

Concert Posters - ArtRock PCL Set

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by Michael Erlewine

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One of the real sleeper sets in poster collecting has to be the PCL series, published by Phil Cushway and ArtRock. This set and many of the pieces in it is undervalued and is bound to rise. There are only a few known collectors of this material that I am aware of. Recently, I had a chance to sit down and go through most of this set, poster by poster. I was amazed at how many great posters there in this series. And I wondered why they are not more collected.

One reason might be ArtRocks' meteoric rise in the industry, coming from a small store in Ann Arbor, Michigan, moving to San Francisco and over a very short time cornering most of the existing posters of value, in particular the Bill Graham (BG) and Family Dog (FD) stock. Phil Cushway literally came into a market, bought it up, sat on his stash, and, more or less, set the industry price for collectable posters. And that price was upward of what it had been before.

It is easy to have an attitude against whomever is on top of the heap, and until recently, in the poster world, that had to be Phil Cushway and ArtRock. At its height, Cushway had something like a million posters. For god's sake, he has a forklift to move them around! It is no wonder that his poster output was perhaps somewhat ignored and discounted. But with the advent of Bill Sagan and Wolfgang's vault, ArtRock is no longer king of the hill. It is time to take a look at what Artrock has produced.

An integral part of Artrock's plan and business was the production of posters, both retrospectives and new art. There are something like 238 posters published by ArtRock that I know of, many of them silkscreens and most of them large. And this series is above and beyond whatever ArtRock published with Frank Kozik. As for subject matter and artists, they are all over the place, almost a "Who's Who" of poster artist for that period, names like: Alan Forbes, Alton Kelley, Bob Masse, Hugh Brown, Chris Shaw, Christopher Peterson, Dave Fremont, Gary Grimshaw, John Howard, Troy Alders, Justin Hampton, Lee Conklin, Lynne Porterfield, Mark Arminski, Frank Kozik, Victor Moscoso, Stanley Mouse, Ward Sutton, Randy Tuten, Rick Griffin, Wes Wilson, and Wig, to name some.

Unlike many poster companies, ArtRock made a real effort to produce signed and numbered editions, so there are perhaps more signed posters than one might normally expect in a series. Like most other large series I have seen, every poster is not a gem, but there are a lot of what we like to call 'classic' posters in this set.

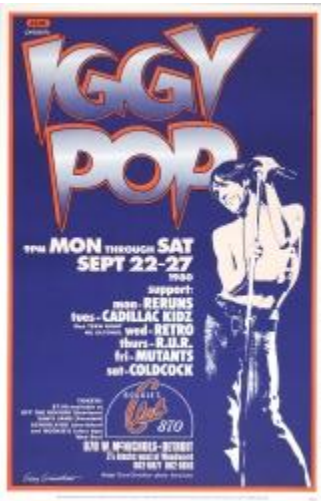


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Siouxsie by Victor Moscoso

The first poster in the series is a killer one by Victor Moscoso. This large and gorgeous poster is a beauty, immediately followed by a 2nd Siouxsie poster by Stanley Mouse. Another great poster.

Then there came the stint when Gary Grimshaw was on staff, during which he produced something like 20 or so posters, most but not all tributes to great bands. Here is Grimshaw's Iggy Pop poster for Bookies in Detroit - a classic.



Pop by Gary Grimshaw

Alton Kelley contributed some 11 posters to the series, including this incredible Grateful Dead piece, a large poster.



Grateful Dead by Alton Kelly

There are nine Justin Hampton pieces in the collection, including some of the best work this artist has ever done, including this killer poster for P.J. Harvey.



P.J. Harvey by Justin Hampton

In fact, the Hampton pieces are one of the highlights of this set. And there are some very tasty pieces by Lynne Porterfield and Mark Arminski.

There are more than 60 pieces by artist Alan Forbes, almost all signed and

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numbered editions, most in small quantities.



The entire PCL series is distinguished by high-quality printing, on good stock, and properly registered. As mentioned, many are signed and numbered, perfect for collectors. I was amazed at how many of these posters are large or above average size.

ArtRocks PCL series is only now starting to catch on with collectors, so each of us has a foot in the door on this low-priced series. Most are still available and at affordable prices. Check out the thumbnails for this series elsewhere on this site and see for yourself.