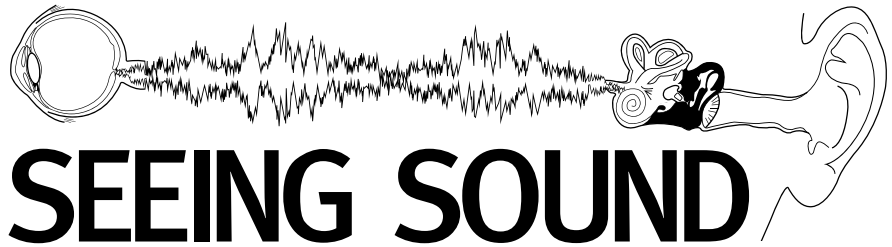


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# SEEING SOUND

Steven Bell



**SEEING**

Steven Bell



# SOUND

**Seeing Sound**

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**Dedicated to my parents for allowing me to do what they couldn't.**

**Designed, Written, Edited and Produced by** Steven Bell

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# Contents

- 01 *Part One: Overview*
- 13 *Part Two: The Process*
- 30 *Part Three: The People*
- 40 *Part Four: The Product*
- 51 *Part Five: Closing*





## Part One: Overview

There are two creative outlets that have become a constant force in my life. My vision is occupied by design, while my ears are enchanted by music. When senior year began I befriended a group of jazz musicians. The more time I spent with them the more I realized we weren't that different from each other. The content that we create have a similar bond. We create to express an emotion or to communicate a message. My jazz cats express themselves through music while I communicate through design. I wrote this book to explore the similarities that our creative outlets share.





## The Process

The creation of music and design is a grueling process. A creator can spend days working on a piece their viewer experiences in mere minutes. The process during these extensive work sessions involves taking an invisible structure's rules then shaping them into a creative playground.

## The People

Why would a person labor for days over something that someone will only give a few minutes of their time to? It is because they have a passion for what their art form represents. These creators have to be a little crazy. They like to work in groups but also alone. These similar disciplines share very similar lifestyles.





## The Product

The products musicians and designers make are never completely finished. There comes a point in the creation process when the artist feels comfortable with showing the public their work. Changes can be made later, but the people at a concert or seeing the first publication of a book experience something that won't necessarily be the same the next time they encounter it. This is dependent on when a piece is ready for an audience, the artist's attachment to their work, and where they see it going.



# Overview Closing

There are three integral elements which influence an artist's work: the process, the people, and the product. It is these elements that are very important to both musicians and designers. These artists create very different end products, using a similar creative process for audiences that may or may not be the same. These days any major musical release combines design and music into one final product for the same audience. Alternatively, a musician may play a show and a designer may create a poster, each entertaining a completely different audience.





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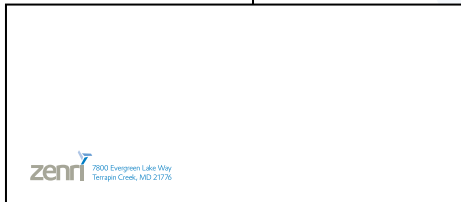




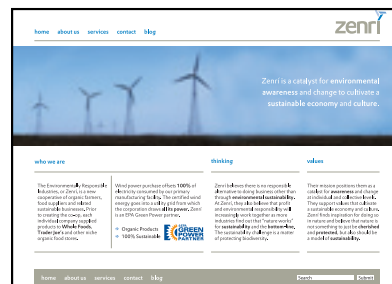
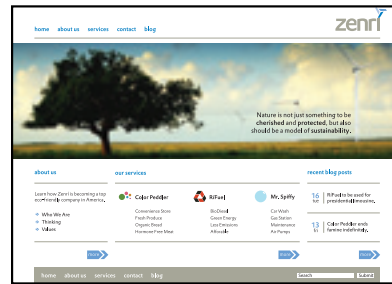
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# Part Two: The Process

The path of creating something that anyone can experience just by looking or listening is a powerful journey. It takes high fidelity to create something that will be comprehended relatively quickly by its consumer. Honesty during the creation process is the key to creating honest work. It breaths the emotions and hard work the artist put into it.



# How We Create

Music and design are universal languages. Nationality, race, gender, or creed does not impede from experiencing the message of a musical composition or a piece of graphic design. All that someone needs to comprehend the message is a set of ears or eyes. Due to phonetic language barriers they might not understand the meaning behind the lyrics or text but are able to understand the feeling they can cause.

In order for musicians and designers to be able to have an open communication with their audience, they must learn how to speak an unspoken language. This is achieved by respecting the tradition that has been laid down by the past creators. Only through the creation of art using the principles and elements that have been proven to create the bread and butter of their respective fields, can an artist begin to truly create. Once these foundations are honed, they can expand on them by discovering their own voice in their field. A distinctive sound or design is the highest compliment that can be given, but in order to find your own voice you must first hear others.





## Principles & Elements

In order to communicate and express ourselves effectively we follow a set of principles and guidelines our worlds have created. It is hard to imagine these art forms existing without a basic rule set. These rules didn't just magically appear. They were flushed out by people doing different methods. After enough variations were done, commonalities that "worked" are exposed. As a collective art form, they were chosen to be the mainstay of our current work and the backbone and foundation for the future art forms.

However, in order to push our arts in a progressive manner, these rules must be broken in creative and innovative ways. These principles were put into place in order for individuals to develop their own voice. If you don't listen or view the work the greats have passed down this progress cannot be achieved. You have to know where you've been to know where you are going. Guidelines are meant to be broken. Mistakes are meant to be made in order to come up with fresh new ideas.





## Invisible Structure

The backbone to the majority of music and design is having a structure to work from. Having a form to work from helps to develop a creative playground for the artist to express themselves in. This constraint can create a groove for people to dance to, or evoke a certain visual response that the designer intended the audience to experience emotionally. Artists who have a grasp on controlling this system can just express what they are feeling and other people will most likely experience the same result.

# Time Signature & Grid

In the world of music, the time is the basis for a groove to exist. While graphic design uses a grid, which is the basis for the majority of well formed designs. They both set the tone overall for a piece, as well as set the most important rule to follow during the creative process. A good musician or designer will recognize instantly if someone knows how to work with time and a grid system. They are crucial invisible structures for creating successful pieces. Masters of time and grid know when the system should be broken to aid in enhancing the experience. It is these moments where the creative juices flow with ease.





# Rhythm

Rhythm exists within the invisible structure. Musically it is what you hear, but also what you don't. Visually it is a timed movement of the audience's eye. It is the foundation for all melodies and harmonies in a piece. The beat a rhythm makes can be experienced by the eyes or the ears.

Musically it sets the basis for the emotional response made by the groove. A simple rhythm can be just as powerful as a complex one. It is instantly recognized by anyone who hears it. Rhythm is the element that gives the heartbeat to music and to life.

While rhythm is not as essential to design as it is music, it is still a critical part of the visual world. The flow of a line is able to bring about a certain mood. A pattern is able to create a systematic repetition. Different patterns can create different reactions for the viewer like a different time signature can construct a feel for people to experience. A pattern can be hidden within elements or used clearly.

# Melody

A melody is the completion of methodical ideas. Each idea needs to be able to transition into one another. It is not about how many ideas can be included in one piece. The use of quality ideas in an effective manner is where the power of melody lies. Having one strong idea is always better than having a bunch of mediocre ideas.

With a powerful melody an artist can make a statement about something through reoccurring elements. When the group of ideas are mixed together they are suppose to come to a resolution in the end. However, this is sometimes left out on intention.

The usage of melody in design leads to pieces that have a sense of cohesiveness to them. Reoccurring design elements, photo treatment, and typography all help to bringing about visual melodies in a piece.



# Harmony

Harmony is a jumping off point for an effective use of melody. It is about taking the idea behind a melody and changing the elements inside it, while keeping the idea of it breathing. For music this would mean changing the notes, while for design this could mean color, proximity, or shape. Effective usage of harmony brings about a full piece, it gives depth to the work, and brings about more over the rainbow moments. The elements used in a composition are balanced with each other creating a cohesive piece.



# Emotional Response

Music is what feelings sound like. Design is what they look like. In music note choice, resolutions, groove, and rhythm all lead to evoking an emotional response. In design the usage of line, shape, typography, texture, color, and images can all cause a viewer to have an emotional response. Depending on the ways these elements are manipulated an artist can flesh out any type of emotion.

In a band the drummer creates a groove, the guitar creates a melody, the piano provides comping, and the bass provides harmony. Put all these together and it creates a conversation. This conversation can have many different topics that lead to an emotional response.

In a design the grid and a pattern provides a groove, a clever use of typography provides the melody, and an effective usage of color provides harmony. Together they make a conversation as well, leading to an emotional response for anyone who encounters it.





# Creating Creativity

Creativity is a tough concept for artists to control. It can be flowing at times, or just a mere drip. Music and design are the same thing as life. However, life is not the same thing as music and design. Who you are effects what comes out of you creatively. The phrase you are what you eat is relevant. The life experiences one has can make a person more aware of their emotions, positive or negative, which influence their creations. These are what a creator can draw from when trying to communicate a message through non-verbal speech. These emotions can be manipulated for good use with practice.

When a creator surrounds themselves with people who inspire them, it creates positive energy. Having emotions is the key to creating. Life experiences craft a better understanding of ones emotions, which leads to better creations.







# Practice Methods

Practicing breeds good results, but it is impossible to become perfect at anything. Constantly re-evaluating and honing of basic skills is key to becoming a successful creator. Trying to recreate other peoples' work is a good exercise because in the process their process is revealed. The human brain can only handle so much practice though. Sometimes it is good to take a step away from the work for an extended amount of time and do something completely different. The time spent away can exercise a different part of your brain you never use during your creative process; which in turn can become active later during the creative process, leading to a fresh idea that would have otherwise been inaccessible. The basic skills can always be honed because they are so crucial. They provide the foundation that is necessary for creating masterpieces.



# Critique

Evaluation of creative work is the best way to improve it. It is impossible to not become emotionally attached to something that you create, but during a critique all of those connections should be severed in favor of improvement. Your toughest critique should be yourself. It is important to look at the bad and the good. But, if you want to grow as a creator it is better to remember the good and forget the bad. Being a perfectionist isn't the end goal here, although pulling out a fine toothed comb at times isn't such a bad idea. Mistakes are a necessary step in the creation process,

but a mistake can be tweaked into a spectacular element. In the world of jazz there is an appropriate nickname used for people. The people who play well are considered cats because they are able to take a mistake and play it off like they meant to do it. When a musician makes a mistake and seems like they whimper from it, they are considered to be "dogging it." It is important for designers to try and become like these jazz cats and avoid dogging it at all cost because nothing is gained from it besides being down on yourself.





## Digital Technology

Design and music are both art forms that existed before the rapid advancement of the computer chip. However, both have had technology turn each of them upside down. Having the work become digital has allowed for a higher fidelity of editing capabilities. Some think this has cheapened the art form. Being able to edit a single note that might have been played wrong during a recording might feel like cheating or fake to some artists. However, the authenticity of having good ideas and concepts behind the work will always be what matters.

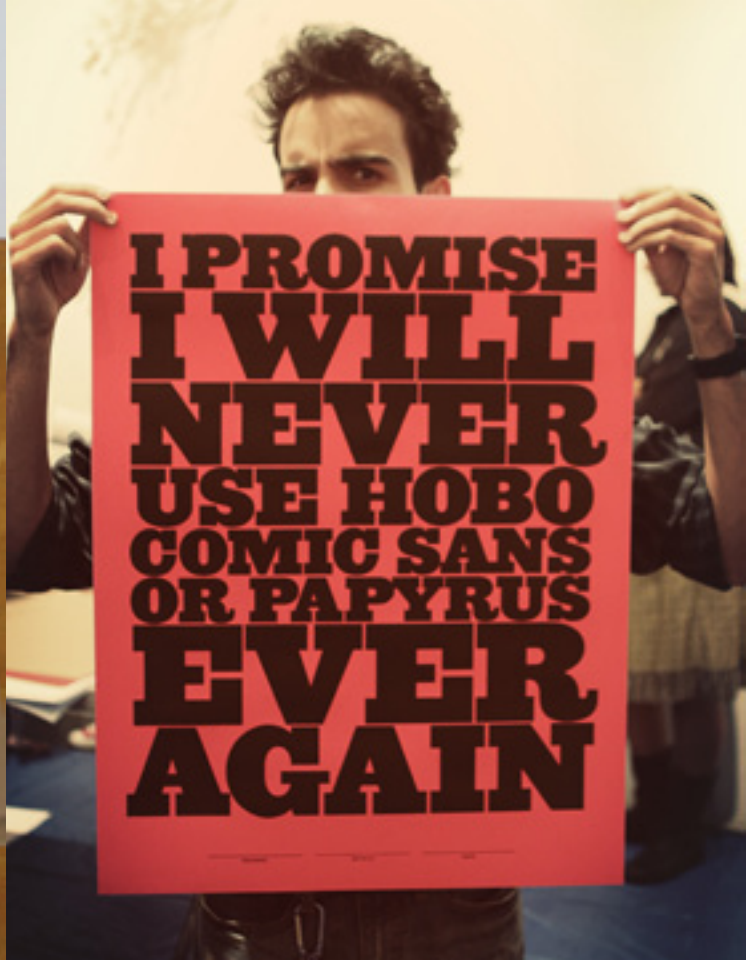
The use of a metronome, video and audio recorders help musicians augment their core skill sets. Being able to edit any part of a design without effecting the rest allows for mistakes to be not so devastating to a design. As technology becomes more prevalent in our society, it also effects the kind of work that is being created in each art form.

# Instruments & the Mind

All the ideas of designers and musicians, by definition, are created from their minds, but can only be expressed with the aid of tools. Our instruments are extensions of our minds that we use to express our ideas. There is a special kind of bond created between our minds and our tools. Both have the potential to be extremely powerful. It takes a few days to technically learn how to use our tools, but it can take a lifetime to become masters of our art.

However, because tools must be used for expression of things that are created in the mind, the ideas are never able to be fully expressed. There is always a part that is lost somewhere in the translation between mind to instrument. The more an artist uses their instrument the better their relationship with it becomes. Hopefully the better the relationship, the more capable the artist is at expressing their ideas. This increased skill with the instrument leads to different ideas that were not possible with a lesser expertise. Nurturing the mind and skill with instrument is the most effective way in becoming a better artists.







## *Part Three: The People*

Being able to express yourself through a visual or sonic medium attracts an interesting breed of people. It is something that not many people are able to do. Therefore, it is a power that should be respected not only as art but also as a lifestyle.





## Life of a Creator

Being able to systematically construct something out of nothing gives a tremendous feeling of power. The brain allows for us to become our own personal god. While it is impossible to control the forming of ideas, it is up to the creator whether the ideas that they come up with thrive or die. Whenever a musician or designer picks up their respective instruments, they are also picking up a scale of judgment for whatever comes out. Having god like powers, being the main driving force during the creation process attracts particular people.

While the creative process can be extremely rewarding, entertaining, and challenging it can also cause immense frustrations. You have to have a passion for the field you are working in order to get through the ups and downs that go along with it. It is almost similar to an addicts experience with hard drugs, the ups are fantastic, but the downs can be irrefutably terrible. Luckily, it is impossible to ever overdose from design or music. Patients is a virtue to have when the creative juices aren't flowing. If enough time is spent on a problem, a solution will be fleshed out eventually and the reward of resolution is commensurate to the level of effort.





## Living Off of Creating

These type of people have to be able to adapt and shape their creative process around what kind of ideas they are able to come up with. Designers and musicians need to know which ones to discard, which ones to use, or save for later use on another project. The ones who can do this consistently are able to make a living off of their creative potential. This comes with the constant pressures of having to create something when they are told to do so. It also means there is chance for getting stuck on a certain style or plateauing as an artist when you create the same thing.

That is why it is important to have a goal to strive towards. Stagnation will take away the fun a creator should be having during the creative process. If you aren't having fun with your job then you mine as well be sitting in a cubical crunching numbers, wondering where your red stapler is. Being able to show your friends and family what you have created in order to pay the bills is something that is quite a privilege of these two lifestyles.



# Commonalities

Designers and musicians seem as if they are made up of the same thread, but have been sewn in a different fashion. They both have to possess a substantial degree of talent in their respective fields, because it is easily recognizable who can walk the walk. People who fake their creative talent stick out like sore thumbs among those who do it for real. With this talent they must have a passion for expressing it at any opportunity that crosses their path. They need to be culturally aware of the trends that are going on in their field, as well as what is happening outside of their field as other sources of ideas for future projects. There is also a need

for having communication skills to express themselves and their ideas to other people. An individual with a personal voice is able to come up with their own ideas. They tend to be sociable people who are able to find something in common with everyone, or at least be open to seeing other perspectives. Integrity is a quality that is necessary for a creative person. There has to be a sense of confidence in their work because it directly reflects the confidence in ones self as a professional. If a creator respects themselves and what they are capable of doing, others will respect them.



# Feelings About the Other

I have found that designers and musicians have a lot of respect and admiration for the work that each other is able to create. This is because they both have similar goals and aspirations in their creative processes, but deal in such polar opposite mediums. Designers tend to have music on in the background whenever they are going through the design process on a project. Musicians can also find inspiration in the other mediums. A well designed piece can evoke an emotion that musician would like to emulate with sound.



# Goin' Solo

When a creative person works alone they are only limited by their capabilities. It puts a lot of pressure on one person but also takes away the pressures of having to rely on other people to get the job done. The process of creating can be extremely specific to your own work method. If you get an idea, you don't have to run it by anybody but yourself. While this could be limiting in the amount of creative ideas possible, it also gives an enormous sense of creative freedom that just isn't possible in a group situation.

Some people feel more productive when they are able to work alone. They don't have to hold any ones hand along the way, or have to keep in the loop about what the other members of the group and doing. The only person they have to worry about is themselves. A single voice can be just as powerful and meaningful as a group of peoples.





## Working in Groups

The opportunity to work in a group is always an exciting experience, but it also poses its own set of obstacles to overcome. Everyone in the group must respect each other and themselves in order for there to be a healthy work environment. While there is a lot of creative egos in a band or a group of designers it is important to make sure that each voice is heard equally. The goal should be common across the board, with a clear consensus on the solution.

In order to gain a consensus there has to be an ability to compromise. Keeping an open mind to multiple solutions besides your own, as well as being able to vote on what is being disagreed upon facilitates achieving a consensus within a group. It is important to have an ease of communication between the members of the group so that anything can be brought to the table and discussed without being immediately dismissed as a bad idea. Being in a group means that you have to be flexible to other people's schedules, and respectful of others' time. It is hard to constantly achieve all of these things in a group, but they are essential to effective group work.



## When Two Worlds Collide

For the past several decades the main link between graphic design and music has been the packaging and album artwork associated with a musical release. It adds another layer to the musical experience that would otherwise be inaccessible through the audio medium. It is the visual world's voice and stance in what is otherwise a sonic world. The design process of trying to represent an audio format in a visual medium poses many problems that have to be thought through. Luckily, as hopefully this book has been trying to demonstrate, they have a lot of commonalities to

jump off from. Vinyl records were the hallmark of the fusion of music and design. The format presented a large playground for designers to evoke any mood or communicate whatever message fit the album enclosed in the cover. The invention of the compact disc brought about the smaller jewel case format that doesn't have as much versatility and options as the vinyl record compared to booklet covers. Recently with the advent of digital releases the options available for designers and music is open to whatever can be displayed on a computer screen, opening the doors for







many exciting options. When designing for another creative medium, such as music, the medium should be a part of the design process. The design should reflect the feel of the music enclosed within. The imagery selected sometimes pulls from imagery evoked by the lyrics. If the band has an industrial feel the design will likely have an industrial connotation attached to it. The album art work exists to further sell the meaning behind a the music. The concept of a package design for a band's album is not that different from a package for a bar of soap. The goal of the package design

is brand recognition and customer loyalty through a visual cue. The proper use of logos and typography can have a lasting impact on how the album is perceived. If the cover isn't visually appealing or interesting it has less of a chance to be picked up when competing against all the other albums in a milk crate or CD rack. The field of album cover design is an exciting crossover of music and design. They fit and build off of each other so well, that it has become a necessity for any musical release in the twenty first century.

# JEFFERSON STARSHIP



## RED OCTOPUS





## ***Part Four: The Product***

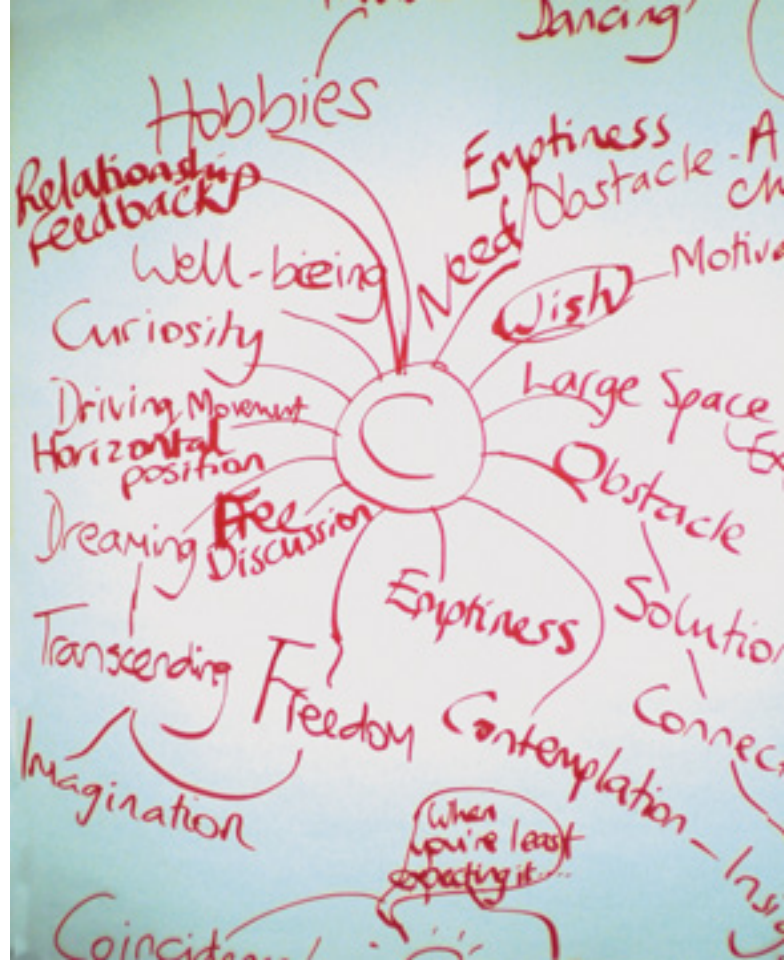
Being able to call something a finished product after spending days of work on it, countless cups of coffee, and a couple of psychotic episodes is always worth the time spent by those who have a passion for creating.



# Why We Create

Creating music or design is like an eternal itch that must always be scratched. The people who create it have a passion for what they do. They don't do it because it is just for kicks, or something to pass the time. It isn't just something that will pay the bills, buy a new car or get their kids through college. It is a way of lifestyle that is constantly evolving as they too are changing as people.

Some designers like to create because they enjoy the problem solving aspect of it. There is guaranteed to be a problem with every design, and thus a solution to be made. Some just like to create organization out of chaos. While others enjoy making things that are just awesome to experience. The use of a creative medium is also how some people like to express themselves when words just aren't enough to express certain emotions. Others like to use it to tell a story, or provide the world with a special statement that they feel needs to be heard by everyone.





## When's it Done?

Creators put a great amount of time in their work because they are passionate about their medium and put their heart and soul into it. To ensure the work is as honest as possible, artists go through a creative process. However, because the act of creating a piece of art is based on the artists's experiences, the process is constantly evolving.

There is really no end to the process of a creative medium. There can be deadlines and release dates, but these are just moments in a work's lifespan. Pieces are able to continue to grow and expand after they are released to the public, that is if their creator chooses to continue the creative process. Whether it is a song covered by another band, or a logo that is redesigned by another designer decades later, the essence of the piece will always be alive.

# Personal Satisfaction

Being able to step back and look at your own work with a smile on your face is something every creator should strive to experience with each piece. There is nothing quite like knowing that you made something that you are proud of. If you are able to be satisfied with your own work it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, personal gratification is the highest form of success. I think this is because you are the only one who experienced the whole creative process

behind a piece. From the formation of an idea, through the drafts of trying to make the idea come alive, the refinement of the idea, and the eventual public release. All of this effort to create something can only be fully appreciated by someone who has experienced it all. It is amazing to think the amount of ideas that are capable of being fully worked but can't because there just aren't enough hours in the day.



# Others Satisfaction

Being proud of your own work is an important part of being a creative developer. The feeling of having someone moved or affected by your work is on par with the self satisfaction that can be achieved from knowing you did a good job on something. When your creative work is shown to someone who wasn't involved with it during the creation process they experience it as an uncorrupted consumer. This unbiased experience of your work is how you know if it is actually an effective solution or not because it takes the person

who created it out of the equation. A person's work should be able to stand on its own. One of the problems I have encountered with feedback on my work is I don't know for sure if it is genuine, or if the critics are just being kind as not to hurt my feelings. I have found this to be extremely insulting as a creator and as an honest person. If someone feels a certain way about my work I would like them to give honest feedback in hopes that it will help me improve as a designer in the future.





## Live Performances

Live musical performances present an interesting way of showing off someone's creative work to others. The actual concert itself is a temporal experience that can't ever be recreated the same again. The main purpose of live performances is for everyone involved to have a good time, if the audience isn't enjoying themselves more likely than not the performer probably isn't either. If there isn't fun being had, there is really no reason to be expressing yourself. Being on stage can be a stressful experience. The audience knows whether the performer is comfortable or not.

Spending time rehearsing to perfect the act of playing in front of other people is the key to having a successful show. Just like everything in life, the more you do it the better you will become. Just like in the creative process, when a mistake is made it is best to try and twist it into looking as if it were intentional.



# Final Composition

As a deadline closes quickly on a job for a designer, the pressures of getting the final design done in time to satisfy the contract increases. This crunch time can be stressful, however, those who plan appropriately can successfully meet the deadline. If the designer communicated properly with the client and there is a clear objective of what needs to be achieved there shouldn't be any stressing, and it could actually be quite enjoyable.

Going through the steps of the design process early on is the most important part of creating an effective final composition to show the client. If there is any corner cutting or shortcuts taken there are usually consequences at the end of the process. After the product has been handed over to the client the designer can celebrate their success, and move on to other endeavours.







## Revealing to the Public

There is always an enormous sense of gratitude when an artist sends a creative work they have sweated over into the world for public consumption. They have to be satisfied with what they have done to the point where they think others will be satisfied with it as well. For every album or album cover design the respective creator must take a step away from their work and come to terms with it being ready for the public to experience. That this iteration of their work is now out of their hands and is only meant for others.





## **Personal Connections**

It is extremely easy to become personally attached to the creative work you create. It is best to recognize and accept that everyone has their own opinions on everything. All you can do is respect your audience, and hopefully they will respect you. However, that doesn't mean that you should agree with all your critics. Standing up for your work when there is solid reasoning behind what is being negatively criticized is an important to being a good creator.



**THE WHO SELL OUT**  **THE WHO SELL OUT**

Replacing the stale smell of excess with the sweet smell of success, Peter Townshend, who, like the rest of his stars, needs it, finds the music with "Odorono" the all-day deodorant that turns perspiration into inspiration.

This way to a godson's breakfast. Duffly rides again. Thanks! "Thanks to Heinz Baked Beans everyday is a super day." Those who Love have many beans make five get Heinz Beans inside and outside every opportunity. Get yours.



**MOUNT REMINGTON**  
LIFE WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE

## Part Five: Closing

I hope the journey through the worlds of music and design as been insightful and inspiring. Being able to describe something that is experienced through the eyes and ears has proven to be quite the challenge design-wise, but I had fun trying to do so either way.







# The Process

The creative process of music and design is an evolving experience. Creators put their heart and soul into all of their works. By utilizing principles and guidelines they are able to express their emotions, communicate unspeakable ideas, and tell stories that anyone can experience in their own way.





## The People

The people who chose the career path as a musician or designer have to be some form of crazy. They are physically and mentally challenging lifestyles that aren't fit for everyone. They put in long hours where they have to be as honest as possible with themselves in order to create honest work that their audience will appreciate.



# The Product

Staying up all hours of the night to find the perfect note or color swatch to push the creative process and product forward makes it worth it in the end. Creators put their hearts and souls into their work, so the results will reflect their passion. While the challenges of deadlines and live performances are stressful, they are ultimately worth it in the end if you have a passion for it.





## Closing Statement

The process, people, and product. These three things are dependent on one another for a creator who is passionate about creating meaningful work for their audiences. Without one of them, the others wouldn't exist. In my journey into the common threads music and design share, I have learned that the connection is deeper than I anticipated. I am glad I don't have to ever pick between the two of them because they are both such integral parts to my lifestyle.

# Bibliography

The textual content has come from my head, as well as content pulled from interviews with Graham Dolby and Martin McDonald for a better idea of the vastness which is the musical realm.

The imagery is from a variety of sources ranging from myself, Kelsey Hunter, and the following accounts on flickr.com: !!!! scogle, angel.a.acevedo, barkbud, benchau, bjorn-meansbear, bossco, chatirygirl, curran.kelleher, ElvertBarnes, escotto2000, fabbio, fensterbme, jdhancock, jepoirrier, kirainet, Kyle May, liberato, lisibo, loimere, Marc Arsenault - Wow Cool, owlpacino, pagedooley, pfly, Piano Piano!, Pink Sherbet Photography, professorbop, taiyofj, the-bigo, williambrawley, wonker, yearofthebird.

# Colophon

The body font used is Meta-Normal 9/11.  
The header typeface is Meta-PlusBold-Roman 20.  
The folio is Bach-ts 18/8.



