

THE MAVERICK TRADITION: POSTERING IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

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Part One

No serious poster enthusiast would question San Francisco’s supremacy as the Mecca and mother lode of rock & roll art. And as the psychedelic explosion in Haight Ashbury reverberated across the country and around the world, other cities began to produce posters in homage to the original Sixties esthetic that drove the poster renaissance in San Francisco. Yet arguably, after San Francisco, no city can boast as rich a music poster tradition as Austin, Texas, where from the mid-Sixties until today a fortuitous combination of factors has spawned a mind-boggling barrage of posters and handbills. It has been said that Austin has more live music venues per capita than any other city in the world; though this may or may not be true, it is undeniable that Austin’s energetic music community and cornucopia of small clubs and honky-tonks has generated an imposing abundance of music art.

This article should provide a brief introduction to some of the major personalities and institutions involved in producing Austin music posters over the last quarter century. The Vulcan Gas Company, the Armadillo World Headquarters, Castle Creek, Antone’s, Soap Creek Saloon, the Continental Club, the Austin Opry/Opera House, Raul’s, Club Foot, Liberty Lunch, the Cannibal Club, the Ritz, and countless other clubs and concert halls have served as benefactors in the proliferation of Austin poster art. Part One of this article will focus on the two most prominent of the venues – The Vulcan Gas Company and the Armadillo World Headquarters.

In the beginning was The Vulcan Gas Company. Opened on October 27, 1967, it was Texas’ original counter culture dance hall and the first major patron of poster art. The Vulcan was the brainchild of Houston White, Gary Scanlon, and Don Hyde. For a year or so, as the “Electric Grandmother,” White and Scanlon had been organizing concerts that featured local and psychedelic pioneers the 13th Floor Elevators and Conqueroo, and from these first shows have survived several posters and handbills. It was for The Vulcan itself, however, that Austin’s most spectacular early posters were created. Though considerably larger than their San Francisco counterparts, Vulcan posters were often rendered in the psychedelic style popularized by Bay area artists like Wes Wilson, Rick Griffin, Alton Kelley, Stanley Mouse, and Victor Moscoso. Typically each of these 23x29 inch posters advertised two or three events with free-form lettering and several bright split-fountain colors. Achieving a stunning overall effect was more important than using a specific image on any one particular piece. At least 36 posters, 58 handbills, and two postcards were created during this era – the vast majority by either Gilbert Shelton or Jim Franklin (JFKLN).

Shelton is generally regarded as Austin’s first modern poster artist because of his extensive work with The Vulcan, including the logo and the grand opening poster. Best known today as the creator of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, Wonder Wart-Hog, and Fat Freddy’s Cat, in the early Sixties Shelton was an editor of the University of Texas student humor magazine, the Texas Ranger. At the Ranger, he met Tony Bell and Lieuen Adkins, both of whom collaborated with him over the years on assorted posters and comic strips. In 1968, after creating a couple dozen colorful posters and handbills, and producing an underground comic entitled “Feds and

Heads,” Shelton followed Austin adventurers like Chet Helms, Janis Joplin, Travis Rivers (The Oracle, Big Brother and the Holding Company), Bob Simmons (KSAN, Soundproof), Powell St. John (Mother Earth), and Jaxon to San Francisco. It was there in 1969, with Jaxon, Dave Moriarty, and Fred Todd, that Shelton founded the Rip Off Press.

Beyond his association with the Rip Off Press, Jack Jackson, a.k.a. Jaxon, was a major contributor to the counter culture movement in both Austin and San Francisco. Also an editor at the Ranger, and a talented cartoonist, Jaxon authored in 1964, with help from Lieuen Adkins, what is regarded by many as the first underground comic. Printed in the basement of the Texas State Capitol Building and entitled “God Nose,” a takeoff on The Austin Iconoclast strip “The Adventures of J(esus)” by Foolbert Sturgeon/Frank Stack, it sold briskly on the street for 50 cents a copy. Jaxon moved west in July of 1966 and was recruited by Chet Helms in early ’67 to set up a poster distribution system for the Family Dog. The phenomenal popularity of San Francisco posters and Jaxon’s business acumen helped finance the Avalon Ballroom concert operation for a while; but disenchanted by the glut of derivative posters flooding the market, Jaxon left the operation after 18 months or so.

Back in Austin, Jim Franklin had taken over as artist in residence at The Vulcan. After brief stints in San Francisco and New York, Texas-born Franklin was lured to Austin in the mid-Sixties by a chance encounter in Galveston with some of the Ranger crowd, including Travis Rivers and Bob Simmons. Soon after his arrival he helped open The Vulcan Gas Company. Much less inclined to imitate the prevalent San Francisco style than his peers were, Franklin began to evolve a distinctly Texas poster look through his de-emphasis on stylized lettering, and his pen and ink renderings rife with crosshatching, absurd juxtapositions, and an army of beatific armadillos. Contrary to popular belief, however, he was not the first to use the armadillo as a symbol of counter culture puckishness; after a prank letter convinced a faculty overseer that any armadillo appearing in a college publication suggested something perverse, Glenn Whitehead and Robert A. Burns had liberally sprinkled ‘dillos throughout the Ranger, beginning in 1966 with the tastefully tardy “Late October” issue. Nonetheless, it was Franklin who populated posterdom with an unending parade of the lovable local mammalian worm-eaters. He floated them over highways, orbited them in space, squeezed them from tubes of acrylic paint, and mated one with the State Capitol Building. Though not all of Franklin’s illustrations contain armadillos posed compliantly in unorthodox positions, his penchant for surrealist satire is inescapable, as in the ’71 Flying Burrito Brothers poster in which he’s depicted Wilbur and Orville launching a heavier-than-air craft with colossal enchiladas for wings. From the late Sixties through the Seventies and into the Eighties, Franklin was a major force in Texas music art, and when he’s in town he still produces the occasional street art drollery.

After his first exposure to the psychedelic art movement during a San Francisco trip in 1967, Lubbock-born Jim Harter returned to Texas and was recruited by Franklin for Vulcan poster duty. His work from that period often features extensive psychedelic-style lettering and a simple photo, as with two of his nicest pieces – Poco and the Texas Rangers. One of his designs appears uncredited on page 248 of Paul Grushkin’s The Art of Rock. Moving to San Francisco in ’74, Harter, who is primarily a collagist, sought out and became friends with Wilfried Satty and David Singer. Since then he’s traveled extensively and published several collections of visionary collages, as well as a popular series of engraving source books for Dover Publications.

Several other artists designed posters and handbills for The Vulcan, including Tony Bell, John Shelton (no relation), Don Evans, and Robert Rush. In the three years it was open, The Vulcan Gas Company played host to scores of local bands, and touring acts from Jimmy Reed, Big Joe Turner, and Canned Heat to Moby Grape, the Fugs, and the Velvet Underground. Yet mid 1970 saw The Vulcan close its doors for good. There was little time to mourn the loss of this seminal alternative venue, however, because in three months, just across the river, the Armadillo World Headquarters would begin its breathtaking ten-year run.

One poster artist, uncommon by even Austin standards, is Robert A. Burns, who produced 135 posters during the late Sixties and early Seventies, not one of which was for The Vulcan or the Armadillo. No longer an active posterist today, he is best known for his work with fellow Austinite Tobe Hooper, and as production designer and art director on films like The Howling, Re-Animator, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, and The Hills Have Eyes. As a student at the University of Texas, Burns was introduced to screen printing in the Drama Department. He was supervisor of the Ranger during its last two years, and eventually created a poster and design business which he dubbed “the RH Factor.” Deliberately bucking the prevailing style of the day, his hand-cut screen-printed posters have a clean, mainstream feel that makes them unique among the posters produced during these psychedelic and cosmic cowboy years.

In August 1970, almost two years to the day before Michael Murphey composed the song “Cosmic Cowboy” during an engagement at the Bitter End in Greenwich Village. Texas’ most fabled dance hall came to life in an old South Austin armory. Named the Armadillo World Headquarters by Jim Franklin and owner Eddie Wilson, it occupies a preeminent place in the hierarchy of Austin entertainment institutions. With its eclectic booking policy and hippie-idealist ideology it launched a substantial musical and cultural movement, the most clearly-defined manifestation of which was the cosmic cowboy phenomenon. In illustrating this movement, the Armadillo artists created a powerful and singularly appropriate iconography that helped to unite performers, flower children, and rednecks in an on-going common celebration. As with Willie Nelson’s 4th of July picnics, the ‘Dillo facilitated a triumph over deep-seated prejudices and an abolition of previously inviolable aural and visual taboos. More significantly to the Austin poster panorama, however, the Armadillo offered artists an inspirational and nurturing environment, a supportive fraternity, and a mission. It became during the Seventies quite possibly the single most important poster patron this side of Haight Ashbury.

In contrast to The Vulcan era posters, which owed much stylistically to their San Francisco brethren, the posters generated for the Armadillo World Headquarters began to evince a homegrown, distinctly Texas style. The ‘Dillo designers, following Franklin’s lead, began to appropriate over-used Western visual clichés, twisting and stretching these traditional symbols into interesting, even subversive, new configurations. Lettering was typically less ornate and “trippy” than the West Coast look. Production costs were kept to a minimum by printing in only one color and by foregoing halftones in favor of crosshatching and stippling. And running consistently throughout the body of work produced for the Armadillo was a pervasive playfulness and irreverence – part of the Shelton/Franklin legacy and in keeping with Texas’ time-honored tongue in cheek tradition.

While Franklin’s influence cannot be overstated, several other important artists emerged during the Armadillo era. After Franklin himself, the most influential of these is Micael Priest, who

succeeded Franklin as the Armadillo's art director. More than any other artist, Priest has captured on posters and handbills the spirit of the cosmic cowboy years. With pieces for the New Riders of the Purple Sage, Kinky Friedman, the September 1972 Willie Nelson and Michael (Martin) Murphey concert at the 'Dillo, and for the 1973 Murphey shows (for which he created an especially tasty illustration of a longhaired mustang rider in space lassoing a comet), Priest has given us a vantage point from which to view a colorful cultural phenomenon. With a fondness for horses, a gift for life-like, action-packed caricature, and a formidable facility for lettering and typography, Priest created the graphic landscape out of which one cannabis-toking cowboy after another stepped into the real world.

De White, better known as Guy Juke, moved to town in 1973, and by 1974 Priest had enlisted his help at the Armadillo. Blessed with an effective mastery of form, an enviable command of color, and an indefatigable imagination, Juke produced some of the finest Armadillo designs. More than any other Austin poster artist, his work exhibits a strikingly broad cross-section of styles – from realistic portraits to Merrie Melodies takeoffs, from old-style ersatz woodcuts to new wave minimalism. Particularly noteworthy is his 1976 series of two dozen or so Butch Hancock handbills displaying an assortment of the many styles at Juke's disposal and indicating the predisposition Juke has to wry twists and visual puns that rivals Franklin's own. Juke dominated the Austin poster field during the early Eighties; and his series of colorful screen prints begun about that time and created for the Austin Chronicle Music Awards is worth seeking out.

Kerry Awn, like Shelton, Franklin, Priest, and Juke, has a distinct tendency to comic touches. As Kerry Fitzgerald, he moved to Austin in 1970 in search of Franklin, whose posters for the Armadillo he had seen and admired while living in Houston. Within a year Awn was creating posters for the Armadillo, but it was as a political cartoonist for UT's Daily Texan that he adopted the nom de guerre "Kerry Awn." He tends to a broader, more cartoonish style than most of his 'Dillo contemporaries; and through his work with the country radio station KOKE-FM he helped visually define the cosmic cowboy/roper dooper persona. Although he did work for the Armadillo, Awn is best known for the series of poster calendars he created for Soap Creek Saloon. Surviving a change in ownership and three location shifts, Awn's calendar series spanned more than a decade. It was inaugurated in February 1974 and the calendars that followed soon gained a reputation for their lusty eccentricity. The first one in the series features an intricate illustration of Big Brother & the Holding Company's James Gurley, penned from a Bob Seidemann photo that had coincidentally been used as the centerpiece for the 1967 Avalon Ballroom poster FD-48 by Kelley and Mouse.

Rick Turner did few posters for the Armadillo because he found the dominant style too time consuming. Along with Awn and fellow posterist Tom "Tommy Bee" Bauman, Turner journeyed to San Francisco in 1971 to try and sell Shelton's Rip Off Press an underground comic they'd produced called Neighborhead. Unsuccessful, they re-named the book Austintatious and published it themselves with help from the Armadillo's legendary Big Rikki the Guacamole Queen. Turner is responsible for the "Burgers from Heaven" design for Daryl Rhoades & the Hahavishnu Orchestra – a phalanx of hamburgers floating in formation above the Texas State Capitol. This design proved so popular that it was used not only as a poster and an album cover but later reproduced by Turner as a mural in New York's Max's Kansas City. Possibly Turner's most readily identifiable work is that done in the punk collage style. During this period he often collaborated with local artist Debra Ingram (a.k.a. Deb-X and Deb X-it), and their collaborative

designs were signed with the anagram “drastic” as seen in their unattributed poster on page 439 of The Art of Rock.

Returning home from Vietnam in 1970, Danny Garrett, like Awn, was first introduced to Franklin’s art in Houston. In 1971 he moved to Austin, looked up Franklin almost immediately and jumped headlong into the Austin poster melee, producing a number of exquisitely-crafted posters for the Armadillo. Garrett also worked extensively with Castle Creek and the Austin Opry House. Some of his most memorable and sought-after work may be found in the series of posters he has created for Antone’s, Texas premier blues venue. The delicacy of his pen and ink stippling and his tendency to traditional or classically realistic illustration contrasts sharply with the surrealist tendencies found in many of the other Austin posterists. In his most recent posters for Antone’s, Garrett has favored black prisma-color on coquille.

One of the most gifted young artists drawn to the Armadillo World Headquarters was Ken Featherston, who had grown up in Corpus Christi with ‘Dillo muralist Henry Gonzalez. Though he worked predominantly with delicate stippling and crosshatching, Featherston occasionally combined airbrush and pen and ink techniques in a single piece. His work often has a gentle, spiritual feel to it. Among his most well-known designs are the Marshall Tucker Band’s Searchin’ For a Rainbow album cover, and the illustration of an ethereal locomotive floating above its tracks in the star-spangled blackness of space, which he created for Austin’s archetypal head shop, Oat Willies. Tragically, in 1975, after working security for a Pointer Sisters show at the Armadillo, Ken Featherston was shot and killed by a deranged patron.

Cliff Carter, Bill Narum, and Sam Yeates were also valuable artists on the Armadillo roster. Carter moved to town in 1971 and produced several posters for the ‘Dillo, including three colorful Balcones Fault pieces. His primary contribution to the venue, however, was as head recording engineer from 1973 until its closing in 1980. Narum was born in Austin and raised in Houston; he began producing posters in junior high. During the late Sixties he worked with Houston’s underground newspaper Space City News, and was active as a poster artist and political cartoonist. Narum returned to Austin in the early Seventies and produced several posters for the Armadillo. His most well-known designs are the album covers he created for ZZ Top. Beginning in June 1988, Narum produced a series of designerly poster calendars for the popular Austin nightspot the Continental Club; and most recently he has specialized in art for LPs, CDs, and cassettes. Sam Yeates graduated from North Texas State in 1974 with a degree in drawing and painting, and then moved to Austin with the intention of attending graduate school. The ‘Dillo intervened and he was wooed away from academic life and into posterizing. One of his most spectacular pieces was created for a Bob Seger concert. He brought the art, rendered in pencil on cold press illustration board, to printer Terry Raines and together, by using a split fountain technique and running the poster through the press from top to bottom and then from side to side, they engineered a very powerful effect. The finished poster features the head of a tiger, a la Ringling Brothers glaring at the viewer out of a ferocious vortex of red and orange, mouth open and the curling neck of a guitar for a tongue.

Many other artists contributed to the torrent of posters that flowed from the Armadillo World Headquarters during the ten years it rocked and rolled with the cultural tide. Among these were Jim Harter and John Shelton from the Vulcan days, Clark Bradley, John Rogers, Michael Arth, and Coy Featherston, Ken’s bother. Also contributing were Cindy Weberdorfer, Gary

McElhaney, Jose Carlos Campos, Dale Wilkins, Henry Gonzales, B. Attwell, Monica White (who also created the cover art for Willie Nelson's celebrated Red Headed Stranger LP), and Jimmy Downey, whose name is spelled incorrectly on page 386 of The Art of Rock under a reproduction of his 1970 New Year's Eve poster.

Though the Armadillo dominated the Austin music scene for many years, scores of other clubs also contributed to the plethora of music available to the public during the Seventies and to the richness of the Austin poster bonanza. Some of these venues have outlived the Armadillo, and since its closing, many more clubs have come and gone. Part Two of this article will tie up any loose ends from the Seventies and then focus on the Eighties and Nineties. Poster artists like Dale Wilkins, Mike Nott, Edd Patton, me as "Jagmo," and the Art Maggots (including Frank Kozik) will be covered, plus the dozens of other provocateurs like Jason Austin, Lyman Hardy, Robert Schneider, Richard Mather, and Roy Tompkins. Nightspots such as Raul's, Club Foot, Liberty Lunch, and the Cannibal Club and poster patrons such as the Austin Chronicle and SXSW will be introduced, plus the important printers from the Vulcan era and succeeding periods will be credited for their contributions. The Vulcan and the Armadillo are gone, but the spirit that created and enlivened them survived throughout the Eighties and thrives in Austin, Texas today.

Part Two

Like rock & roll itself, Texas rock graphics had become, by the mid Seventies, predictable – even respectable. As the punk movement became a rallying point for those betrayed by mainstream rock, poster art began to reflect the spirit of the new music. In contrast to the Sixties, when Austin posters promoted Vulcan Gas Company psychedelia, or the early Seventies when the 'Dillo and its cosmic cowboys set the tone, posters in the late Seventies began to embody the unpretentious exuberance and simplicity of early rock & roll. What follows is the second installment of a two part piece on Austin postering; it will focus primarily on what has happened in central Texas since the watershed advent of punk esthetics.

What The Vulcan was to Austin's psychedelic heyday, Raul's was to the punk era. Located on "the drag" directly across the street from the University of Texas, Raul's opened its doors on December 31, 1977 as a Tejano night club. One week later Austin music was changed forever, and shortly thereafter so was Raul's booking policy. Many local music fans had been following for quite some time the new sounds coming out of places like London, Cleveland, and New York. The Ramones and Iggy Pop had been through town, and Neil Ruttenberg, as the Rev. Neil X, hosted a new wave program on KUT-FM. Yet it was the January 8th Sex Pistols' show at Randy's Rodeo, a converted San Antonio bowling Alley, that galvanized Austin's new music makers and new music lovers into a rampaging aggregation of revolutionaries who would take the city by storm. New bands burst out of the shadows, evolved, dissolved, re-grouped, and matured with amazing ferocity. And during the next five years, at clubs like Raul's, Duke's, the Continental Club, and Club Foot, traditional musical boundaries were eradicated in a sustained explosion of creative outrageousness.

Raul's owners, Joseph Gonzales and Roy "Raul" Gomez, booked their first punk show for February '78 and by summer they were scheduling punk and new wave bands on a regular basis. In September, during the debut performance of The Huns, jockstrap fancier and lead singer Phil

Tolstead, now an evangelist, was wrestled from the stage by four overzealous police officers. A near riot ensued, 17 squad cars converged, arrests were made, and by the time the smoke cleared Raul's had been baptized Austin's most exciting new nightspot. After presiding over two years of such excitement, Gonzales and Gomez sold the club to Steve Hayden in early 1980. One year later, on April Fool's Day, having spawned a generation of art/punk activists, Raul's was closed for good.

Mike Nott lived next door to Raul's and became closely associated with the punk movement. Tipping over the last two letters of his surname, he signed his work "NOXX." Though he cites Panter's screameresque portrait of Tomata du Plenty as an influence, NOXX' early style tended to be scrupulously geometric. Two of his most popular posters are more visually substantial than the skeletal early work but retain his trademark simplicity. The first, promoting a 1983 King Sunny Ade concert, was inspired by African woodprints, and the second, announcing a performance by New Order, incorporates the floor plan of a medieval cathedral in red and black.

Two other neophyte designers closely associated with Raul's and the early days of Austin punk are Ric Cruz and Control Rat X. San Antonio born Ric Cruz began designing posters and handbills for The Huns and other Raul's bands in 1979. His elaborately detailed pen and ink illustrations reflect the common ground he shares with his Armadillo antecedents. Yet Cruz' sci-fi themes are more than merely a personal preference; they represent a definitive rejection of 'Dillo hippie/cowboy clichés. John Slate, using the colorful moniker Control Rat X, began producing handbills in 1980, including a series for his nonexistent "poster band" Bodily Funktions. Though his work occasionally lured small groups of confused Bodily Funktions fans to Raul's parking lot, he is best known for the punkish periodical, Xiphoid Process, which he published from '79 to '82.

In Austin, as elsewhere, there has always been some overlap between performers and designers. During his first few years in town, De White was known more for his guitar work with Doak Snead and Butch Hancock than for the graphics of his alter ego, Guy Juke; today he occasionally fronts his own band, Blackie White and the Halftones. Armadillo high priest Jim Franklin performed with Ramon Ramon and the Four Daddios. And Kerry Awn is a founding member of the Uranium Savages parody band. Beginning with the punk movement, however, an increasing number of musicians were coaxed into the do-it-yourself poster process. Cam King, guitarist for the proto-wave threesome the Explosives, created a number of posters and signed them "Flathead." Guitarist Byron "Siren" Scott, drummer Rock Savage, Larry Seaman of Standing Waves, Glass Eye's Kathy McCarty, Bodysnatchers' guitarist Chris Bailey, Bad Mutha Goose's Billy (Prahblem) Pringle and Terri Lord, a.k.a. P.F. Flyer, Ace Bondage, et al., Chris Wing of Sharon Tate's Baby, David Yow of Toxic Shock and now with Jesus Lizard, accordion player Bert Crews, and the Big Boys' Randy "Biscuit" Turner and Chris Gates have all proven themselves talented and prolific designers.

In contrast to the urban punk phenomenon prevalent in larger cities, Austin's punk movement was, for the most part, devoid of safety pins and violent overtones; it was characterized rather by a mix of irrepressible enthusiasm, sacred cow bashing, and garage band bravado. Nonetheless, like the common music of the punk era, local posters and handbills were intended to shock and challenge traditional standards. Very often musicians produced the most outrageous and controversial street visuals. Their handiwork sometimes evoked strong reactions, as when Bert

Crews, of the acoustic punk band the Re*cords, became the target of an aggressive F.B.I. manhunt in 1979 after he used the Sluggo punk-zine press to run off several hundred Raul's handbills on I.R.S. forms. Or when a hapless Steve Hayden was arrested in 1980 because of a Big Boys handbill put together by Biscuit. Entitled "Hot and Bothered Men," it featured the unexpurgated photo of an oily stud sporting only a cowboy hat and a hard-on.

By the late Seventies, with the cosmic cowboy era on the wane, many 'Dillo era poster artists began to expand stylistically. Influenced by the punk movement, Rick Turner and Guy Juke shed the elaborately crafted illustrations associated with the Armadillo and began experimenting with a simpler more spontaneous look. Turner's engraving collage posters, adorned with ransom note typography were timely and powerful. Yet Juke, more than any of the 'Dillo veterans, captured graphically the straightforward, streamlined feel of the new music. He perfected an angular minimalist style that in time evolved into a sophisticated faceted look. The perverted popularity of his "House of Wax" and Joe Ely "Live Shots" designs are indicative of how well Juke apprehended the spirit of the times. The shadowy skulker of his "House of Wax" illustration was inspired by a still photo from the classic horror film. Shortly after the design appeared as a full page Raul's ad in the November 1980 issue of New York Rocker (for which Juke created also the B-52's back cover art), a shabbily bootlegged facsimile showed up on the Ramones' "Pleasant Dreams" LP. Juke's cowboy hated, besunspectacled Joe Ely portrait featured on Ely's 1980 "Live Shots" LP was surreptitiously appropriated for the cover of a pirated "new wave music" [sic] cassette sold on the Saudi black market.

Despite the advent of punk and new wave sensibilities, Austin's music scene has remained diverse enough to support, even demand, a continued variety of poster styles. The blues tradition, for example, has been fostered by clubs such as the Victory Grill, Rome Inn, One Knite, Ernie's Chicken Shack, Brook's, and Antone's. Often incorporating a playing card as an embellishment, the Antone's posters of Danny Garrett remain traditionally realistic in style. The work of Todd Green, as well, is consistently free of punk effects. Having moved to Austin in '68 from Kentucky, Green is most closely associated with "the drag's" venerable Hole in the Wall tavern.

Another artist whose style has been essentially unaffected by the punk movement is Dale Wilkins. Born in Long Beach, California, Wilkins spent his freshman year at Rick Griffin's alma mater, Palos Verdes High School. Griffin was an early influence but Wilkins had moved to Michigan before he saw his first psychedelic poster in 1967. Soon thereafter he was dabbling in poster design himself and by 1969 he had settled in Austin. Wilkins created a few posters for the Armadillo World Headquarters but he really hit his stride working for the Austin Opry House in the early Eighties. It was about this time that he worked out of Sheauxnough Studios, with Priest, Juke, and Garrett. Sheauxnough was an arts collective founded in '76 by Priest, Sam Yeates, and John Rodgers to fill the void created two years earlier by the dissolution of Priest's Directions Company, Austin's first counter culture ad agency.

Three venues important to counter culture postering were Duke's, which closed in the early Eighties, and the Continental Club and Liberty Lunch, both of which are still very popular. For punk bands, the most viable early alternative to Raul's was Duke's Royal Coach Inn, located on Congress Avenue in the same building that had housed The Vulcan Gas Company. Also on Congress, the Continental Club has been supportive of alternative music and additionally books

blues, roots rock, tex-mex, and just about anything else. During the early Eighties, Gary Oliver created an entertaining series of poster calendars for the Continental. These calendars, signed “Golliver,” featured elaborate cartoons and were an extension of the work he had produced for the One Knite, popularly known before its untimely extinguishment as “the joint that won’t go out.” Liberty Lunch, a generous patron of poster art during the Eighties, is a large open-air club particularly suited to third world and alternative bands. Built over the site of an 1870s wagon yard and home to Tony’s Sanitary Tortilla Factory in the 1940s, the Lunch has been covered since 1981 by a partial roof erected with steel framing salvaged from the Armadillo.

In mid 1980, a cavernous warehouse, which heretofore had housed a run of undistinguished rock clubs with silly names, emerged as heir apparent to Raul’s punk legacy. Dubbed Club Foot (no connection to the San Francisco venue of the same name) by owner John Bird, this night club could comfortably accommodate upwards of a thousand patrons in its corrugated metal-sheathed, multilevel interior, riddled with stairways and catwalks, large spaces and secret rooms. It hosted an eclectic array of touring acts, from U-2 and R.E.M. to James Brown, B.B. King, and King Sunny Ade; and was also, in its day, Austin’s most important showcase for local talent. Complementing the music at Club Foot was a four-year avalanche of posters and handbills. Established artists such as Wilkins, Juke, and Kerry Awn contributed pieces; NOXX designed the logo. Novices such as Charles Webre, a.k.a. Towie, Field Gilbert, me as Jagmo, the Art Maggots including Paul Sabal and Frank Kozik, and an amorphous army of band members, fans, dabblers, dopers, pranksters, and hangers-on produced posters.

Shortly after Club Foot opened, I joined the staff as bar manager. Eventually my responsibilities were expanded to include advertising and promotion. Because I had been collecting the work of Franklin, Juke, et al. since moving from Chicago to Texas in ’78, I found it especially exhilarating when my duties at Club Foot allowed me to commission posters, and even to experiment with designing some myself. It was at this point that I began to sign my work “Jagmo.” After leaving Club Foot in 1983 I embarked on a freelance career specializing in posters and other music industry art. Since then, as Jagmo, I’ve had the privilege of working extensively with many of my favorite performers, promoters, and clubs, Liberty Lunch in particular, and serving as art director for challenging endeavors such as the Texas-U.S.S.R. Musicians’ Exchange in 1987 and, since its inception, the annual South by Southwest Music and Media Conference – SXSW.

The Art Maggots wriggled out of Eugene, Oregon’s fecund punk underworld about 1980. With a hankering to express themselves visually and no illustration experience, they used a conglomeration of odd images to produce handbills for the fictitious Foam Lords. Three of the Art Maggots, Billy Haddock, Paul Sabal, and Tony Carbonee, relocated to Austin in the early Eighties, where they were joined in their twisted visual mission by Andy Blackwood and Frank Kozik. From ’81 to ’84, in addition to a succession of humorously subversive “guerilla” handbills, they produced a number of increasingly imaginative and well-rendered posters for Club Foot. In 1983, Club Foot was renamed Nightlife; a few months later it was closed for good and the building demolished.

El Paso born Paul Sabal earned an architecture degree at the University of Oregon and as such had a considerable amount of graphic experience compared to the other Maggots. In the mid Eighties he worked closely with The Austin Chronicle, Austin’s current and most long-lived

alternative tabloid. Founded in 1981 by Nick Barbaro and Louis Black, with help from Bob Simmons and others, The Chronicle supplanted the Austin Rag, the Austin Sun, and Rumors as a news source with a progressive, arts oriented point of view. Ardently supportive of local music, The Chronicle sponsors the annual Austin Chronicle Music Awards and co-sponsors SXSW. Just as The Vulcan, the 'Dillo, and Raul's were in their day, The Chronicle/SXSW nexus has become the hub around which much of Austin's creative counter culture currently revolves.

Frank Kozik was born in Spain and by 1981 he had found his way to Austin. Much of his earliest work was done with the Art Maggots. In 1987 Kozik began designing posters for the Cave Club, which was eventually relocated by owner Brad First to 6th Street as Club Cairo, which begat in turn the Cannibal Club. Kozik's raw early style, often calculatedly offensive, became popular with bands such as Austin's Butthole Surfers. A Poison 13 concert was cancelled by University of Texas officials, reportedly in response to Christian students complaints about the poster Kozik had designed for the show – an unflattering rendering of Baby Jesus roasting on a “Char-Boy” barbeque grill. Though Kozik was very active locally during the late Eighties, he has been working primarily on West Coast projects lately, often in conjunction with California's L'Imagerie. Under its auspices he now has his own shop for screen printing, a process he was exposed to while working at Bee-Bop Printing in 1987.

More than merely serving as Kozik's temporary home base, Bee-Bop Screen Printing has played a key role in Austin postering for more than a decade. A number of other talented young poster artists, including Martian, Malice, Schneider, and Justin Hess, have cut their teeth doing overlays in Bee-Bop's art department. In 1977, at the age of 15, Marty Bebout founded Bee-Bop Printing and began selling his prints on “the drag.” As a student at Austin's Anderson High, Bebout studied art and then screen printing under Southwestern artist Amado Peña, and then spent three years working with him. Though he has worked with every major poster artist in town, Bebout enjoys an especially close professional relationship with Juke. Beginning in 1983 with the 1st annual Austin Chronicle Music Awards poster, Bebout and Juke have collaborated on several dozen magnificent screen prints. Edd Patton is another artist closely associated with Bee-Bop in the early Eighties. Born and raised in Austin, he produced several posters, the most memorable of which is his 1984 Offenders piece, a 28x36 inch tour poster featuring World War II fighter planes amid exploding flak.

While Bee-Bop and a small assortment of other screen printers produced quite a few silk-screened music posters, the vast majority of posters were off-set printed. Most of the large format Vulcan posters were printed by Johnny Mercer on his 29-inch Harris single color press. Typically, after the artist furnished him with black and white board art, Mercer would shoot a negative and then a reverse negative for the second color run – usually a split fountain. Normally only 100 posters were printed; yet, because The Vulcan had trouble covering printing costs, Mercer remembers often being paid with coffee cans full of coins and wadded up bills. Two printers who worked extensively with poster artists in the Seventies are Mike Morgan and Benny Binford – first at Express Press and later at Calico Press. Printers often had to deal with artists running behind schedule on rush jobs; Morgan swears that Priest would usually be adding the finishing touches to a poster design even as the press was printing it. Morgan and Binford went their separate ways in 1980, and a short time later Binford helped greenhorn printer Junior Franklin get started in the business.

Junior Franklin is easily one of Austin's most unusual poster personalities. Born in Austin, he moved to L.A. in 1956 and became a founding member of the Might Clouds of Joy. For 18 years Franklin performed with this trend-setting gospel quartet and also served as manager of the group. After returning to Austin in '79 to be with his ailing mother, he had the same dream on three consecutive nights – a dream about posters. Though he knew absolutely nothing about printing, Franklin was convinced that The Lord wanted him to become a printer. So he enlisted the aid of his friend Reverend J.T. Stewart, and soon the Franklin & Stewart Poster and Printing Co. became “the country's first black owned poster printing business.” With a book on printing borrowed from the library, and by tapping into his extensive gospel circuit connections, Franklin started printing day-glo colored placards for gospel, soul, R&B, blues, and rock shows from Beaumont, Texas to Chicago. Possibly his most memorable poster for a gospel tour features a photo of Siamese twin sisters joined at the head. Sadly, in 1985, the business was closed by the Treasury Department as a consequence of a baffling alleged counterfeiting scandal.

Over the years no Austin printer has been as consistently involved with Texas music graphics as Terry Raines. Fascinated by caves and underground exploration, he originally began printing in the mid Sixties as a means of disseminating information to other caving fanatics. A couple years later he was printing Vulcan handbills, and eventually printed many of the Armadillo posters, including Jim Franklin's four-color grand opening design and Priest's memorable “Last Dance” poster. Endearingly eccentric, he printed from '71 to '73 in a derelict bus which he had parked on 33rd Street and had proudly emblazoned with the cryptic battle cry “Transportes Espeleológicos.” Raines' enthusiasm, meticulous attention to detail, and creative flair have made him a favorite of Austin posterists for twenty-five years. Long ago he retired his primitive Multilith 1250 press and moved out of his dilapidated old bus. Currently using state-of-the-art Heidelberg presses, Raines continues to churn out a confusion of fine concert posters and esoteric caving publications.

For today's fledgling generation of poster designers, there is rarely budget enough for them to see their work actually printed, and they must rely instead on xerography. As a logical consequence of technological advances and a pervasive lack of promotional funding, the trend toward photocopying, which gained popularity with the advent of punk, is ever more prevalent today. This is especially true for many of the promising young artists who have produced posters for the Cave/Cairo/Cannibal Club concatenation: Malice, Roy T., Schneider, Mather, Austin, and Hardy.

Seth Spicker Maxwell, a.k.a. Malice, moved to Austin from Indiana in 1985 and spent time at Bee-Bop Printing. A couple years later he was booking bands into “The Loft” above the Cannibal Club and creating his own posters. Resplendent with hairy letters and steroid-crazed eyeballs, his posters were a common sight on “the drag” until he moved to San Francisco in 1989. Malice often collaborated with Roy T(ompkins), who had begun designing odd co-op posters about 1984. Roy T. renders his humorously gruesome subject matter in a broad, distinctive style. He is best known for giving life to his lovable lantern-jawed offspring, Harvey the Hillbilly Bastard. Bob Schneider moved to Austin in '87 and spent the better part of a year at Bee-Bop. Lead singer of the band Joe Rockhead, he has produced a multitude of posters for his own group and others. Schneider's style is bold, clean, and less sleaze oriented than the look espoused by many of his contemporaries. Richard Mather began doing macabre posters for the

Cannibal in 1990. A fan of Ed “Big Daddy” Roth and Robert Williams, he has experimented with a handful of different styles.

The most productive of Austin’s young poster artists is Jason Austin. Born on Long Island in ’71, he moved to Texas in 1978, and designed his first poster ten years later. His earliest pieces were signed “J. Wichrowski,” and for a time he used the allonym “Zebulon Woodhull.” Often approximating a neo-psychedelic look and using quasi Sixties era lettering, Austin nonetheless shares the penchant for gory and horrific imagery currently favored by many alternative posterists. He often works with Lyman Hardy, who began creating posters in Houston about ’85 and moved to Austin in 1990.

Another talented Bee-Bop alumnus, Paul Sessums, a.k.a. Martian, is closely associated with the Black Cat, a 6th Street club ingeniously fashioned out of a funky little space across from the Cannibal. A gifted cartoonist, Martian has mastered a clean and simple style that, while irreverently contemporary, still owes more to ‘Dillo era illustrators than the thrash and slash school of today. In addition to Martian and the rest of the aforementioned posterists, there are many other newcomers currently producing street graphics. Among them are David Lewis as d.n.l., Daiv Fisher, Kool Pop, B.A.D., Mark Shaw, Bungee, and countless unnamed purveyors of ocular rock propaganda. From pillar to post, they promote live music, with energy and imagination, true to the spirit of Austin postering that has persevered for more than twenty-five years.

Fastened to telephone poles and hoardings, or hanging in galleries and museums, concert posters chronicle the evolution of popular culture with a unique and conspicuous eloquence. In Austin, Texas particularly, poster art provides a formidable counterpoint to a thriving live music tradition. Austin posters and popular music are each manifestations of the same maverick urge – the urge to buck the system and to define reality on one’s own terms. And in the same way that rock & roll itself is a progressive, persistent defiance of the status quo, from the days of The Vulcan to the ‘Dillo, and then Raul’s, and now the Black Cat, the poster art of each succeeding generation has consumed its progenitors. As such, Austin’s poster tradition is reborn in the rambunctious vision of every new guitar slinger or renegade garage band. For postering in Austin is largely an act of creative solidarity and a labor of love, and as long as live music flourishes, uncompromising and original, so too will the poster art that celebrates it.

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