

## Classic Posters Interview with Tom Deja by Michael Erlewine

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

Tom Deja: I've been interested in and designing posters (which always used to be called fliers) since I've been involved with punk rock-- the early 1980s-- though I really started working at it when I started doing freelance illustration and design in 1987.

Michael Erlewine: What kind of art influenced you?

Tom Deja: There are "low"/cultural influences: Cartoons (esp. Fleischer Bros., Tex Avery and early Warner Brothers artists/directors, Rocky and Bullwinkle), movie posters and design (esp. Saul Bass) and there is graphic design in general (esp. Paul Rand, Charles S. Anderson, House Industries).

And there is "high"/Art School influences like: Dada, Pop Art, Expressionism, The Fauves, etc, and all the artists generally associated with those movements.

Michael Erlewine: What concert-posters artists influenced you?

Tom Deja: A lot of the Kustom Kulture guys: Art Chantry, Robert Williams, Big Daddy Roth, Coop, Pizz, Frank Kozik, etc.

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

Tom Deja: I'm sure it was for the first/only show my high school band -- we had a million names, but at the time were called The Flaming Altar Boys -- played. A battle of the bands in the cafeteria after a basketball game in Spring, 1986.

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

Tom Deja: I do a great deal of work for the Lager House in Detroit, but I've also done several posters for the Magic Stick (Detroit), The Magic Bag (Ferndale, Mi) as well as a couple for the Beat Kitchen and the Double Door (both Chicago)

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

Tom Deja: In the late 80s/and through the 90s I did posters primarily for my own bands (El Smasho and The Chinese Millionaires), but in the last couple of years, I've started doing a lot of work for my friends in the Detroit scene. This includes, but isn't limited to, the Electric Six (formerly the Wild Bunch), the Witches, the Dirtbombs, Bantam Rooster, the Detroit Cobras, the Paybacks and Bogue -- among countless others. I've also been tapped to do work for national acts that have stopped in town, bands like Holly Golightly, the Deadly Snakes, the Mooney Suzuki, the Fall, the Immortal Lee County Killers and others.

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

Tom Deja: I generally draw/create my posters on my Mac -- almost solely at 11" x 17" -- and they are digitally printed by the venue.

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

Tom Deja: None so far.

Michael Erlewine: Who are your favorite current poster artists?

Tom Deja: I love the guts of Art Chantry, who is above all my favorite poster artist/graphic designer, but I'm also a big

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fan of Coop, Scrojo, Frank Kozik, The Pizz, etc.

Michael Erlewine: Who are your favorite bands?

Tom Deja: Thee Billy Childish Juggernaut (Pop Rivets, Milkshakes, Delmonas, Mighty Caesars, Headcoats/Headcoatees, Buff Medways), the Devil Dogs, Saints, Radio Birdman, The Cramps, The Kinks, Birthday Party/Bad Seeds, Nikki Sudden, Big Star, Modern Lovers, Minutemen, Black Flag ...the list goes on like this for some time.

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