I think I have a pretty cool job as editor of an online magazine but if I could choose my dream job I’d be in a band. Can’t sing, can’t play any musical instrument, bar some basic work with a recorder, but it’s still a (pipe) dream of mine to be a front woman of some sort of poprock/indie group. Music is important to me. Some of my best memories have been guided by a song, a band, a concert. I met my husband at Livid Festival while watching Har Mar Superstar. We were recently married and are spending our honeymoon at the Meredith Music Festival. So it’s no surprise that sooner or later we put together a MUSIC issue for Canvas.

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Words by Seema Duggal

Dan Whitford may be best known as the frontman of ubiquitous Australian dance band Cut Copy, but that only really brushes half of his story – the publicly prominent, I Have the Power to Make You Groove stage presence that makes jelly legs of us all. But when he’s not shooting electric rods through the dance floor, he’s really just another guy behind the computer – well, that is until you see what he can DO behind a computer. Satiating the visionary side of his multi-talented persona as one half of design duo Alter with Jonathon Wallace (aka Jono), he is one of those rare people who tipped the scales in the general distribution of genius – and he is clearly on the top end. Although his music has reached an unprecedented level of success, it was art that saw his foray into creativity.

“My father was an architect and always encouraged me to draw and be creative, and it was something I was always pretty good at, so it wasn’t until I was at university studying graphic design that I really got into making music,” he says.

Upon graduating from design school, Dan worked for a year at an established firm before he got the independent bug which nearly every artist can relate to – the numbing desire for more creative control. But his main point of difference is that he took the leap most only dream of and started up his own studio with his new business partner, Jono.

“I think I was feeling as though I really wanted to have my own name to design work that I did, and have more input on the types of jobs I worked on and the way the studio worked. So I met up with Jono, who I’d studied with previously and we collectively made the decision to leave our jobs and go into business for ourselves as Alter,” says Dan. To really make us envious, it was also around this time when Dan signed a record deal, and Cut Copy began to become an established name in the music world just as Alter started to take off in design circles.

With designers benefiting from a relatively faceless level of fame, Dan says he has found coping with the recognition a bit… odd, for lack of a better word. “It’s weird, and at times seems a little silly to me that people all of a sudden have such a different reaction when meeting you. As I never really entered music or design to chase fame, I find it quietly amusing that people have such an impression of me now that my face is on covers of magazines. I don’t feel like I’ve changed,” he says.

He may have art and sound down to a tee, but Dan says the two fields are relatively standalone in terms of the creative process. “I don’t think you ever consciously draw a creative process from music into design or visa versa. They are two very different creative forms that just happen to be tied together in our culture. If you look at styles of music, there is always an accompanying approach when it comes to record covers, posters and fashion. I like the idea of cross pollinating, or collaging ideas from different eras and styles, which is something that is probably common in our design work and music,” he says.
The next question is obvious – how does he manage both fields and maintain his sanity?

“It has always been somewhat of a juggling act to manage both passions. I think at some point, I had an unrealistic expectation of being able to cover both as semi-full-time projects which meant that my own life was relegated to a distant third priority. I still work on specific projects, but as the band has enjoyed greater success, I’ve been away from Australia and therefore away from the business for long periods. Thankfully I have a tremendously understanding business partner and a very capable team of designers who keep things rolling in the meantime,” he says.

“I really think it’s important maintain energy and enthusiasm for what you’re doing. As soon as either thing becomes a chore, then it creates an imbalance. Also (as it has taken me a while to realise), time away from either passion can help reinvigorate this enthusiasm. So it’s probably good to think of down-time as exactly that, rather than slacking off...”

Thanks to Jono and a seemingly incredible team of designers at Alter holding fort, music is definitely consuming the majority of Dan’s time right now – but he said if he had to choose between a tour and a design project, he’d find a way to make them both work.

With an interview like this, it’s pretty standard – and maybe a tad cliché, but reasonably so – to wonder where he’d like to see both endeavours in 10 years’ time.

“I’d like to build Alter’s profile to a point where we can undertake bigger, more ambitious jobs with the same creative philosophy we have maintained from its inception, and I’d like to continue Cut Copy on its current trajectory, continuing to produce interesting music. Simple, really.”

www.altet.com.au
DID I STEP ON YOUR TRUMPET?
PREVIOUS: Stacey HAT, Karen Walker DRESS (WORN AS BLOUSE) AND BELT @ DIGGING FOR APPLES, AnaESSIA SKIRT, Vintage JACKET, SEMPRE DI BRISUE @ ZOMP SHOEZ. TESS HAT, Karen Walker DRESS (WORN AS BLOUSE) @ DIGGING FOR APPLES, AnaESSIA SKIRT, Karen Walker BELT, NÜ BROGUE @ ZOMP SHOEZ.

THIS PAGE: Tess Woodford Co DRESS, Karen Walker JACKET, Rheanna Langham NECKLACE @ Glitzern WOODFORD & CO DRESS, DHINI JACKET, Karen Walker BELT, RHEANNA LINGHAM NECKLACE @ GLITZERN.
GRACE: DHINI HAT AND TOP, MARNIE SKILLINGS SKIRT, KAREN WALKER BELT, HOUSE OF BAULCH NECKLACE, SEMPRE DI BROGUE @ ZOMP SHOEZ, TESS: AMY KAEHNE SHIRT, DHINI JACKET, GAIL SORRONDA HAREM PANT, HOUSE OF BAULCH NECKLACE, ENRICO ANTINORI BROGUE @ ZOMP SHOEZ, STACEY: LOVER BLOUSE @ CRIMSON PHOENIX, DHINI JACKET, DHINI HAREM PANT, AGI BROGUE @ ZOMP SHOEZ, VINTAGE HAT, ALPHA60 SHIRT, VINTAGE JACKET, MJÖLK TROUSER, JACK LONDON BELT, ZU SHOES BOOT.
STACEY LOVER SHIRT & CRIMSON PHOENIX, CYBELE SKIRT, ANAESSIA UNDERSKIRT, VINTAGE CAPE, GLITZERNE NECKLACE, KAREN WALKER BELT AND REIJ VINTAGE HAT, MJÖLK SHIRT, MJÖLK WAISTCOAT, MJÖLK TROUSER, JACK LONDON BELT, NECK TIE STYLISTS OWN
PHOTOGRAPHER NICK BLAIR
STYLIST SARAH BANGER
MAKE UP BRADWYN JONES@KHM
HAIR CARLREEVES@MIeka
USING REDKEN PRODUCTS
PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSISTANT ELLE ALIHOS
STYLING ASSISTANTS
ADAM NASH & CHARLOTTE WEBB
HAIR ASSISTANT LORNA STACEY
GRANT@CAMERONS GRACE@CAMERONS
TESS@MAVERICK ANDREJ@CHADWICKS
MATTHEW BENJAMIN@VIVIENS
SPECIAL THANKS TO RIPPONLEA ESTATE & WARICKS FIREARMS

VINTAGE HAT, LOVER SHIRT @ CRIMSON PHOENIX, SASS & BIDE JACKET, CYBELE SKIRT, ANAESSIA UNDERSKIRT, KAREN WALKER BELT, NU BROGUE
SHAKETHATDEVIL
JACKIE CHEN COUTURE BLOUSE @ STYLE JUNKY, DIOR EYEWEAR @ LOVEMEANDLEAVEME, WILLIAM LLEWELLYN GRIFFITHS TEMPLE STONE RING, SWAROVSKI RING, YAMILA GUEDEZ NECKLACE, ARMANI EXCHANGE BLACK LEGGINGS.
TONI MATIC EVI DRESS, SOPHIE KYRON BARCELONA CUFF, CE'S VELA BRACELET & RING, VICTOR & ROLF PATENT SHOES & ARTHUR SAKAE.
PAUL FRANK EYEWEAR, THERESA RAWSTHORNE CIGARETTE GIRL ONTO LEG, HIGH HIGH BOOTS, CHANEL BAG I LOVE ME I LEAVE ME
ALANA HILL FUR COAT / BJORN BORG UNDERWEAR / STYLISTS OWN SHOWER CAP. ROMANCE WAS BORN TOP / GIVENCHY HEELS @ MISS CHIC BOUTIQUE.
In my house, just brushing my teeth. I have to do it again. I'm just on the second brushing. I get paranoid that I haven't brushed my teeth so I... Yeah.

It's fun. Festivals you might hang out for a bit. Yeah, it's cool,

and you don't get to see any of the place. At least at countries or whatever and often it's quite intensive about festivals is that you're... You go to other

club shows because they're there to see you. You're headlining... then it can be just as good as the

It depends you know, for example if you're like first one on the main stage often it's kind of weird because it's like playing in front of other people's fans but if you're headlining... then it can be just as good as the club shows because they're there to see you.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BEST FESTIVALS? WHERE DO YOU GET THE BEST RECEPTION?

Festival-wise I think the best two that we've ever played is like Manifest in Mexico. That's a really weird name for a festival, isn't it? You know, if you actually think about it. And then there's Benicassim. Yeah, that was great.

ARE YOU HEADING BACK THERE THIS YEAR?

Yeah we are. The best thing about it is actually trying to see loads of bands. We just got back from the Hurricane Festival in Stuttgart and they had Kraftwerk and The Pixies and I was going to say people like that... just other bands that were playing that I like. Yeah, we enjoyed ourselves.

OLDER BANDS OR BANDS THAT HAVE BEEN AROUND A BIT LONGER...?

Yeah, just bands that I'm into.

WHICH OUT OF THESE BANDS PUT ON A REALLY GOOD LIVE SHOW? ARE THERE ANY BANDS THAT INFLUENCE YOUR LIVE PERFORMANCE?

Well I mean Kraftwerk... the curtain lifts and they come out as robots so I don't know how influential that is. I mean they're certainly good to watch - the sound they get and that one guy's slightly tapping his feet. That's about as animated as they get.

They're just bands I really like. It's just as much about the personality of the people.

I WAS DOING A BIT OF RESEARCH FOR OUR CHAT AND I CAME ACROSS AN INTERVIEW WHERE YOU SAID THAT TOURING THE US IS HEP! MORE ENJOYABLE THAN TOURING ENGLAND AND THERE WERE A FEW EXPLICITLY THROWN IN THERE ABOUT THE UK.

WERE YOU RECEIVED VERY DIFFERENTLY IN THE US COMPARED TO THE UK OR...

Oh no it's got nothing to do with the crowds at all. It's really more the places you see. To be quite honest, the UK is just really diabolical. There's no cultural identity from town to town. That's really all I can say.

I mean with the odd exception. It's so dull. Touring the states is more fun. It's just an unfamiliar place.

SO I GATHER PRIMARY COLOURS WAS WRITTEN IN THE STUDIO RATHER THAN ON THE ROAD?

Yeah, I mean I've never really got my head around how most bands can write on the road. I mean I understand they can write the odd song but it's really hard trying to write because you're not in the mindset of writing.


[laughs] That phrase is so grotesque!

OH KNOW, I'M SORRY! THAT'S HORDREUS I APOLOGISE!

I mean anything influences anything doesn't it? You are influenced by what you see. More than you see the more you think I guess. I get influenced by everything. On a personal level, I like to see as much as possible.

SO THE US IS PROBABLY A BIT BETTER INSPIRATION-WISE THAN THE UK IS? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

Well no, because all the best things are borne out of frustration. Whether I'm having a good time or a bad time.

I READ THAT TOM AND RHYS SWAPPED INSTRUMENTS FOR PRIMARY COLOURS. IS THAT A PERMANENT CHANGE?

Tom wanted to play keyboards and Rhys wanted to play bass basically. They did swap but it was more a gradual thing. You know, Tom just started getting really into synths and Rhys found that he was better at writing songs on bass and it was just beneficial all round really.

SONICALLY PRIMARY COLOURS IS DEFINITELY A PROGRESSION FROM STRANGE HOUSE ALTHOUGH YOU'VE SAID THE SAME BANDS HAVE INFLUENCED BOTH ALBUMS. DO YOU THINK YOUR SOUND AND YOUR IMAGE NEED TO KEEP EVOLVING TO MAINTAIN THE LEVEL OF INTEREST THAT YOU GUYS HAVE HAD?"
I just don’t understand why any band would want to keep doing the same thing. I mean, I guess people don’t think the same way we do—although some people do. Basically, I cannot see the appeal of making an album and then making it again three times. If you’re going to be a band, which is usually creative, then you should by nature be evolving and developing and if you’re not then why bother. Just quit. I mean really, it’s pointless unless you explore things and be creative. That’s it.

I THINK IT’S INTERESTING THAT SEA WITHIN A SEA WAS CHOSEN AS THE FIRST SINGLE WHEN IT’S THE LAST SONG ON THE ALBUM. OBVIOUSLY THAT’S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT BEING EIGHT MINUTES LONG. DO YOU GUYS HAVE INPUT INTO CHOOSING WHAT THE SINGLES ARE?

[Laughs] Any input? Who else would do it?

THE RECORD COMPANY?
Not that happens but only for really big pop bands that don’t even write their own songs. It’s like... I was going to say some sort of weird analogy that probably doesn’t make sense but that’s kind of like going to a restaurant and being told what to eat. It doesn’t really make any sense. My main point is that I wouldn’t even be in a band if it was a case of being told what to do. It’s like self expression—it’s not label expression. I mean why are people in bands if they don’t want to make the decisions? If the label got to choose what single we put out then... you know. No way.

SO YOU GUYS LIKE TO HAVE TOTAL CREATIVE CONTROL?
That was one of the stipulations in our contract. That’s why X are good for us. I mean, you go off and you start recording and you don’t hear a word from them for months. They just let you get on with it.

A LOT’S BEEN MADE OF YOUR GREAT TASTE IN MUSIC—YOU AND THE BAND AS A WHOLE. I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU COULD TELL US WHAT THREE SONGS YOU HAVE ON HIGH ROTATION AT THE MOMENT.

A lot’s been made of my great taste in music?

YEAH. I’VE READ A LOT ABOUT YOUR PRE-SHOW PA MIXES BEING GREAT—ESPECIALLY IN MUSIC JOURNALISTS’ EYES I’M GUESSING.

When other people say that it almost feels like you’ve kind of been bragging about it. But I just think for some people, it’s like their main passion in life or whatever.

WELL, I THINK IT’S A NEW WAY FOR PEOPLE TO DISCOVER NEW MUSIC OUTSIDE ALL OF THE HYPE ON THE INTERNET ABOUT NEW RELEASES.

Yeah, I totally think that bands should talk about what they’re into. But you know, it’s just like when you get into a conversation with someone who’s well-read or whatever and they start listing all these books that they’re into and they’re just name-checking them to sound clever.

YEAH, THERE’S ALWAYS A RUSSIAN AUTHOR IN THERE SOMEBWHERE.

But yeah, sorry, to answer your question. There’s a band that I was turned onto by a friend of mine and they’re called Ceremony. So I looked them up and there are two Ceremonys. And the other Ceremony features Sonny and Cher’s lesbian daughter. It’s NOT them. The good Ceremony are from Virginia and they’ve got a song called Never Love Again. It’s a good song. That’s one.

And... have you ever heard any of Lou Reed’s band before the Velvet Underground?

NO, I HAVEN’T.

He was in like those weird surf bands and one of them is called Beach Nut. And it’s really funny because you listen to it there’s a lot of elements that do go on to be included in The Velvet Underground—scratchy guitar and whatever but in the context of a surf song—quite a throwaway surf song. It’s great anyway. That song’s called Cycle Annie.

And the third one—I think it’s the last thing I listened to before I went to sleep last night—is called Percolator. It’s by a band called Stereolab. You probably know them. Yeah, I’m quite into them at the moment.

EXCELLENT. LAST QUESTION. CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE THE HORRORS IN AUSTRALIA ANY TIME SOON?

Yeah, we’re doing Big Day Out and we’re going to do some club shows around then, so we’ll be there January.

WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME—I’LL LET YOU GET BACK TO BRUSHING YOUR TEETH NOW. It’s all finished so maybe I’ll just go comb my hair or something.
People are always saying “it’s such a small world” and never more does that ring true than in Brisbane. The other saying, “six degrees of separation”? Well it’s more like two in this city, which can sometimes serve one well, like this catch-up conversation we had with Brisbane ex-pat stylist/creative/artist Ms. Fitz.

Interview by Catherine McPhee
WHEN MS. FITZ LEFT BRISBANE SEVERAL YEARS AGO, SHE WAS COLLABORATING REGULARLY WITH THOM KERR AND RUFIO CREATIVE, DOING EDITORIAL WORK FOR LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINES, MAKING A NAME AS A STYLIST BOTH ON THE CATWALK AND IN COMMERCIAL TELEVISION. THEN, LIKE A GAME OF CHINESE WHISPERS, SHE HAD HIT THE ROAD, WORKING AS A BACKUP DANCER FOR PEACHES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY WORKING WITH A WELL-KNOWN COSTUME STYLIST.

PUTTING THIS ISSUE TOGETHER GAVE US A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO FIND OUT WHAT’S REALLY HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF MS. FITZ. ONE THINGS FOR CERTAIN, YOU CAN TAKE THE GIRL OUT OF BRISBANE, BUT YOU CAN’T TAKE BRISBANE OUT OF THE GIRL!

CM>OK, SO WE LAST SAW YOU IN AUSTALIA IN MAY, COLLABORATING WITH MAISE FOR THEIR S/S CATWALK SHOW. WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW? I SUPPOSE FOR SOME, MYSELF INCLUDED, IT WAS A BIT OF A SURPRISE TO HEAR YOU WERE TOURING OVERSEAS AS A BACKUP DANCER. YOU SEEMED TO BE MAKING A NAME FOR YOURSELF HERE AT HOME WITH YOUR STYLING WORK. SO HOW DID YOU MAKE THE DECISION TO PACK UP AND WORK IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, IN A DIFFERENT CREATIVE GENRE?

MS. FITZ>I love how word travels! Unfortunately I am not touring the states as a back up dancer..! I am dancing regularly - taking lots of classes, but mostly working on a pop album with heavy weight electro producer Chew Fu. Who knows how that will go? But I’m really excited about it. Dance and music has been a big part of my self expression for a long time- its the reason I shied away from being simply a stylist and moved towards working with musicians. I’m inspired by music, colour and fringe culture. I’m also just finishing off a music video I directed (my first time as a director) for Chew Fu and J-Cast.

Being overseas has given me the freedom to explore other artistic genres with out being boxed into the restrictions of being simply a stylist. I’m more than a stylist- I’m an artistic director, and artist who can work in any medium- be it music, film or fashion styling and design.

I’m also interning for a hat designer (who shall remain nameless) and basically hanging out in the garment district everyday learning the ins and outs of the manufacturing and wholesale industry here. I may branch out into my own accessories label at some stage, so I’m just gaining all the knowledge I need to make it a reality.

I guess for the most part with styling you’re in control of the aesthetic and influence the outcome whereas as a dancer for other performers, those choices are made for you.

IS THAT DIFFICULT TO ADJUST TO?

I prefer to work with performers because its more of a challenge- dressing a mannequin, they’re gonna wear what ever you want- its their job. But working with musicians, you need to listen to their music, understand their message and the core of their image and interpret that- you need to work with the artist, and I really enjoy that collaborative process.

DID WORKING ON AUSTRALIA’S SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO MAKE THE CHANGE? HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED TRYING OUT FOR THE SHOW!?

Working on SYTYCD was a wonderful opportunity I really loved it, but I was a dancer long before I was a stylist. And no, haaa, I have a strictly no entering into reality television policy! Its just too much of a gamble to put your brand into the hands of reality TV producers :). Those crazy bastards!:)

YOU’RE OWN STYLE IS A HYBRID OF HIP-HOP/JAZZ/ KRUMP/DANCEHALL SO WHAT KIND OF BANDS DO YOU LISTEN TO?

Yeah, my style of dance is hip hop/jazz/ interpretive,krump/dancehall!! I say that as a joke, basically because dance, for me, is anarchical- its about not giving a flying fuck and just doing your own thing- getting down to the music in anyway you’d like. Just letting go and enjoying yourself. I listen to alot of 80’s new wave pop, ska, dancethall, hip hop, punk, electro and pop. Anything with a fun upbeat tune and a sassy attitude gets me going.

SO HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR OWN STYLE?

My style is- constantly evolving. It always changes! I’m a chameleon. At the moment its pretty standard 80’s Jem and the Hologram’s steeze. But I enjoy anything unusual: awkward creative combinations- something unexpected. Put that bowlers hat with those snow boots baby! oh yeah, rock that Neckromantix tee shirt with a floral skirt and over sized hounds tooth blazer! WOAHRRRRRR!

IS THERE ANY CHANCE WE’LL SEE YOU BACK HOME SOON? OR TOO BUSY BEING A BACKUP DANCER!?

Well, I’m really playing it by ear at them moment, it depends on Visa approvals etc. But I will be home to Brisbane to visit for Christmas. I miss it.
MASSIVE ATTACK

It’s no surprise that an experimental band like Massive Attack, who pushed the boundaries of hip-hop into trip-hop, would collaborate with someone like Nick Knight. Its a little unfair to pigeonhole Knight as purely a fashion photographer, for which his work is more widely known, because his ideas are bigger than that.

He has openly embraced new technology, forging live fashion and art performances on his website ShowStudio, an online site that is so far ahead of the fashion industry in terms of web-based content. He is king of experimentation, both of new ideas and images and history will show him to be one of this century’s most defining image makers.

WORDS BY ANDREW DWYER

If one more old fart 70’s rocker, “back in my day” type starts banging onto me about, “... the days when you went out and bought an LP and sat down to play it whilst perusing the album for it’s amazing art...” I’m just going to have to bust that dirty ole vinyl over their head.

But as tired as I am by this old rhetoric, a mate of mine has taken to amassing his own collection of LP’s and at least this part is true; to cradle an LP jacket after placing the vinyl on the turntables is still a moment to savour. It’s almost a romantic notion these days.

I do have to admit that if the music download doesn’t have a pretty artwork for me to log in my itunes library it really does ruin the whole experience. And it’s not that musicians today are putting less into their album art direction. We’ve put together a collection of the musicians who we think have produced some of the best album cover art in the last little while for your perusal. It’s not an easy list to put together.

And to those 70’s rocker types who can’t get over their vinyl I’d just like to say, “umm, digital music actually sounds better.”

UNCOVERED

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And to those 70’s rocker types who can’t get over their vinyl I’d just like to say, “umm, digital music actually sounds better.”
Can an illustration have more power than a photograph? This is the belief that Alexander Gelman put to the members of Blonde Redhead in designing the cover artwork for their atmospheric taste-of-dream-pop release “23”. Kazu Makino, lead vocalist of the band, describes how she wanted the album to have a simple luxury and the subsequent recommendation she received from a friend that only luminary graphic designer Gelman could bring such a brief to life.

The journey started with a picture the band found of a circus freak show lady with four legs and ended in a deliberately heightened state of unreality. This took the form of an image that seems somehow more emblematic than representative of the form of this circus performer. Note the fact that the facial features of said circus freak are non-descriptive adding to the sense of symbolism. And there are other figurative themes at play too. Since when did a circus performer develop a penchant for Lascoste and begin swinging a racquet? Perhaps this is a way that Gelman could develop his imagery at the same time as playing to the band’s brief of a simple luxury?

Blonde Redhead must have been pleased with the finished product. We love this statement by Makino, when she proclaims it ‘great that artwork can be so uncompromising’. Add the images embossed nature to the mix and the fact that it appears alone on the cover void of any statement as to the album or band’s name and we are presented with what the band can only describe as insane simplicity. Is this the key to unlocking the power of iconic graphic design? Ask a graphic designer; they’re sure to give you their opinion. In the meantime we just think it’s an amazing album cover.

*23* is available through 4AD.
Perhaps unlike some of the other album covers that we have discussed you can’t help but peruse the album artwork of Panda Bear’s “Person Pitch” and think of it as inextricably linked to the music therein. Whereas at times there may be a tenuous relationship between what a band chooses to place on their album cover and their music, what we are presented with on Panda Bear aka Noah Lennox’s album cover appears as a development on the themes of the soundscape.

By all reports the reason for this is two fold. The first is that Noah commissioned his close friend and artist Agnes Montgomery to work with him in realizing his idea for the cover. A close relationship between visual artist and musician can produce vivid results and this is especially the case when their vision is so closely aligned. The second is that the duo then undertook a visual journey to get to the point of presentation of the final artwork cover. Agnes talks about working on four artwork covers for four singles before finally undertaking the work for Person Pitch.

The development of the cover art was a painstaking process of collage, arranging by hand found paper using small scissors and a magnifying lamp. Agnes speaks about the importance she places in making a visual musical match; a tantalising expression of fervor for her art and the respect she has for the art of those she collaborates with. Indeed the art she produces is equally as arresting as the music of her muse.

PANDA BEAR

PERSON PITCH AVAILABLE THROUGH PAW TRACKS.
SPECIAL THANKS TO AGNES MONTGOMERY.
This was the second album from Antony and the Johnsons, a haunting and intimate affair that followed the themes of duality and transformation. The music is a very honest embrace of Antony’s own struggles and desires to become what he knows is his true self. It is no coincidence then that the artwork of I Am Bird Now is so emotionally and instinctively connected to the album’s narrative.

There is so much history and hurt in this picture. The ‘girl’ on the bed is Candy Darling, a Warhol superstar and pop art muse of the 60s. The photograph, aptly titled Candy Darling on her deathbed, was shot by Peter Hujar, a photographer in the New York scene who focused on fashion during the 50s and 60s.

His idiom was always plain: black and white photographs that were very classic in their composition. The theme of mortality seemed to be a recurring topic in Hujar’s work; a perfect complement to Antony’s ghostly hymns and a very real reminder of both Candy’s and Peter’s premature deaths: Candy from leukemia and Peter of the AIDS-related virus.

It is a disturbing and painful portrait, but one that perfectly sums up the personal agony of its protagonist.
This album can’t be discussed without asking the question as to why an album cover that makes a statement of such truly awful connotations can possibly have become the revered image of cool that it is today? My morning coffee barista used to wear a homemade T with the image from Sonic Youth’s ‘Goo’ album on the front. I thought it was great. For as long as I can remember I’ve loved this cover, and it seems, so have others – so much so that some have decided to make home-made T-shirts using it. Yet there is no denying that it is grotesque.

Raymond Pettibon the unofficial in-house artist for the punk music scene of the 1970’s and 80’s illustrated the front cover of Sonic Youth’s 1990 release. The image is based on a photograph of Maureen Hindley and David Smith, en route to the murder trial of Maureen’s sister Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, the infamous serial killers in the Moor murders.

A review of Pettibon illustrations points out his, "uniquely sophisticated relationship between image and text". This text and the racy illustrating is probably the reasoning behind Sonic Youth deciding to use the art rather than the fact the album actually had anything to do with the lyrics or music contained therein.

But there is something inherently more interesting about the cover itself and it probably goes right to the heart of what the punk movement has meant to so many followers over the last three or four decades and that’s the enjoyment of something - well just because you shouldn’t; juvenile really, puerile almost. But there is something in iconic imagery becoming so iconic just because it is absolutely sinister; because any normal person shouldn’t be enthralled.

In reviewing the cover of “Goo” we heard whispers that Oliver Stone used it as inspiration to his 1994 satirical film Natural Born Killers where death and killing were seemingly glorified not because your everyday punter likes death and murdering his mum but more because they are fascinated with sensationalism, particularly of the macabre. "...I’m not saying I believe in mass murder or that shit but if I was a mass murderer I’d be Mickey and Mallory..."
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