

peer pressure

Our pick of the best reader submissions sent to us this month

Peer Pressure has once again been inundated with a volume of great artworks. The chosen entries this month offer an array of insights into the creative mind, sharing and revealing individual approaches and skills. Read on, enjoy and if you feel that you have what it takes to showcase your work and join the ranks of your Peer Pressure fellows, then don't hesitate to send us your entries.

We always include your email and web address, so anyone interested in your designs can get hold of you. All you have to do is send us high-quality TIFFs or JPEGs (RGB or CMYK) at 300dpi minimum, which can be printed at a minimum size of 15cm x 15cm.

Send us low-res versions to advancedpshop@imagine-publishing.co.uk – we'll get back to you for higher resolution work if needed. Alternatively, log on to our forum at www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/forum. Unfortunately, we cannot provide individual image criticisms.



Character building

NAME: Jack Dixon

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Jack formed an alternative record label four years ago, under the name Alaska Recordings. He designed releases and promotional material for all of Alaska's artists, and after the label came to an end, the design studio carried on. Olli joined forces with Jack to create Alaska Design, which was fairly successful within the alternative music scene. After Alaska ended in 2005, both Olli and Jack went on to work for the biggest alternative reality game ever made – *Perplex City*, for Mind Candy. Now back on the freelance scene with Bishbo, Jack and Olli are on the hunt for new challenges.

Bishbo is inspired by food, film, family and friends: "Ideas can pop in to your head at any time of the day. We try not to plan things too much as we find that calculative, well thought out and planned artwork can lose that spontaneity we embrace," says Jack.

With a style that relies on vector character art with heavy Photoshop influence, Bishbo certainly produces plenty of fresh ideas. "We've also been known to mix a lot of gritty, collage-style mess together with anything we can find!"

Technically, Bishbo uses a few set tools in particular to create designs. "Blending layers is hugely important. Also, perhaps shamefully, the Shape Tool can be really useful. Possibly the most important thing is Clipping Masks, which makes such a huge difference getting the lighting perfect or texture right on a certain layer."

BEST IN SHOW Advanced Photoshop

Dream machines

NAME: Steven Rubenstein

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Steven Rubenstein has travelled a very rocky path to become a graphic artist. He explains: "It sounds like a cliché, but if it wasn't for my Dad I definitely would not be where I am today. One day, he saw me playing around with an old version of Photoshop 4 on my slow machine. The next day, I get home and BAM! There's a brand new HP Pentium 4 sitting on the table and next to it, my old man with the proudest grin on his face. So I made the decision to enrol in school and off I went with big dreams and high hopes, but it wasn't what I expected at all. I made it through five or six classes before I decided that school just wasn't the route for me.

Shortly after, while driving, some guy stopped me to comment on my car and asked if he could shoot it for a catalogue. It turned out that he was the owner of a then small automotive ad agency. I interned there five days a week for eight months before being hired as a production artist. Not long after I was hired, my world quickly fell apart. I was in a violent accident and let's just say I didn't get up and walk away. Then my father went in for surgery and passed away. As I was clearing out his hospital room, a nurse tapped me on my shoulder and handed me a crumpled piece of paper. In his last few days my father couldn't speak due to the respirator and had to resort to writing to communicate. Barely legible were the words 'he's a graphic designer... yes, very proud'. That was a life changing moment. I owe everything to him; he is my inspiration. So I dived headfirst into design and over the course of six years I've worked my way up the ladder, improving my skills, feeding the brain and striving to be the best I can be."





Amalgamation nation

NAME: Ian Carr

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Before making it as a graphic artist and illustrator in Bath, Ian Carr spent the first 18 years of his life in the Yorkshire Dales. He was always collecting, photographing and recreating textures from an early age: "I basically had a sketchbook strapped to me, which has always been a daily necessity," Ian says. "But as I grew older my images bound together with the introduction of Photoshop and digital photography. This wasn't accepted by a town fueled by big-eared farmers and their sheep. Then I developed my ideas and current topics into illustrations to give a meaning to my work. This made me think... what am I actually about and what do I want to say?"

Ian left the Dales to study Fine Art at York, which swiftly delivered him into a thriving graphic art career. "Throughout my time at university I found that my strengths were in composition, collage, mixed-media (with paint) and digital imaging. At the time I never thought of amalgamating them all together. Now I am always experimenting with different processes such as screen-printing, cut and paste collage, Photoshop, and many more techniques. However, I mainly stay organic and textured, and let accidents happen. That is the best and most surprising part."

Inspired by patterns and textures all around him, Ian creates pieces that reflect a very urban style. He hopes to be globally recognised as an artist, illustrator and designer in the near future, and dreams of being part of a multi-disciplinary studio, getting involved and starting a collective.



Darkness and light

NAME: Lisa Sweet aka Fanged Femme

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"Someone once told me that they were both repulsed and delighted at the same time from looking at my work. I like to think that anyone viewing my work will experience a wide range of emotion. Some of it they will connect to and other pieces they won't," explains Lisa Sweet, also known as Fanged Femme to those who follow her work online. "One of the most commonly asked questions about my work is why the bloody, grotesque images? Well, I have always loved the horror genre and to me it's not only a tribute to all that is scary, but a way to express the darker side of fear and pain."

Due to financial restrictions, Lisa didn't own a computer until the mid-Nineties and it wasn't until later in the decade that she first discovered Photoshop. "It blew my mind because I'd been looking for something that would enable me to take my photography further. I saved up money and dived into the digital world to find so many more creative outlets. It was frustrating because I am not very patient at times and learning software can be tedious when all you want to do is create the imagery flowing in your head. I just stuck at it and little by little understood things more on a digital level, and the fact that I found Photoshop to be user friendly was a big help! I am still learning new things and always trying different ways of expressing myself. However, Photoshop is definitely my number one tool."



Darkness and light continued overleaf...

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...Darkness and light continued

