Visual music  by Gary Boyle

Read the following story by Tatat Bunnag from the Bangkok Post. Then, answer the questions that follow.

A great cover can inspire us to pick an album off the shelf and give it a listen.

CHERISH THE ART
For as long as pop music has been around, artwork has played a big part in the music industry. And very often, it does far more than just accompany the music; some album covers are almost as iconic as the albums themselves.

With the advent of online streaming, the importance of album art may have diminished. But for many, it remains a big part of the musical experience. Renowned graphic designer and print artist Supichan Rojvanich believes that the beauty of album art is something to be cherished. Supichan is behind some of the most recognisable album covers and logos in Thai music, keeping his style fresh and exciting for over a decade.

Supichan is the founder and principle designer at Hereodd. Over the years, he has worked with restaurants, hotels and condos. But his true love is album art. He has done designs for artists like Bodyslam, Da Endorphine, Thongchai "Bird" McIntyre and Slot Machine, to name just a few.
WEIRDOS LIKE ME

Supichan studied Decorative Arts at Silpakorn University, which is where he first realised that his twin passions of music and graphic design could become one.

"University was where I got to meet like-minded people for the first time," he recalled. "In high school, you meet friends who aren't necessarily like you. But at art college, I found myself in the same classroom as weirdos like me: people who shared the same love of music, film and fashion. It was such an exciting time to realise my own identity and future."

Like his university friends, Supichan was into rock and alternative music. He didn't sing or play any instruments, being more interested in art and design, but many of his classmates did and were playing in bands.

"My friends back then were mostly singers, like Karinyawat Durongjirakan of Slot Machine, Saruyos Kongmee of The Jukks and Kasemsak Siengchin of Morning Surfers."

After they graduated, Karinyawat landed Supichan his first gig designing the cover art and packaging for Slot Machine's third album, Grey. But Supichan considers his design for Grey a failure.

"At that time I was very new at design, but full of ego," he said. "I designed a hexagon shape for the CD box, instead of a square, because I wanted it to look unique, something nobody had done before. But it just didn't work. It wouldn't stand upright on the shelf."

But, Supichan says, he learned an important lesson. That was the moment he understood that design isn't about showing off and satisfying your own ego; it's about creating something that fits with the band's vision and concept. And the package should be functional and practical. So he tried again with Slot Machine's next release, Cell. It was a success, both musically and artistically.

"People began to talk a lot about the design for Cell. I was contacted by many other artists and labels to do artwork for them. That was when I started to think that I'd done something right."

Before he begins work on a new design, Supichan does plenty of research, looking for a way to convert the artist's music and concepts into pictures.

"I go through the band's Facebook fanpage and other social media to see who their listeners are and what they expect," he explained. "This information is very useful if you're going to design something that appeals to people. In the end, any kind of artwork that makes you want to listen to the music is good."
WORK TOGETHER

The relationship between musician and designer is a very important one, says Supichan. It's a collaborative work, so it's always good when the designer can talk about the album with the artist and have that inform the work that they do. And the cover doesn't need to reveal everything about the music. It just needs to evoke a sense of what the album is about.

"You should be able to listen to the music and look at the artwork and just know that they go together," he said.

With the rise of music streaming, Supichan has had to evolve. Now, in addition to album covers, he designs artist logos and promotional material for concerts and festivals. But he understands this and accepts the need to change.

Supichan believes art and packaging will continue to play an important part in music, thanks to events such as music festivals, or Record Store Day, which has helped renew interest in collectables in recent years.

"Ten years ago, the most exciting work was album art. Now, it's special editions, posters and digital art."

Section 1: Read through the story and answer the following questions.

1. Where did Supichan graduate from? …………….
2. What's the name of his company? ……………
3. Which album was his first cover design for? ……………
4. He felt that the design was a success. True or false? ……………
5. How many sides did the CD box have? ……………
6. Supichan thinks album covers should tell you something about the album's music. True or false? ……………
7. What does he design these days?
8. What does Supichan prefer to design?
   a. Album art. b. Posters. c. The story doesn't say.

Section 2: Write the noun form of the following words.

9. iconic……………
10. exciting…………
11. social……………
12. important…………
13. evolve……………
Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.
"Artists don't release …14… albums as …15… as they used to. Some bands even spend years releasing only singles before putting them together ..16.. a package," he said. "But I believe it's still a dream for …17… artist to release a proper album at …18… once in their careers. And I'm glad that I get to capture this …19… moment."

14. a. physics  
   b. physical  
   c. psychological

15. a. frequently  
   b. normally  
   c. seldom

16. a. as  
   b. on  
   c. of

17. a. some  
   b. all  
   c. any

18. a. every  
   b. the  
   c. least

19. a. import  
   b. importance  
   c. important

Section 4: Find synonyms in the story for the following words.

For the answers, find the story online at www.bangkokpost.com/learning

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at garyb@bangkokpost.co.th