

Rick Griffin. Designer.

Born : 1944

Died : 1991

Nationality: American

Style: Psychedelic 1960's.

Graphic

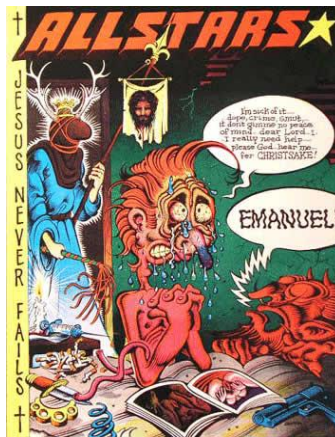
Background Information

Rick Griffin was born in on 18th June 1944. His father was an archaeologist and young Rick often accompanied his Dad on digs. This was where he was exposed to Native American and Ghost Town artefacts which influenced his later designs. Southern California is renowned for its surfing beaches, so as a teenager Rick took this up as a hobby and soon became an enthusiast. He was already drawing and designing and would charge his surfing friends 50 cents to design them individual t-shirt s. He also decorated surfboards, hot-rod cars and motorbikes. He was soon working as a designer for a surfer magazine where he drew comic strips and created a character called ‘Murphy’. This little gremlin cartoon became a popular logo / motif . Griffin moved to San Francisco , the hub of hippy counter- culture and became famous for his fantastic, posters and album cover designs. He lived a rather interesting life, mixing with rock stars, writers and artists, living in vans and travelling to festivals but always working. He died in a car crash in 1991.

‘Murphy character’



Comic book illustration



‘Retrospectacle’ poster



Influences:

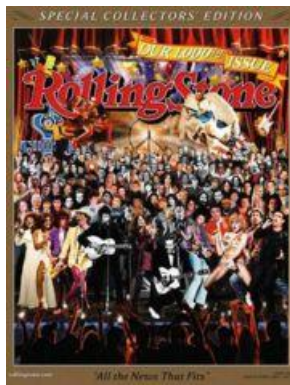
One of the main influences on Rick Griffin's work was psychedelic drugs. In the sixties scientists were doing research into the chemical make-up of the plants eaten by Native Americans, Aztecs and Mexicans for ceremonial purposes. These substances had mind bending effects and altered their consciousness creating strange illusions. It was decided to test out how these would affect 'creative types' some writers (like Ken Kesey who wrote 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest') and artists experimented with hallucinogenic chemicals for scientific purposes (The Watts Acid Test). At first this was done under supervision, however L.S.D. which was legal at this time were soon being used outside the lab. Rick Griffin was one of the designers who took

L.S.D. and the effects are quite evident in his style. Other influences on Griffin included the radical, counter-culture politics at the time, new freedoms in society, the 'swinging sixties' lifestyle and also spirituality and increasing interest in other cultures.

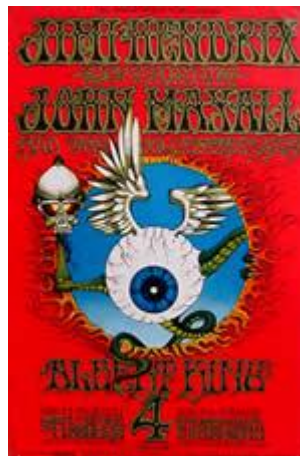
STYLE.

The main characteristics of the 1960's Psychedelic style are fantastical, surrealistic imagery, optical illusions, kaleidoscopic, fractal and paisley patterns, the use of bright, vivid, contrasting colours, morphed or distorted shapes and extreme detail. Lots of symbolism, spiritual motifs and imaginary creatures are also featured. Alongside this type of illustration, designers also tended to use highly decorative, complicated styles of lettering which often made some of their graphics rather hard to read and in some cases virtually illegible.

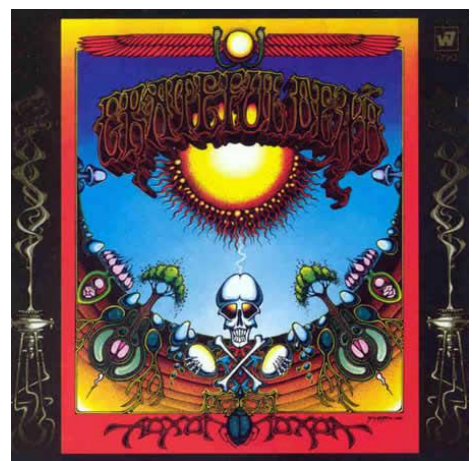
'Rolling Stone
Magazine Logo



Jimi Hendrix
Concert Poster



'Aoxaomaoxoa' Album
Grateful Dead



Techniques

Griffin's work shows an incredible mastery of styles and techniques. Initially he used pen and ink for his comic books, then progressed to using acrylic paint on canvas, many of the images used as illustrations for his poster or album cover designs were actually large paintings, some were as big as 6ft high. These were then taken into print production.

A common process was lithographic printing where Griffin would oversee the production of his work, making minor adjustments and checking colours before the final print run. He also designs typefaces, fonts to accompany the central image. These were highly intricate in style and it is clear to see an Art Nouveau influence. He often used more than one colour, italics, drop shadows and added decorative flourishes to the serifs which often made the letters difficult to make out.