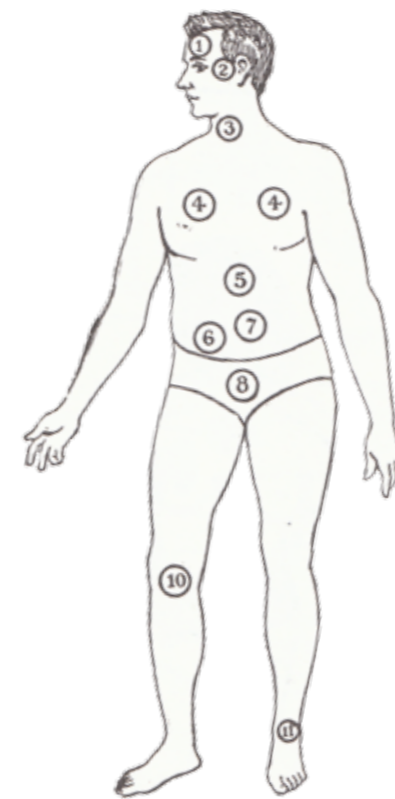


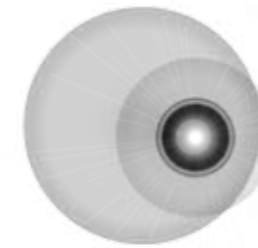
Critical Studies: the graphic legacy of Library Music sleeve design



# CRITICAL STUDIES

POPULAR  
HI-FI

## A DETERMINATION OF THE GRAPHIC LEGACY OF LIBRARY MUSIC SLEEVE DESIGN



### Narration by WILLIAM SKINNER

#### INTRODUCTION

Music and graphic design have always come in hand in hand for me. I have long admired the instantaneous ability of weird and wonderful packaging to catch my eye, from the codified, minimalist visual language of Peter Saville (Factory Records), to the sensual aesthetics of Vaughan Oliver's graphic authorship for 4AD.

Recent years have seen a revival of interest in vintage Library Music, old records from the 60s and 70s being rediscovered, re-pressed, re-released on both CD and vinyl. Originals are selling for a small fortune on Ebay, and quirky new labels are releasing retrospectives, making cult heroes of figures such as Basil Kirchin and Delia Derbyshire. Moreover, I have become fascinated by the weird, unearthly, experimental electronic sounds contained within.

Not only this, the packaging that has accompanied these re-releases- whether being a reproduction of the original sleeves, or re-appropriation of such graphic styling for a contemporary audience, has also become a source of fascination. It seems, with the release of a book compiling fine examples of the original sleeves, *The Music Library*, we are today undertaking a 'visual and audio celebration of some of the greatest unseen sleeves and unheard music ever made.' (Trunk, 2005, p.5).

I have decided to use this critical study to explore the design legacy of old Library Music sleeves, asking many questions as I do so. What is their influence upon the field of music packaging and graphic design today? What is their appeal? Why have they drawn so many contemporary admirers, and even been described as 'often bordering on outsider art?' (House, 2005, p.207).

I will also explore, from a personal perspective, why I find many examples so alluring, and whether I can incorporate such attributes into my own design practice.

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*Overall Playing Time:* 4298  
[Words]

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UNIT 005

Sleeve Design: Bill Skinner  
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## WHAT IS LIBRARY MUSIC?

To continue I first need to clarify what actually is Library Music and which areas I shall explore? Why is this vintage music often seen as so 'out there,' collectable and even wildly experimental today, despite possibly being recorded 40 years ago?

Produced from the 1950s onwards in limited quantities it was, in its simplest terms, well produced and economic music for TV, film, advertising and radio. Producers on a budget could not afford to commission their own theme tunes so it was more economically viable for them to select suitable music from this source. The music was recorded with specific themes, scenes, moods and emotions in mind, and so it was necessary for library music companies to pre-empt the producers' needs.

From the mid 60s into the 70s there was a 'golden age' of Library Music as TV and radio productions increased, and with this came a significant growth in the number of library companies across Europe. It is only this vintage period which will form the focus of this critical evaluation. (I realise Library Music production has continued up to the present day, but analysis of this later trend with regard to sleeve design is rendered obsolete for a number of reasons-most prominently, labels stopping producing vinyl, and its irrelevance to modern changes in production means).

What is important to note about this vintage Library Music is that it was never commercially available. Talented session musicians were brought together to record it- often leading jazz, classical and avant-garde musicians moonlighting under pseudonyms- and once pressed, the vinyl was sent directly to production houses and radio stations for use when necessary. Hence, much of the desire to rediscover it today is down to the musician's lack of commercial constraints. The audience was invisible, budgets low, and musicians therefore had much more scope for experimentation with a 'soundtrack to scenes that didn't yet exist.' (Trunk, 2005).

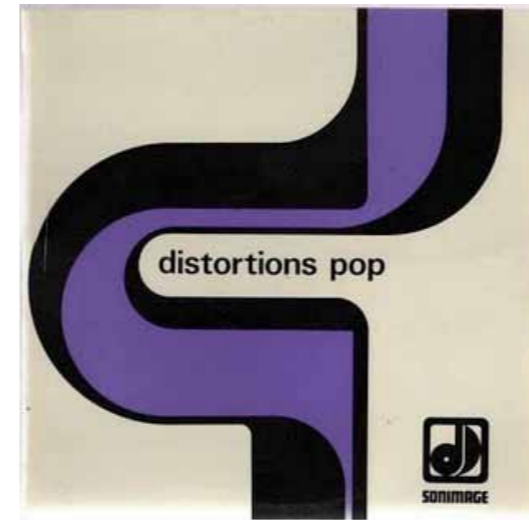


Fig. 1

R: **Distortions Pop**

A: H. Tical

L: Sonimage

Y: Unknown 70s-80s

C: experimental, rhythmic music

### Key:

R: **Name of Album**

D: Name of Artist

L: Name of Label

Y: Year

C: Content

The availability of a mass of new synthesizers, electronics and sonic fashions during this time further compounded the environment for the production of these new and peculiar sounds (fig.2).

John Cavanagh, founder of Library Music re-issuing label Glo Spot recognises its striking originality. Library records were all about the search for new sounds, “back then musicians weren’t told what to do.” (Rogers, 2008). There was none of today’s record labels’ dogmatic preoccupation with focus groups and demographics.

Hence, over the past decade or so adventurous collectors and musicians have revisited these neglected vinyl LPs, the former as home listening, the latter in search of weird beats and atmospheres for their sampler.

Furthermore, in support of their appeal, Rogers (2008) argues that a lot of library music from the 60s and 70s still sounds futuristic and mind-expanding today. The reasons she gives for this are, firstly, it brings to mind the psychedelic music of the time; secondly, it acts as an aural reminder of the age of space travel, when film and TV companies sought strange music to soundtrack their science-fiction productions. Dammers backs this up, ‘If you want to find that strange ingredient which makes modern music modern, futuristic library music isn’t a bad place to look. (Dammers, 2005, p.6).



Fig. 2:  
R: **Push Button**  
A: Anon  
L: Music De Wolfe  
C: contemporary electronic cues



Fig. 3:  
R: **Fonit 7002 International Series**  
L: Fonit  
C: world music and folkloric cues

## THE VISUAL APPEAL OF THE LIBRARY MUSIC SLEEVE

The visual appeal of the record sleeves is partly accounted for by the competitive marketplace in which the industry found itself. To be profitable Library Music labels had to bombard potential production houses with new recordings. Therefore, to increase the chances of any single record standing out, being listened to, and subsequently used, a good, eye-catching graphic could make the difference in the cutting room.

Ironic as it may seem, taking this competitive marketplace into account, these sleeve designs would never be exposed to the general public. Hence, rather like the music, there was simultaneously a lack of commercial constraints. Designers had more scope for wayward creativity. This is why some of these covers look weird and wonderful today.

Jerry Dammers argues that the same brief seems to have been given to the sleeve designers as the musicians, a 'zero budget, and complete and utter artistic freedom to indulge in your most disturbed inner fantasies. (Dammers, 2005, p 7).

It is necessary to draw a sense of perspective here. Many sleeves are amongst the worst record covers ever produced (fig 4.); their non-commercial nature made this an equally viable option. The same can be said of much of the music.

Jerry Dammers (2005) also argues for every piece of French avant-garde experimentation there is an abundance of "dreck." However, the best Library Music owes its greatness to just getting every musical genre just marginally wrong enough to sound a bit twisted and different. Hence, it has an internal poetic allure often missing from more artistically focused music of that era.



Fig. 4  
R: **America Giovane**  
A: R. Ducros  
L: Leonardi  
Y: early 1970s  
C: Italy meets America



Once again parallels can be made here to explain the allure of accompanying sleeve designs. Shaughnessy (2005) argues it shares the music's unselfconsciousness, producing real outsider graphic art. Many examples are terrible in terms of formal graphic design, and, like the music, just a little bit wrong.

However, as a result of these factors, he attributes them with a 'maverick charisma almost unobtainable in our knowing times.' (Shaughnessy, 2005). Therefore, those of today's graphic designers, jaded by their immersion in our consumer culture with its shameless brand values, have found something to cherish in the modest, sometimes ugly charm of library music sleeves.

As with the music, there also has to be elements of collectability and nostalgia about the sleeves' visual appeal. I interviewed the famous record collector and author of The Music Library, Johnny Trunk about what drew him to compile a book celebrating the visual appeal of these sleeves, (conducted by email, November, 2009). He claims the sleeves have never held the same fascination for him as the Library Music itself, but the deeper he delved into this musical world the more interesting the sleeves also became.

'Obvious British ones are quite functional but dull (like KPM), but as the world of library music opened up, the covers became more visually extraordinary.' (Trunk, 2009).

Trunk's favorite cover, in terms of the artistic freedom afforded their designers, is probably the Freesound series (fig 5-6), especially Philopsis (fig. 7), though the latter may be more about the unlikely use of an arcane painting than being visually 'way out.' Further to this, Rogers' argument above (2008) that the music still sounds futuristic today, due to being an aural reminder of the age of space travel and mind-expanding psychedelia, must also stand for its sleeves. The best examples also appear oddly futuristic today for the same reasons; only the reminder is visual rather than aural.



Fig. 5  
R: **Challenger**  
A: Anon  
L: Freesound  
Y: 1974



Fig 6.  
R.: **Schifters**  
D: Anon  
L: Freesound  
Y: 1974

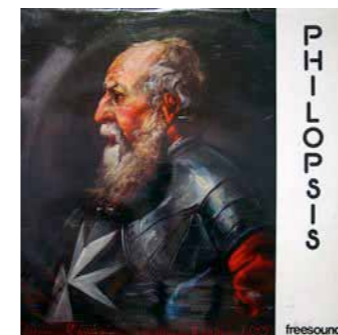


Fig. 7  
R: **Philopsis**  
D: Anon  
L: Freesound  
Y: 1975

## THE LEGACY OF THE LIBRARY MUSIC SLEEVE

For this latter reason particularly, I argue that modern day designers have been able to attain a futuristic feel within their work by re-appropriating the visual elements of these old cover sleeves.

My first case in point concerns Warp Records, quite aptly too, since there are parallels to be drawn between the invisible marketplace of these old Library Records and this pioneering contemporary label's identity. Upon Warp's inception, most of the roster's artists, like the anonymous purveyors of Library Music, were wilfully faceless, as well as being proponents of bravely experimental and futuristic sounding electronica. Artists such as The Aphex Twin and LFO refused to engage with the media's need to interpret and critically evaluate their creative processes. "In reaction to the self-promoting height of the 1980s' visible pop culture, many Warp artists were slippery, almost invisible." (Young, 2005, p.13).

Warp's re-appropriation begins with its distinctive purple outer bag and logo, forged by Sheffield's Designers Republic in 1989 and remaining unchanged to this day, as well as sleeves for its serial releases.

Like many techno labels, such as R&S, spawning from rave culture, the bag (fig. 8) draws upon the functional and minimalist attributes of some Library Record series. The covers for the vintage output of the classic KPM label are colour coded according to series, whilst exhibiting minimal use of text (fig.9-10). The classic Library Music 1000 Series for example denotes merely the name of the Label and its address, both inconspicuous enough to lend huge presence to its distinctive olive green colour coding. The influence of the likes of the Cavendish or KPM sleeves upon Warp can be seen in the clear visual parallels with the colour coding and layout of the Peel Session series of sleeves (fig. 11-12).



Fig. 8  
R: Gak  
A: Gak  
L: Warp  
Y: 1994



Fig. 9 (above)  
R: KPM 1000 Series  
L: KPM

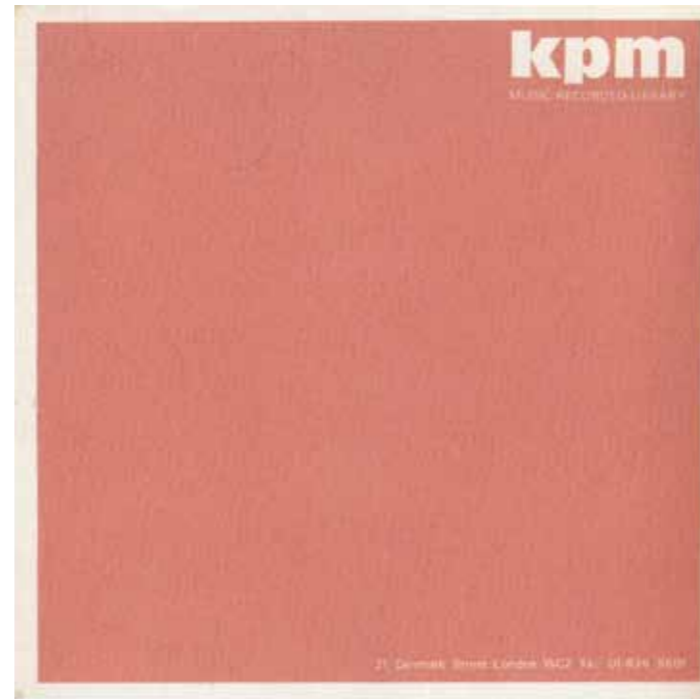


Fig. 10 (above)  
R: KPM pre-1000 Series  
L: KPM

Fig. 11 (below)  
R: Peel Sessions  
A: Boards of Canada  
L: Warp  
Y: 1999

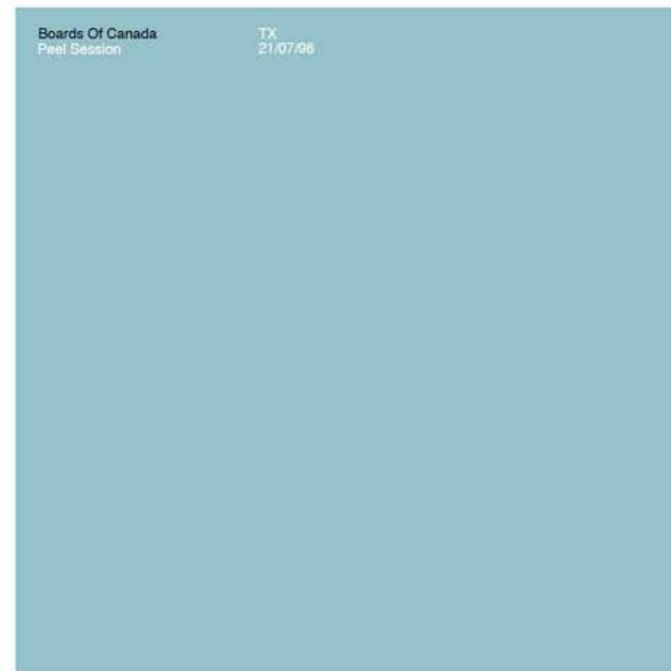
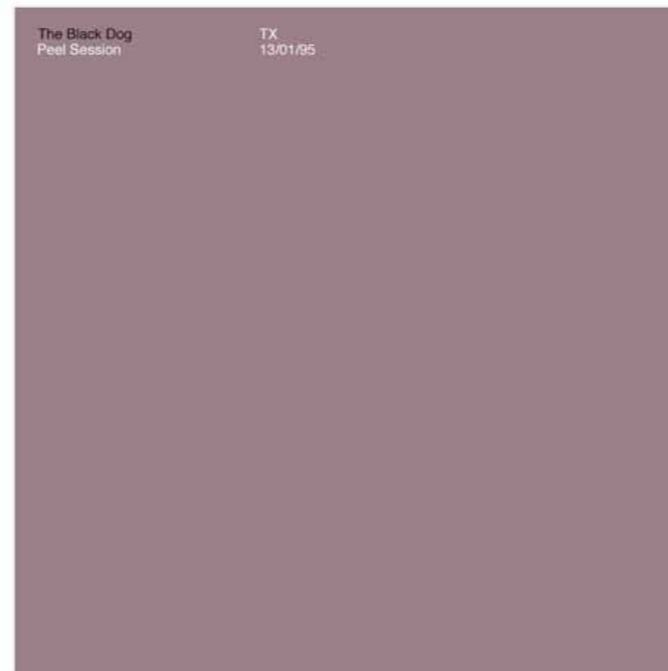


Fig. 12 (below)  
R: Peel Sessions  
A: The Black Dog  
L: Warp  
Y: 1999





In the same way, for its house bag, Warp employs a distinctive purple coding against minimal text to give the label a sense of authenticity and graphic authorship.

For the latter purposes I would disagree with Trunk's (2009) argument that the functionality of the KPM sleeves renders them dull. There is something visually powerful and graceful about the minimalist, archival language of these sleeves.

Similarly the strong influence of minimal, vintage Library Music sleeve design can be determined from a comparison of Stephan Grappelli's *Timing No* (fig. 13) with the cover for the Warp compilation 'We Are Reasonable People,' (fig. 14) and the eponymous LFO album release (fig. 15).

Secondly, Warp's "distinctive Jetsons-meets-Captain Scarlet logo" (Young, 2005, p. 23) was designed to appear futuristic, but with a view to it not quickly dating. The Republic designer Ian Anderson, therefore, sought something 60s looking, with its connotations of science fiction and space exploration, and it remains strikingly futuristic today, just as Rogers (2008) would argue.

"What were trying to do was have something that looked futuristic that was, in some way already dated, but dated to the degree where it kind of matured." (Anderson, 2005, p.25).

Anderson argues that a lot of designers at that time of emergent rave culture made the mistake of trying to be too modern with the result that their work dated shortly afterward. I would agree and go further to argue that the logo's (fig. 16) futuristic concept may be heavily indebted to the two-colour globe logo of the obscure Rome-based World organisation (fig. 17), who produced a small run of mood-orientated Library Music in the late 1960s. The former is a compressed variation on the latter. World's globe similarly produced a uniform house style for its sleeves.



Fig. 13:  
R: **Timing no. 1**  
A: Stephan Grappelli  
L: Timing  
C: insane beats

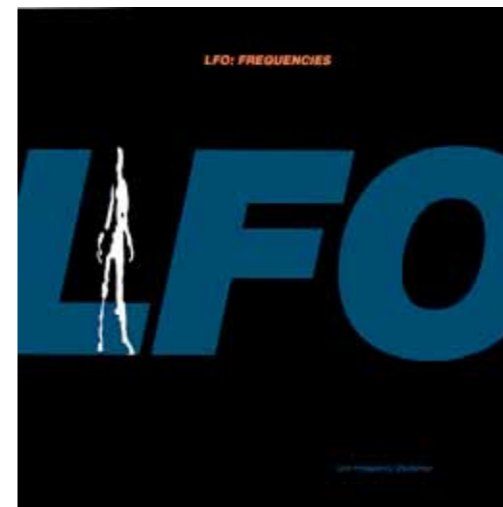


Fig. 14:  
R: We are Reasonable People  
A: Various  
L: Warp



Fig. 15:  
R: **LFO**  
A: LFO  
L: Warp  
Y: 1991



Fig. 16  
**Warp Logo**

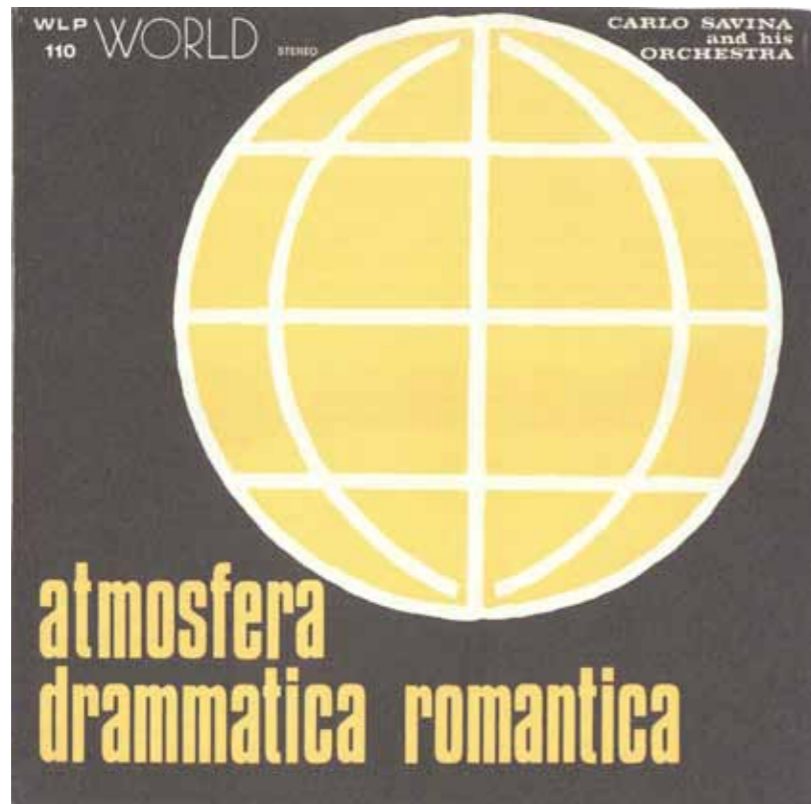


Fig. 17  
R: **Atmosfera Drammatica Romantica**  
A: Carlo Savina  
L: World

It certainly seems that there is more to the legacy of Library Music sleeve design than a modern-day appreciation of what Shaugnessy (2005) attributes as the visual appeal of the originals' unselfconsciousness, informality, maverick charisma and sometime ugly charm.

Nowhere is this more pertinent for me than the work of my favourite graphic designer Julian House.

House (2005) is a huge admirer of Library Music sleeve design, seeing it as sharing a symbiotic harmony with the weird atmospheres etched into the vinyl. He does echo the sentiment that this is down to the freedom provided in the creative process, describing it as a 'bad but good free for all, unfettered by commercial constraints.' (House, 2005, p.207).

However, he is also able to identify consistent elements running throughout his favourite library sleeves, and re-appropriate them into a whole design aesthetic that compliments the music of his clients perfectly, both in sound and influence. His approach is to make the visual and aural inseparable, or as he states 'packaging that's wrapped inside the music.' (House, 2005, p.207).

Such elements are particularly manifest in his work for experimental pop groups Stereolab and Broadcast, fittingly so, as they are kindred spirits in sharing his love of Library Music.

At one extreme this may seem like homage. The cover for Stereolab single 'Jenny Ondioline' (1993) (fig.18) is a tribute to Hi-Fi Sound's 'Stereo Test Record' (1969) (fig. 19), even down to its technical descriptions of track data. Stereolab even go on to steal one of its test names 'Wow and Flutter' as the name of a single. Fittingly, the song itself is a tribute to a pioneering electronic keyboard invented in the 1930s. However, House's work, with this exception, is never merely homage. He re-appropriates these elements into something new and fitting for the record he is designing. He may retain the feel of these classic influences but they never look retro. The same values are mirrored by his clients' musical output.



Fig. 18:  
R: **Jenny Ondioline**  
A: Stereolab  
Y: 1993



Fig. 19:  
R: **Stereo Test Record**  
L: Hi-Fi Sound  
Y: 1969  
C: test record

So what are these influential elements exactly? Well, for one there is the frequent use of bizarre collages, which House describes as bordering upon 'outsider art.' House sees collage as the main key to the effectiveness of his work.

"Collage is central to everything I do. Even if the end result is not necessarily a collage, that process of letting things emerge from the elements you push together is a fundamental part of it." (House, 2004, p.139).

This influence can be seen in House's work for Broadcast, which has graced their record sleeves since their debut EP, *The Book Lovers* in 1996. House collage work is prominent, for example, throughout the sleeve design for the band's *Ha Ha Sound* album (2003) (fig.20). It appears weird, otherworldly, and futuristic, and succeeds in being an "external formulation that captures the fundamental intelligence and space-beatnik eclecticism of their music." (Shaughnessy, 2005, p. 109). There are other classic, retro references at play here- the typewriter experiments of Lettrist poet Henri Chopin, nods to Dadaist photomontage, the Polish poster art of Roman Cieslewicz- all visual indicators of Broadcast's influences. However, he succeeds in making the sum of the parts, just like Anderson's work for Warp, oddly futuristic in look.

The parallels to Broadcast's music are herein perfect. Broadcast also embody this ultimate irony in that their music transcends its influences- Ennio Morricone's and the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop's spooky, spatial soundtrack arrangements, Library Music, Czech horror film scores- to produce a proto-electronic pop. Their music sounds modern and futuristic despite its analogue sources, using "ancient echo chambers and *Forbidden Planet* electronics from vintage keyboards." (Young, 2005, p.106).

One glance at the collaged sleeve design for MPI's *Jazz pour L'Action* (fig.21), and *Guitares Rhymes et Guitares*, or *Music de Wolfe's Sun is High* record (fig.22), demonstrates a clear visual precursor to Broadcast's *Ha Ha Sound* and *Pendulum* sleeves (fig.23).



Fig. 20  
R: **Challenger**  
A: Anon  
L: Freesound  
Y: 1974



Fig 21  
R.: **Jazz pour L'Action**  
D: Richard Eldwyn  
L: MPI  
C: Fast jazz themes



Fig. 22  
R: **Sun is High**  
D: Anon  
L: Muisic de Wolfe



There are also knowing nods in House's work to the cut out hand and eye motifs commonly found in the likes of these vintage collaged sleeves. House's appropriation of these elements can be seen in the sleeve and inset design for Broadcast's Future Crayon (fig.24) compilation and very clearly in The Focus Group's Hey Let Loose Your Love (fig.25).

Secondly, Julian House cites the simple Pop Art geometry and Surrealism at play within these early works as a major influence upon his work. Such geometric alchemy can be found in his covers for both Stereolab's Fab Four Suture and Miss Modular, for example. Clear antecedents can be found in the vintage sleeves for Structures and Patchwork 34 (fig. 26-29).

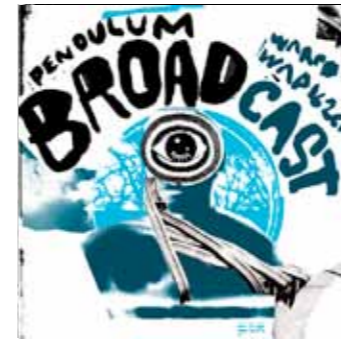


Fig. 23  
R: **Pendulum**  
A: Broadcast  
L: Warp  
Y: 2003



Fig. 26:  
R: **Fab Four Suture**  
A: Stereolab  
Y: 2006



Fig. 27:  
R: **Miss Modular**  
A: Stereolab  
Y: 1997



Fig 24  
R: **Future Crayon**  
A: Broadcast  
L: Warp  
Y: 2006



Fig. 28:  
R: **Structures Percussions**  
A: Charles Bellzoni  
C: abstract percussion



Fig. 29:  
R: **Patchwork 34**  
A: Claude Perraudin  
C: conceptual electronics



Fig. 25  
R: **Hey let loose your love**  
A: The Focus Group  
L: Ghost Box  
Y: 2005



House also points to the beguiling abstractions, which he considers a perfect visual match for the angular, disjointed moods of Library Music. The vivid colours of such abstractions are prominent, as are their ability to convey the excitement of the new technology and space age of the 60s.

These abstractions frequently form visual metaphors for radio/sound-waves and frequencies. Compare the forms of House's Stereolab covers for Emperor Tomato Ketchup and Oscillons (fig. 30-31) with those of the Futurissimo and TV suite sleeves (fig. 32-33) respectively. The vintage sleeve for the album Palpitations also portrays the unsteady bodily rhythms suggested by its title in fluorescently abstract forms (fig.34).

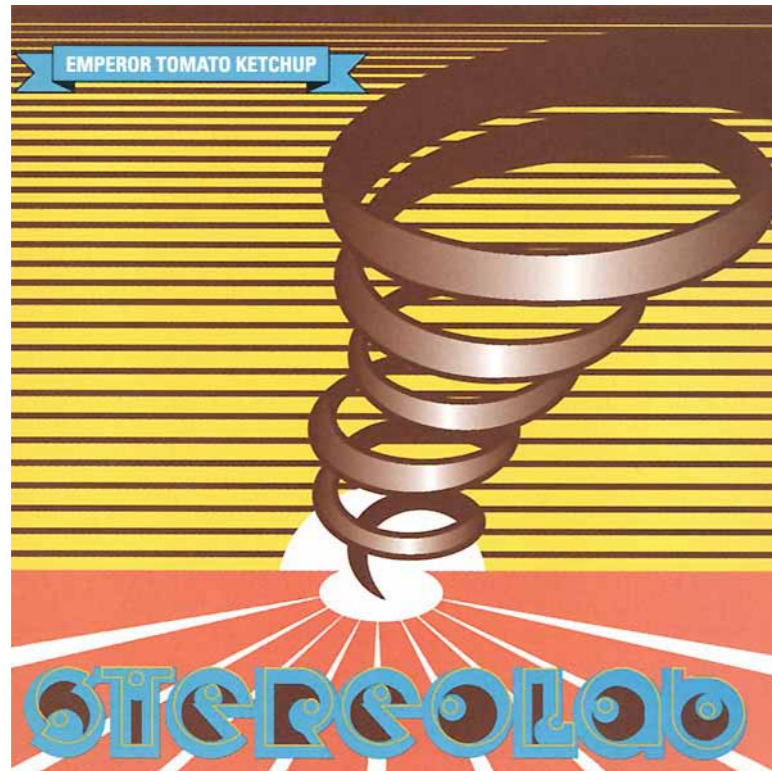


Fig. 30:  
R: **Emperor Tomato Ketchup**  
A: Stereolab  
Y: 1996



Fig. 31  
R: **Oscillons from the Anti-Sun**  
A: Stereolab  
L: Too Pure  
Y: 2005



Fig 32  
R: **Futurissimo**  
A: Egisto Macchi  
L: Saint Germain des Pres  
Y: 1970s  
C: Experimental electronic



Fig. 33  
R: **TV Suite**  
A: Peter Fenn & John Hawksworth  
L: Music de Wolfe  
C: from cold to disjointed fear



The frequent psychedelic preoccupations of the 60s and 70s can also be found rendered in Christain Piget's Minotaure (fig.35) in strikingly abstract form, just as they are reiterated in House's design for Stereolab's Chemical Chords album (fig.36). Similarly, compare 1967's Audio Obstacle Course with Stereolab's BBC sessions LP (fig. 37-38).

House similarly designs in a way that represents the album, its colours, tones and vision. His distinctive design for Stereolab also visually echoes their musical influences- 1970s Krautrock, 1960s pop, vintage analogue keyboards, easy listening, as well as Library Music.



Fig. 34:  
R: **Palpitations**  
A: Eric frammond  
L: MP2000  
Y: late 60s- mid-70s  
C: twisted jazz themes



Fig. 35  
R: **Minotaure**  
A: Christian Piget  
L: PSI  
Y: 1970s  
C: electronic and easy



Fig 36  
R.: **Chemical Chords (inset)**  
A: Stereolab  
L: Duphonic/4AD  
Y: 2008

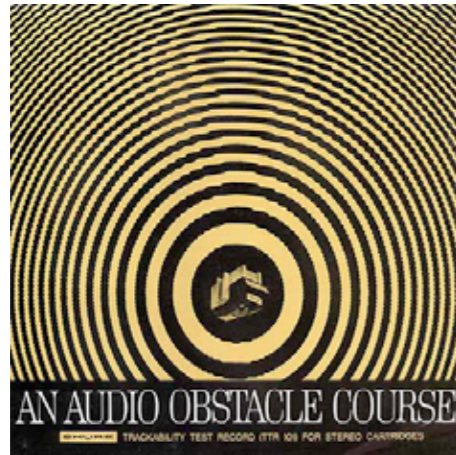


Fig. 37  
 R: **An Audio Obstacle Course**  
 A: N/A Test record  
 Y: unknown

Fig. 38:  
 R: **Stereolab Radio I sessions**  
 A: Stereolab  
 L: ABC Records  
 Y: 2003

The third of the elements, which House identifies from his love of vintage Library Music sleeves, is the subtle but clunky- or in his own words 'wonky'- typography. Examples of this pictorial typography, incorporating itself as an illustrative element within the whole design, include the Hangover and PM sleeves. This influence can be seen in the likes of the integrated type of House's cover for Stereolab's Chemical Chords album.



Fig 39  
 R.: **Hangover**  
 A: Wolfgang Schluter Combo  
 L: Peer International Library Limited  
 C: European jazz fusion



Fig 41  
 R.: **Chemical Chords**  
 A: Stereolab  
 L: Duphonic/4AD  
 Y: 2008



Fig. 40  
 R: **Music For Show**  
 A: Anon  
 L: PM  
 Y: early 1970s  
 C: Brazilian themes/ tangoes

Then there are the simple, colour-coded, multiple sleeves. These are common throughout Library Music to denote series, and naturally give an archival look.

Striking examples include the Fonit International and April Orchestra series of sleeves.

“I always loved the colour-coded repetitions of library albums, the sort of occult quality of something that’s repeated over and over with slight changes each time.” (House, 2008, p. 39).

Throughout his artwork with Broadcast and Stereolab, his approach has been to produce a series of sleeves that change just enough each time, but use repetition, colour, and references to draw the viewer in. This creates a sense of strange worlds and fictions that can generate cult appeal. There’s a bookish feel of collectability, with suggestions of arcane sources, in the same way we may now find old Penguin paperback design both fascinating and a little strange. It also imbues the viewer with a sense of pure artistic endeavour, which has little to do with the music industry.

This colour-coded repetition is most keenly felt in House’s designs for his own label Ghost Box (fig.42-44). The label encapsulates like-minded artists with similar obsessions- The Radiophonic Workshop, Library Records, British TV Sci-fi productions, cosmic horror and the eerie fears of postwar Britain- and most importantly the concept of Hauntology.

When House and co-founder Jim Jupp planned the label it was clear from the outset that it was to be densely floated with such allusions and references, but also to have a complimentary audio-visual identity. The latter would draw heavily on the above, as well as old pulp and Penguin paperback design.



Fig. 42  
R: **The Willows**  
A: Belbury Poly  
L: Ghost Box  
Y: 2004



Fig 43  
R.: **Ouroborindra**  
D: Eric Zann  
L: Ghost Box  
D: 2005

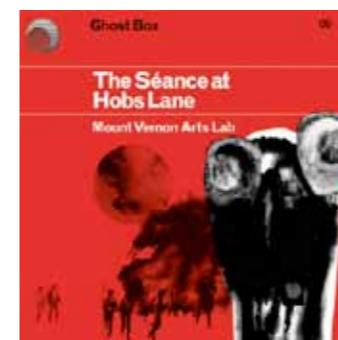


Fig. 44  
R: **The Séance at Hobbs Lane**  
D: Mount Vernon Arts Lab  
L: Ghost Box  
Y: 2007



The influence of Library Music covers can clearly be seen upon viewing the colour-coded sleeves of the vintage April Orchestra series amongst others. (fig. 45-47). Even the logo of this publishing house has clearly proven influential to the formulation of the Ghost Box logo (fig.48).



Fig 48  
Ghost Box logo

## Ghost Box

“Ghost Box is about forging a link between British modernism and something arcane and lost.” (House, 2008, p 39).

Once again the question must be asked- why does the work of Ghost Box appear eerily futuristic when its elements are most often arcane?

I believe an explanation for the effectiveness of these retro-futuristic elements today lies in the phenomenon of Hauntology, with which both House and Broadcast share a fascination. Their music resembles memories; it evokes in the listener distant, fuzzy impressions of an emotion, time and place, but this is only half the story.

When the accusation is put to Ghost Box that their label concerns the British obsession with the past – the record collecting equivalent of the National Trust- their reply is exemplary. House (2008) argues their work is more about forging strange, almost unconscious links between half remembered things from our forgotten culture. This is free from the inherent irony of pastiche. It allows us to create imaginary places.



Fig. 45:  
R: **April Orchestra vol.4**  
A: Ricardo Lucians  
L: April Orchestra  
C: tension cues



Fig 46  
R: **April Orchestra 5**  
A: DI Jarrec  
L: April Orchestra  
C: electronic, avant-garde

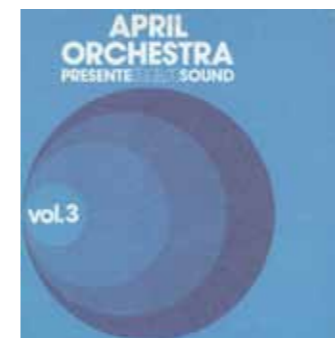


Fig. 47  
R: **April Orchestra 3**  
A: Ennio Morricone  
L: April Orchestra  
C: sounds of suspense

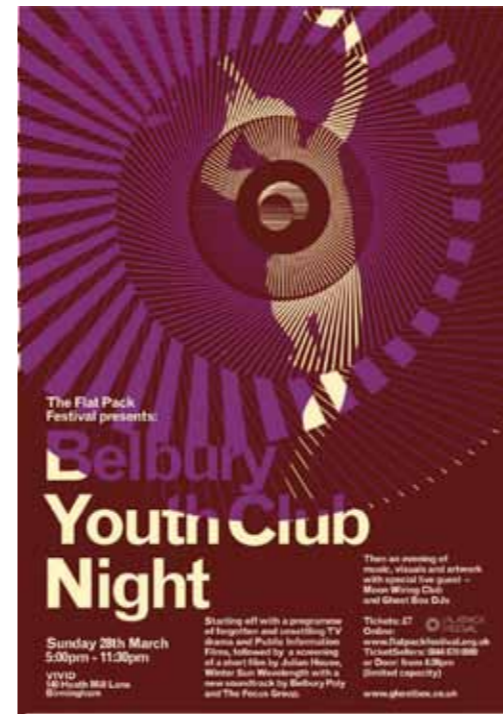
This is true, in line with their original label ethos, for both the music and its corresponding visuals.

This hauntological aesthetic is not really nostalgia in its purest form, as it is actually built upon “faulty or wishful recollections of the past.” (Stannard, 2009, p.42). Stannard (2009) describes it as almost a wilful submission to a psychedelic strain of false memory syndrome, and Broadcast’s Trish Keenan, within the same interview, as a residual of imaginary time travel in which you can either go backward or forward. Revisiting previous musical times through that weird alchemy of retro influences in their musical output is akin to recalling a memory that never happened to you. This results in dislocation, a fuzzy sense of time and place.

Their music sounds exciting and transformative as it restores the concept of timelessness, in away that the likes of Oasis or Razorlight could never do. The latter merely draw upon “the well plundered graveyard of rock classicism.” (Stannard, 2009, p.42).

Keenan interestingly observes, “It seems to me the past is always happening now; in the present we are always in memory.” (2009, p.42) I would argue this weirdly, timeless music may seem this way, for listeners of my generation, as it fires up in us subconscious, barely tangible feelings/memories from past decades; eras when we all felt a fascination, coupled with a communal fear and dread, regarding space travel, the future, and science fiction. For example, Broadcast’s music harks back to the weird, unearthly analogue sounds, devised by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop in the 60s and 70s to give a feeling of space age horror to productions such as Doctor Who and Quatermass and the Pit.

Perhaps, in the same way, this is why a lot of Library Music still sounds strangely futuristic now as it is drawing upon long dormant memories and sensations of the future within us. For the same reasons, the re-appropriation of retro elements, of the sleeve design that accompanied it, into contemporary design succeeds in having a futuristic feel when used.



Poster for Belbury Youth Club Night (Julian House/Ghost Box club night) (2009)

I am arguing this hauntological phenomena extends to these visual reminders just as much as it does aural ones, whether it be vintage photomontage, geometric abstractions or colour-coded repetition.

## Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the today there is still an interest, indeed reawakening, in the visual as well as musical aesthetics of library music. There has to be an element of nostalgia to this, as well as the appeal of collectability. Furthermore, many will be drawn to an appreciation of the maverick charisma of these vintage sleeves, borne out of another time, and an unfamiliar lack of commercial constraint. However I have argued that this vintage design has an energy and style that has been influential upon certain graphic design of music packaging today. To demonstrate this wide-ranging legacy, and taking word-counts into consideration, I have chosen to focus upon the case studies of Warp Records and Julian House.

I could equally have pointed to those of today's re-releases of Library Music which have re-appropriated elements of these vintage sleeves into a new, more contemporary design, such as the cover for Glo Spot's re-issue of Delia Derbyshire's classic *Electrosonic* (fig. 49), or modern electronic artists such as Harmonic 33 (fig.50) whose vintage looking sleeves reflect the influence of this old Library Music sleeve design, just as much as their music does the sounds. Then there's the graphic design of the Ghostly International label (fig.51-52).



Fig. 49  
R: **Electrosonic (re-issue)**  
A: Delia Derbyshire  
L: Glo Spot  
Y: 2008  
C: weird electronic cues



Fig. 50:  
R: **Music for Film and Television**  
A: Harmonic 33  
L: Warp  
C: 2005



Fig 51  
R.: **Asa Breed**  
A: Matthew Breed  
L: Ghostly International  
Y: 2008



Fig 52  
R.: **The Many Moods of...**  
A: GI Ben Benjamin  
L: Ghostly International  
Y: 2007



What is clear that graphic designers have re-appropriated elements of vintage Library Music sleeve design into their contemporary work, and, ironically, succeeded in producing work that feels futuristic today. This may be part explained by my modification of Rogers' (2008) argument that, for the older viewer, they serve as visual reminder of an earlier age where society was fascinated by the future and the novelty of space travel.

Trunk (2009) also argues that these elements only look futuristic in a retrospective fashion. However, I believe that this sparking of memory is much more complex than this, having a deep hauntological facet.

As the web theorist K- Punk (2006) comments upon House's designs for Ghost Box, the artwork has more to do with the 'compression and confluences' of dream-work than with memory. 'Ghost Box conjure up a past that never was.'

It would be interesting to see whether younger generations, who could have no possible recollections of feelings from the 60s and 70s- of the Space Age- would judge this music and graphic design to be futuristic, or indeed the opposite- retrograde and antiquated. Of course in a culture that now eats itself, with endless, old film and TV re-releases on DVD, even this comparison may be jaded.

In the meantime I have learnt a lot from this research assignment about using antiquated elements in contemporary graphic design to create certain looks and moods. I particularly hope that looking in depth at House's work will influence me in creating work that can appear quite eerie, unearthly, or dislocating in time. Furthermore, I hope to follow his example in thinking more about my design work in the way that it represents colour, tone and vision, as well as using geometric elements and abstraction to convey feeling and emotion.

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# BIBLIOGRAPHY

**An interview with Johnny Trunk**

(conducted by email, November, 2009). Questions and answers recorded below:

**1. Where did your interest in library music begin?**

When I first found out what it was. I'd been fascinated by the music from science documentaries, late night programming and peculiar soundtrack records for a while, but it was only when I found a Bosworth Background library record in an old box in a record shop I started to work out what it actually was that I was interested in. I'd say this was in about 1990.

**2. In the introduction to your book, you describe it as a celebration of some of the 'greatest unseen sleeves and unheard music ever made.' How much did the visual appeal of library music (ie its sleeves/graphics) form your interest, in relation to the music?**

The sleeves became more interesting the more records I found and the deeper I fell into it. Obvious British ones are quite functional but dull (like KPM), but as the world of library music opened up, the covers became more visually extraordinary. The sleeves have not become as fascinating as the music.

**3. Julian House states that the sleeves have had a huge influence upon his work with their pop surrealism, collages, wonky typography, and abstractions. Is there any particular element of their design which you find particularly beguiling personally?**

Yes, they are always quite graphically unexpected and unpredictable, and apart from (in some cases) having a graphic signature as part of a recognised series or library, most of it is totally mad.

**4. With the huge increase in library companies across Europe from the mid-60s, you describe how a good graphic on a LP could make the difference in whether it would become used or not, in such a competitive market, by catching the eye of TV/radio production staff. What do you consider your favourite/ most striking library music cover and why?**

I think in terms of pure functionality, the mid period de Wolfe sleeves are very efficient and obvious, although they are not my favourites.

**5. At the same time, the fact that there was a zero budget, or no commercial constraints regarding having to appeal/sell to the general public, gave the sleeve designers greater artistic freedom, just like the musicians involved, or as Jerry Dammers puts it, an opportunity to explore 'their most disturbed inner fantasies?' What would be your favourite example of this visually?**

Probably the weird series from Freesound. Especially the album Philopsis.

## An interview with Johnny Trunk (continued)

**6. The popularity and demand for new and weird sounds in the 60s/70s, due mainly to the popularity of classic science fiction productions at the time, has meant that much of this electronic music sounds strangely futuristic even today. Do you think there are elements of the sleeve design that also look oddly futuristic today in the same way?**

Only in a retrospective fashion.

**7. Do you think the rise of new synthesizers and other sonic technology at the time had a major impact on the design of library music sleeves. There seems to be an attempt to manifest sound waves/ frequencies etc.. in an abstract, pictorial fashion?**

It must have had some effect, but then again you could put some of this down to the general technological excitement of the times. It's difficult to make a full judgement as no one really knows if the artists involved even knew what music they were illustrating.

**8. Julian House says the appeal for him in library music is the discovery of the strange atmospheres etched into the vinyl. Do you there also exists strange visual atmospheres within the record sleeves to parallel these auditory ones?**

Yes, that's why I collect them,

**9. What do you think of the concept of hauntology? For example, in conjuring up a strange sense of feeling, apprehension or memory when you listen to this music, sounds that feel strangely familiar and yet alien and disquieting at the same time?**

I think it's been around for donkey years - it only exists right now because Simon Reynolds has given it a name.

**10. Being a friend of House's what's your favourite piece of design work by him?**

Some of the stuff you haven't seen that he's supposed to have printed off for me but hasn't yet.



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