

Classic Posters Interview with Steven Cerio by Michael Erlewine

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

Steven Cerio: My first contacts with art were the illustrations in the 1975 unabridged edition of the Random House Dictionary, and the store-bought mural on the shower wall that I stared at when I took baths. What peaked my interest in posters wasn't a rock poster, it was hand-drawn supermarket-window posters for the "Super Duper" in Liverpool, New York, where I grew up. When my dad told me they were made by hand, I was blown away. My love for type had begun as well.

By the time I arrived in New York City and the venerable Jacaeber Kastor hired me at the now legendary Psychedelic Solution Gallery, my interest in posters had more than peaked. I had been in NYC for only 3 days, and I found myself around icons like Rick Griffin, Robert Williams, Robert Crumb, Victor Moscoso, Randy Tuten and S. Clay Wilson, to name only a few.

Michael Erlewine: What kind of art influenced you?

Steven Cerio: Dr. Seuss and cereal boxes, primarily. Alexander Calder, Stuart Davis and Philip Guston have been influences. Rory Hayes, Mark Beyer and Gary Panter as well.

Michael Erlewine: What concert-posters artists influenced you?

Steven Cerio: Lee Conklin's Santana cover really rearranged my molecules. It led me to surrealism before I was 10. I still follow surrealist ethics (not Magritte-esque irony). I love all of Lee's

work as well as Rick Griffin and David Singer's.

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

Steven Cerio: It was for Codeine, Flyashtray and Galaxy 500 at Coney Island (August, 1989). After that I did flyers for Monster Magnet and White Zombie before their bigger record deals.

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

Steven Cerio: The Fillmore and Cleveland Flats. Many of my posters were done at request of the group or manager.

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

Steven Cerio: My poster work for The Residents is always a big thrill for me. I've also done film and animation with them. They are always years ahead. It's always a challenge and a joy working for them, since they use no boundaries.

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

Steven Cerio: My originals have always been brushed ink on acid free printing paper. I then either scan the line into my PC or copy it to acetate. The acetates are painted on the backside with cel-vinyl paint while the scanned images are opened into Photoshop. If the job needs to be prepared for screen printing, I do the seps by hand on occasion, but have recently begun separating the color layers in Photoshop. With the use of a Wacom tablet, I've been able to keep a warmer, more hand made appearance.

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

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Steven Cerio: None really. Closest I've come was working closely with Mark Dancey on the promo and gallery dressing for a two-man show we did at C-POP in Detroit called "Iconosphere."

Michael Erlewine: Who are your favorite current poster artists?\

Steven Cerio: Mark Dancey and David Fremont. There are countless people who should be doing posters like Calef Brown, Michael Kupperman, Mark Beyer, Gary Panter and Mike Diana.

Michael Erlewine: What are your favorite bands? Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, The Residents, John Coltrane, King Crimson, Cecil Taylor, Brian Eno, Dragibus, Frank Zappa, Syd Barrett, Harry Partch, etc., etc. (my bands Lettuce Little and Small Girl Boils Water aren't bad either!!!)

Michael Erlewine: Please list any poster shows of your work:

Steven Cerio: My poster art is always shown with my gallery work. (A list of my shows will arrive with my CDR in the mail)

Steven Cerio: "I don't like things I can understand" by Geroge Petros