fremont. There are countless people who should be doing posters like Calef Brown, Michael Kupperman, Mark Beyer, Gary Panter and Mike Diana.

Michael Erlewine: What are your favorite bands? Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, The Residents, John Coltrane, King Crimson , Cecil Taylor, Brian Eno, Dragibus, Frank Zappa, Syd Barrett, Harry Partch, etc., etc. (my bands Lettuce Little and Small Girl Boils Water aren't bad either!!!)

Michael Erlewine: Please list any poster shows of your work:

Steven Cerio: My poster art is always shown with my gallery work.(A list of my shows will arrive with my CDR in the mail)

Steven Cerio: "I don't like things I can understand" by Geroge Petros