Punk Rock vs. Swiss Modernism

graphic design

Members of the band Double Dagger are graphic designers by day, poets of the profession by night.

The unholy union of hard-core punk and graphic design may have been inevitable. Any punk band worth its salt is angry, passionate, and alienated yet desperately idealistic—and if you think design is a realm where cooler heads prevail, Google "graphic design manifesto" and see how many cris de coeur you get.

Perhaps the only surprise is that a band like the Baltimore-based trio Double Dagger didn't crop up sooner. Founding members Bruce Willen (bass, backing vocals) and Nolen Strals (vocals) are graphic designers by day and musicians by night; and graphic design, in all its heartbreak and glory, is what they sing about. "We were going to sing about architecture," Willen says. "But since we didn't know that much about it, we picked the next most self-important profession we could think of."

They have coined the term *designcore* to describe their stripped-down art-rock meets hard-core sound. Lyrics explore topics like color correction ("CMYK"), digital design versus analog design ("Command+X Command+V"), unreasonable clients ("You're Getting Paid to Make My Life Harder"), bad computer fonts ("Comic Book Lettering"), and related themes ("Punk Rock vs. Swiss Modernism" and "My Dad Has a Theory That the Internet Is the Roman Coliseum of Our Time"). As one reviewer put it, "You don't have to be a graphic designer to enjoy it, but it definitely helps."

Strong views on design may be the hallmark of the Double Dagger brand—don't get them started on what Future Brand did to Paul Rand's tidy classic UPS logo: much of the resulting conversation will be unprintable—but their critical eye doesn't stop there. "Some record executive comes up with an idea for a band that appeals to the broadest market segment possible," Willen says of the current state of the music industry. "This concept is further watered down by a series of middle-management douche bags and talentless producers until they have a number-one hit on their hands."

Hoping to stay true to their vision, Double Dagger is proceeding in a DIY vein for now—and they're in need of a permanent drummer. Readers with "wicked design chops and pro gear" should go to www.posttypography.com/-doubledagger to contact Bruce or Nolen. —Lara Kristin Lentini

Double Dagger created a poster (foreground), a space, and performed at Millersville University's student chapter of the AIGA. They created this pattern typeface (background) for their Web site. Their poster (bottom) for the 2003 Johns Hopkins Film Festival becomes a Super 8 camera and film canister.