



Music to the Eyes: The IU Designer Behind Your Favorite Album Art

Video Transcript

[Video: The words "IU" on crimson banner left]

[Video: The word "DAY" on red banner right]

[Video: Two banners come together to form the IU DAY banner]

[Words appear and encircle top and bottom of IU Day banner: ALL IU. ALL DAY.]

[Words appear on black film strip with IU DAY banner at top: MUSIC TO THE EYES: The IU Day Designer Behind Your Favorite Album Art]

[Video: Daniel Murphy sitting in a chair in his office]

[Words appear: DANIEL MURPHY, BAJ'00, Senior Designer, Merge Records]

Daniel Murphy speaks: I remember being in high school and first learning Photoshop or other design software and recreating the logos of bands I liked just to see if I could do it and it honestly never crossed my mind that this is something that I could do for a living.

[Video: Bookshelf cubes filled with record album covers]

[Words appear: SINCE GRADUATING FROM IU IN 2000, DANIEL HAS DESIGNED OVER 400 ALBUM COVERS]

[Video: Photograph of Daniel taken in 1996]

I started IU in 1996 as a Journalism major, continued with Journalism all the way through.

[Video: Photograph of Daniel and his father at Daniel's graduation in 2000]

I graduated in 2000.

[Video: Blue manual typewriter, kitty figurine, and lamp on a low file cabinet]

[Video: Close-up of blue manual typewriter's keys]

While I was there I did a little work for the IDS writing and pretty quickly realized that as much as I enjoyed writing I was not as passionate about it as a lot of the people who were coming out of Journalism school.

[Video: Daniel looking at a computer screen in his office]

At the same time, that wasn't a disappointment because I found a lot of other things about Journalism and about publishing that were exciting to me, namely production.

[Video: Daniel's hand operating a computer mouse]

Something I hadn't really considered as being a career path for myself.

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

[Video: Daniel looking at a design image on his computer screen]

I had taken classes in production design, page layouts, editing, that sort of thing. It was exciting for me.

[Video: Blurred image of a turntable becomes clear]

It was something I hadn't really considered when I was sort of focused on becoming a writer coming into college.

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

I was involved in the music scene when I was in Bloomington, not as a musician. Never been a musician. Need to be clear about that.

[Video: Daniel reviews album covers on the bookshelf cubes in his office]

But I enjoyed music I've always loved music and seen live music and met the guys who would go on to own Secretly Canadian, the record label in Bloomington, as undergrads.

[Words appear: SECRETLY CANADIAN WAS FOUNDED IN BLOOMINGTON IN 1996]

[Video: Close-up of album covers on bookshelf cubes]

[Words appear: IT IS NOW PART OF A RECORD LABEL COLLECTIVE REPRESENTING OVER 70 ARTISTS]

By the time I got out of school and Secretly Canadian was growing a little bit, and they were willing to hire me on.

[Video: Daniel looking at a design image on his computer screen]

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

It was an opportunity for me to find a way to use design for music and combine the skills I learned in school with the things I was passionate about in a way that hadn't really dawned on me before as possible.

[Video: Close up of album cover designs. Focuses on PHOSPHORESCENT's *Muchacho* and THE WAR ON DRUGS' *LOST IN THE DREAM* album covers]

For me album art is a first impression. If you haven't heard the record, if you're flipping through records in the store then I want to make sure that I'm making a really solid visual first impression that gets people to stop, take a second and consider listening to the record.

[Video: Daniel pulls a record album cover from the bookshelf cube]

The process of designing a record is really all over the place. It varies from artist to artist and it's as different as artist are from each other.

[Video: Daniel plays a record on his turntable]

Sometimes artist will come, they'll finish the record and from day one of writing the songs to recording the album they have an image in mind.

[Video: Daniel displays OKKERVIL RIVER'S AWAY album cover]

They know exactly what they want and my job is just to facilitate that. Other times artists are so tired by the end of the process of recording an album that they have no idea what they want it to look like. They just hand over the master and say, "You tell me what this looks like."

[Video: Three framed silver records on the wall]

That's an opportunity for me to sort of pitch as many "out-there" ideas as I can possibly come up with just to see what sticks.

If my iTunes is to be believed, by the time the record actually hits the street and sort of all the designs that's related to it is finished I've probably listened to it 30 or 40 times.

[Video: A record album storefront, Exclusive; customer inside Exclusive looking at vinyl records]

I think vinyl's becoming popular again because people like the way it looks, they like the way it sounds. I'm not going to delve into the arguments about whether it sounds better, it just sounds different. It's its own experience.

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

And I think people like an excuse to slow down a little bit, to enjoy music and vinyl forces you to do that. You have to sit down, flip the record every 15 minutes or so.

[Video: Hands flipping through vinyl record covers and pulling one out to review in an album store]

You have to take it out of the sleeve, you have to be sort of careful with it, and while you're holding it you might also pause to look at what you're holding, to spend a little time looking at the packaging, figuring out exactly what's there.

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

I don't think it's a necessary element to enjoy music.

[Video: Man in album store choosing a record album from a display.]

That would be sort of ineffective because a lot of people who love these records never look at the vinyl packaging. I don't want them to miss out on part of the experience.

[Video: Hands flipping through vinyl record covers.]

: But if you are willing to take the time and money off to get a copy of the physical record I want there to be rewards in that. I want it to offer something more for those who are going to take the time to do that.

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

When I'm designing album artwork ... I've been a fan of it all my life. I mean, even as a child I would flip through records and just be fascinated by the lighter notes and all the sort of nuances of it.

[Video: Wide angle view of man flipping through a bin of record albums facing a wall-display of record albums]

If I'm doing anything it's keeping alive the traditions that have already been in place. The things that I admired about album artwork when I was just a fan and not a producer of it.

[Video: Daniel sitting in a chair in his office]

If that gives people a reason to keep thinking it's important to go back and look at older records that inspired me, that I've loved then my work is done.

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[Transcript ends]