

I am best known to some of you for my time spent working with Ian Dury and The Blockheads and then The Clash. Over the years I did, at various times, work with other groups, musicians and performers, but the purpose of this website is not to cover that part of my life where music was at the centre of all I did. But to be brief, I started out at Stiff Records in London in 1976 and ended my professional involvement with music as a producer at Casino Studios in Atlanta in the mid 1990's. There were some gaps in that period, but I've had no serious involvement with music since Casino. Now I'm just a record buying fan again (yes, records!), which is exactly where I came in!

Since those distant and different days, I have helped raise a family and also developed into an artist. Surprise, surprise, I have had no formal art training, other than the common classroom "nightmare" and was not aware of any interest I might have had in the Arts until I began to mix with musicians in my late teens. Despite a keen interest in clothes and a substantial record collection (unusual considering the time and my circumstances), I had not made any connection between fashion, music and the world of art. I don't think I had even stopped to consider that clothes and records involved design. To me they just existed.

But working with musicians, and entering the world in which they lived, soon brought me an awareness of the creative process and creative people-- people whose primary concern was making something not buying it. This is where I believe my art education began and my thinking changed. I now look at this world, so different from the blue collar one I had grown up in, as my own version of Art School.

As to when I started producing Art, it's hard for me to say and from what I can remember at first, the quality varied considerably. I lived in a world where music played constantly, and being on the move much of the time, the cassette was the popular format. I began to make my own covers for home-recorded cassettes, which soon developed into changing the covers for pre-recorded ones as well. Although we long ago moved on to (the now endangered) compact disc, I still make my own covers and change the ones I don't like.

Over time I would suggest ideas or roughs that might be developed into designs for posters, t-shirts, or record covers. The Clash was a particularly pro-creative environment, and one was encouraged to offer up any idea one might have. The "Know Your Rights" logo was something I first drew on a

piece of paper for no particular purpose in my basement flat in West London. Spotted by one of the others, it was whisked away, "fixed up" and became the talisman of The Clash's 1982 "Combat Rock" campaign.

Once married and starting a family, my attention moved away from music. I realized my round the clock "full on" style of participation was not conducive to a happy family life; so I switched my focus to raising our two sons with my wife, Jennifer. During this time, I developed a preference for communicating with friends both near and far by postcard: it's concise, visual and open. When I ran out of postcards to purchase, I began customizing what I could find and that lead me to make my own one-off postcards. Pictures and text, first torn and later cut from newspapers and magazines, were my primary source of material. These were glued onto the cardboard from cereal boxes and decorated with children's markers and pencils. It's something I continue to do, although I have since developed new sources for cardboard and introduced acrylic paint. This has lead in recent years to decorating envelopes too, as much as I appreciate the convenience of the Super Information Highway, it's no substitute for sending or receiving something through "the post."

At some point in the 1990's, I began to try my hand at painting. After I complained to my sister-in-law about the problems of slow-drying oil-based house paint, she introduced me to acrylics. The fast drying time and easy clean up made them perfect for a schedule based around raising two boys! My style was very much Pop Art influenced, especially by the early work of Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Mel Ramos. The paintings that I didn't discard or abandon were given to friends and family. They were all portraits of people with some special significance to the recipient--Nick Drake, Muhammad Ali, Billy Fury and Hank Williams are just a few.

In 2010, I was asked to contribute to what sadly became a memorial exhibition and foundation fundraiser to the artist/cartoonist and friend Ray Lowry. The show was called "London Calling" in tribute to Ray's iconic album cover design of that LP. I produced a piece titled "Ammunition Box#1 Fill 'Er Up Jacko." The piece is a vintage 45 RPM record box, customized and decorated to present a three dimensional portrait of Ray himself. Since then I've been working on a series of Ammunition Boxes, each one a "portrait sculpture" using a combination of record box, specific records, various images, fonts, paints and gris gris to represent those people I

have chosen as my subjects. It is my intention to show these pieces, but first I have a few more to make.

Soon after the "London Calling" show my now-teenage eldest son suggested I switch from postcard to online blog and so began my blow-by-blow account of my existence as a long distance fan of West Ham United soccer team. The blog's title "Is Saitch Yer Daddy," comes from some cryptic East London graffiti from my youth. You could see it just past Bromley By Bow station, when taking the District Line Underground train east, en route to Upton Park, home of The Hammers. To me it captures a time and place: post war East London, pre-gentrification.

The switch from postcard to blog presented me with an issue regarding copy as I had used the front as my "canvas" and the back for my writing (plus the address). It soon became apparent that I would rather incorporate both sides of a postcard (minus the address) into one image than display both front and back. I decided to produce a single piece where the copy--and therefore the font used --would become an integral part of the work. Having purchased several thousand records in sleeves since the 1960's, my influences would be hard to specify, but I was more familiar with the marriage of image and font than I at first thought.

At the end of this season "Saitch" will come to an end. It has never been my intention to only cover football/soccer, as I have many other interests. But it has offered me the opportunity to try and portray "the trials, tribulations and triumphs" that are experienced by sports fans everywhere. It has also allowed to try and present a glimpse at what remains of a once geographically specific culture--working class East London--that is fast evaporating. Later this year, West Ham United will move to a state-of-the-art Olympic Stadium, situated next to an enormous 21st Century "world class" shopping mall. Although the distance is only a couple of miles, it will be a far cry from the place where I grew up.

Having introduced paint into my "Saitches" and other projects, I have also started working on some "paint only" paintings. We will see where that leads....