

Album covers are conspicuous in their expression of the bands' visual side. An album cover says "I'm a painting with words". The cover may be symbolic, a summary of stage performances, propaganda-like, the artwork of a band member or simply designed to grab more sales. Some are so simplistic in nature that two colors can say everything there is to be said. Whatever the message conveyed, album covers should artistically parallel the sound of the music.

When music first became available in a home listening format, it was engraved on large wax disks. Stored in compressed paper sleeves, the artwork reflected the classical music popular at the time. Black and white printing was the only kind available. At first, classical works of art were sketched and then printed on the covers. For example, the Venus de Milo was printed for Korsakov's musical styling. As the technology of photography developed, a few select albums had photographs of classical art printed on them. People from that time would have been shocked at how the album cover would evolve.

During the 1940's, some album covers were both photographic and printed in color. Some covers were airbrushed paintings, or pastel drawings. The popularity of these impressionistic photographs quickly waned, as the album cover gave way to color photographs. Many of the new covers depicted the feel-good sounds of the albums, with people frolicking on the beaches or in fields. Other covers featured photographs of the artist or band itself, with the person or band performing on stage or simply in front of a microphone. A few albums today use the same concept.

During the 1960's and 1970's, album covers tended toward conceptual protests of previous ideas of good cover design. Abstract psychedelic patterns were popularly tied in to this new concept. The "hippie" times were a period of mind expansion and discovery, characterized by demands for social and political reform. This was expressed through the medium of the album cover, with photographs of war contrasting with portrayals of aristocratic wealth. On a lighter note, "flower children", nature, and Eastern religion were combined with psychedelic mind-blowing color-infused patterns.

Album covers of the 1980's and 1990's saw a sharp decline in artistic designs, changing gears, leaning towards rebellious youth looking to break away from their parents' pacifist natures. With the introduction of KISS, the heavy metal sound was on the rise. Covers often depicted harsh, gory scenes. Offensive and shocking designs became the new cover message. Unnerving and disturbing people was considered a revolutionary concept.

Today, album covers are more diverse than ever. Ideas and art work from genres and milieus throughout history are used. Everything from the original Venus de

Milo to entirely computer developed graphics may be found on today's album covers. Almost every style used for album covers since their first debut has been integrated since 2000. It's hard to imagine what will come next.