

Top 5 record covers by Russ Bestley



Sex Pistols, Never Mind The Bollocks album

It feels a bit like a cliché to choose this as one of my top five, but in terms of punk album covers, it's pretty much up there as the canon upon which all others are to be judged. Jamie Reid's decision to avoid images of the band on their record covers, combined with the use of fluorescent colours, ransom note typography (ironically, beautifully arranged and visually balanced, in contrast to his punk design imitators) and THAT TITLE (originally coined by guitarist Steve Jones) make it iconic.



Killing Joke, Killing Joke album

For the cover of Killing Joke's debut album, designer Mike Coles chose a photograph by renowned British war photographer Don McCullin depicting Irish youths running away from British troops in Derry, which had originally been published in the *Sunday Times Magazine* on 16 December 1971. Adding white gouache to render the Killing Joke band name, Coles distressed the photograph to create a stark, black and white, almost silhouetted graphic version of the original. Using a photocopier and PMT camera, he then carefully selected elements from different treatments, reassembling the final image to create the paste-up artwork ready for print. The album was issued with a gatefold cover, with the image running full-bleed across the entire frame. It's a strikingly evocative image that somehow perfectly reflects the brutal, dystopian nature of Killing Joke's music.

This is a RECORD COVER. This writing is the DESIGN upon the record cover. The DESIGN is to help SELL the record. We hope to draw your attention to it and encourage you to pick it up. When you have done that maybe you'll be persuaded to listen to the music - in this case XTC's Go 2 album. Then we want you to BUY it. The idea being that the more of you that buy this record the more money Virgin Records, the manager Ian Reid and XTC themselves will make. To the aforementioned this is known as PLEASURE. A good cover DESIGN is one that attracts more buyers and gives more pleasure. This writing is trying to pull you in much like an eye-catching picture. It is designed to get you to READ IT. This is called luring the VICTIM, and you are the VICTIM. But if you have a free mind you should STOP READING NOW! because all we are attempting to do is to get you to read on. Yet this is a DOUBLE BIND because if you indeed stop you'll be doing what we tell you, and if you read on you'll be doing what we've wanted all along. And the more you read on the more you're falling for this simple device of telling you exactly how a good commercial design works. They're TRICKS and this is the worst TRICK of all since it's describing the TRICK whilst trying to TRICK you, and if you've read this far then you're TRICKED but you wouldn't have known this unless you'd read this far. At least we're telling you directly instead of seducing you with a beautiful or haunting visual that may never tell you. We're letting you know that you ought to buy this record because in essence it's a PRODUCT and PRODUCTS are to be consumed and you are a consumer and this is a good PRODUCT. We could have written the band's name in special lettering so that it stood out and you'd see it before you'd read any of this writing and possibly have bought it anyway. What we are really suggesting is that you are FOOLISH to buy or not buy an album merely as a consequence of the design on its cover. This is a con because if you agree then you'll probably like this writing - which is the cover design - and hence the album inside. But we've just warned you against that. The con is a con. A good cover design could be considered as one that gets you to buy the record, but that never actually happens to YOU because YOU know it's just a design for the cover. And this is the RECORD COVER.

This is the back of a RECORD COVER. Catalogue No. V2108. This writing is the DESIGN on the back of the cover. This design is not like that on the FRONT. Its aim is to impart information about the RECORD and the GATEFOLD INSERT within rather than trying to sell it by being impactful or clever or any of those things. We have kept it in the same style so that the entire package has a sense of IDENTITY which ever way you see it. The record is by XTC. This is their second album. We won't attempt to describe their music because all you have to do is play it and you can describe it for yourself. XTC is made up of Andy Partridge, Barry Andrews, Colin Moulding and Terry Chambers. We have shown photos of them below because this is regarded as commercially sensible and helpful in creating their image. And if you're curious at all you might find it interesting to see what the musicians actually look like. And there are more pictures and words on the very colourful insert which you can only see if you buy the whole thing.

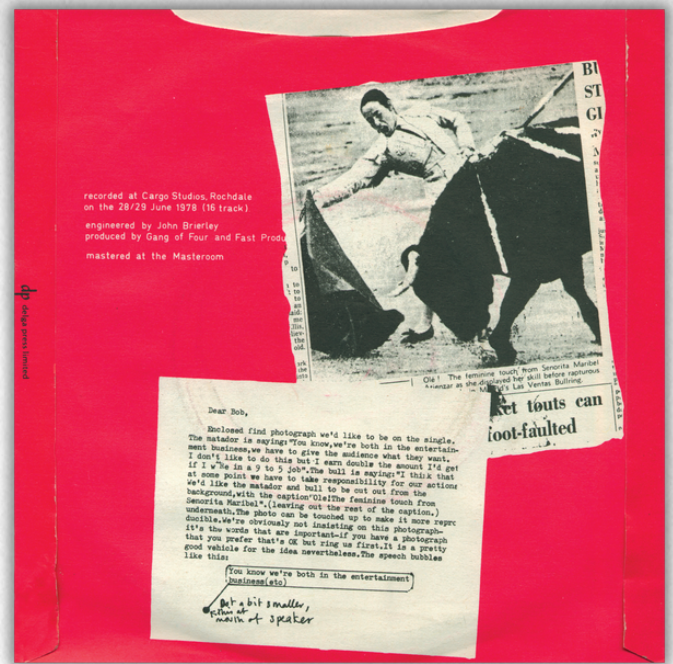
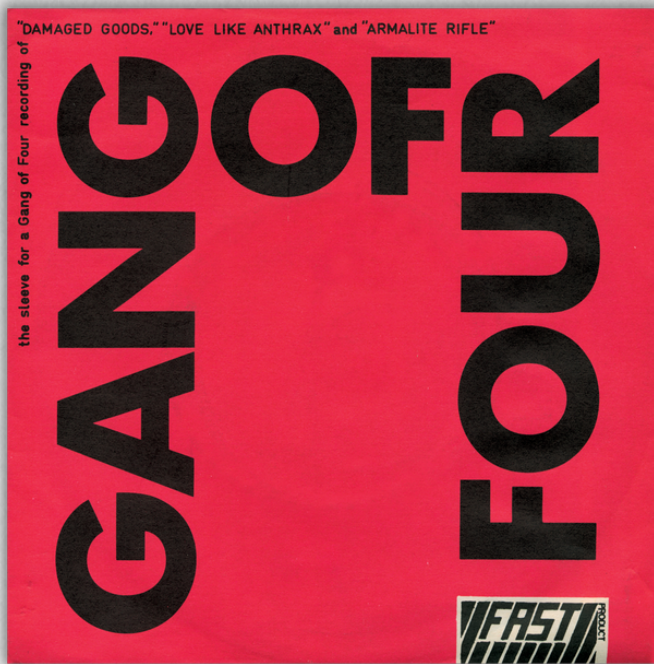


Many people think it helpful and about the songs on the record in 1. Meccanik Dancing (Oh We Go!) 2. Paints Brian) 3. Buzzcity Talki Rhythm 6. Red 7. Beatown 8. Li 9. Jumping in Gomorra 10. My 12. I am the Audience. You w the record was produced and assistant engineers Haydn Bf also, Andy Llewelyn and Jess Roots photos were by Dave Eagle. number on the insert for bureaucratic

Lastly we would like to make it clear that this is a product of Virgin Records Limited, partly because they wanted us to and partly because it is a legal necessity. Virgin Records' head office is located at Vernon Yard, Portobello Road, London W.11. and is © Virgin Records 1978 and © 1978 Virgin Music (Publishers) Ltd. This sleeve was written and photographed by Hipgnosis and printed in England by James Upton Ltd.

XTC, Go2 album

This was designed by Hipgnosis, the design group that worked with Pink Floyd for *Dark Side of the Moon*, Led Zeppelin and the biggest prog bands of the early 1970s. It is one of my favourites because it does exactly what it says on the tin: 'This is a record cover. This writing is the design upon the record cover.' The design is a typewritten essay about what a record cover does. It's trying to pull you in as if you're the victim who will buy this record, but you're much more intelligent than that. As a reader, you understand this process so you're going to stop reading, but, actually, you know you've been tricked and you're going to continue to read it and you're going to buy the record. The design presents us with the dilemma between consumerism, marketing, and product.



Gang of Four, *Damaged Goods* EP

The cover of the debut EP by Leeds post-punks Gang of Four was designed by Bob Last, the founder of the Fast Product record label. The band sent him a clipping from a newspaper, depicting a female matador in action in a Spanish bullring, along with a typewritten letter. They wanted the matador and the bull to be cut out from the background with the caption, 'Olé! The feminine touch from Seniorita Maribel.' However, Last chose instead to create a simple but effective typographic front cover based on the group's name oriented around three sides, with smaller text labelling the sleeve-as-object. He then placed the torn-out photograph alongside the group's typewritten instructions on the back. The *Damaged Goods* cover is explicit about the production process and the audience/producer relationship, while at the same time reflecting a kind of postmodern irony that was implicit to the post-punk project.



Public Image Ltd., Metal Box album

This entire package is something of a post-punk statement of intent. Having left the Sex Pistols at the end of a disastrous US tour in the Spring of 1978, singer Johnny Rotten reverted to his real name, John Lydon, and set about confounding his critics – and quite a few fans – with a new outfit, Public Image Ltd. The group drew upon Lydon's love of progressive rock, Krautrock and dub reggae, while at the same time attempting to forge a new sound and a new attitude that directly extended punk's vanguard revolution. Public Image Ltd's second album, *Metal Box*, was released as three twelve-inch 45-rpm singles housed in a round metal canister, embossed with the PiL logo, and was designed by Lydon and photographer Dennis Morris.