

ArtRock PCL Series



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One of the real sleeper sets in poster collecting has to be the PCL series, published by Phil Cushway and ArtRock. This set and many of the pieces in it is undervalued and is bound to rise. There are only a few known collectors of this material that I am aware of. Recently, I had a chance to sit down and go through most of this set, poster by poster. I was amazed at how many great posters there in this series. And I wondered why they are not more collected.

One reason might be ArtRocks' meteoric rise in the industry, coming from a small store in Ann Arbor, Michigan, moving to San Francisco and over a very short time cornering most of the existing posters of value, in particular the Bill Graham (BG) and Family Dog (FD) stock. Phil Cushway literally came into a market, bought it up, sat on his stash, and, more or less, set the industry price for collectable posters. And that price was upward of what it had been before.

It is easy to have an attitude against whomever is on top of the heap, and until recently, in the poster world, that had to be Phil Cushway and ArtRock. At its height, Cushway had something like a million posters. For god's sake, he has a forklift to move them around!

It is no wonder that his poster output was perhaps somewhat ignored and discounted. But with the advent of Bill Sagan and Wolfgang's vault, ArtRock is no longer king of the hill. It is time to take a look at what Artrock has produced.

An integral part of Artrock's plan and business was the production of posters, both retrospectives and new art. There are something like 238 posters published by ArtRock that I know of, many of them silkscreens and most of them large. And this series is above and beyond whatever ArtRock published with Frank Kozik. As for subject matter and artists, they are all over the place, almost a "Who's Who" of poster artist for that period, names like: Alan Forbes, Alton Kelley, Bob Masse, Hugh Brown, Chris Shaw, Christopher Peterson, Dave Fremont, Gary Grimshaw, John Howard, Troy Alders, Justin Hampton, Lee Conklin, Lynne Porterfield, Mark Arminski, Frank Kozik, Victor Moscoso, Stanley Mouse, Ward Sutton, Randy Tuten, Rick Griffin, Wes Wilson, and Wig, to name some.

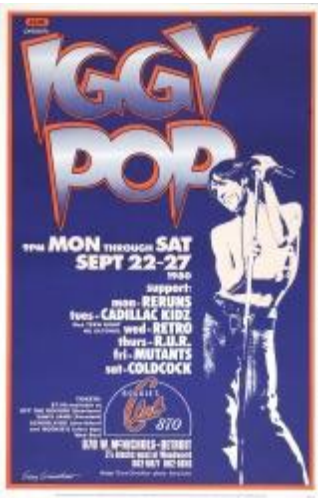
Unlike many poster companies, ArtRock made a real effort to produce signed and numbered editions, so there are perhaps more signed posters than one might normally expect in a series. Like most other large series I have seen, every poster is not a gem, but there are a lot of what we like to call 'classic' posters in this set.



Siouxsie by Victor Moscoso

The first poster in the series is a killer one by Victor Moscoso. This large and gorgeous poster is a beauty, immediately followed by a 2nd Siouxsie poster by Stanley Mouse. Another great poster.

Then there came the stint when Gary Grimshaw was on staff, during which he produced something like 20 or so posters, most but not all tributes to great bands. Here is Grimshaw's Iggy Pop poster for Bookies in Detroit - a classic.



Pop by Gary Grimshaw

Alton Kelley contributed some 11 posters to the series, including this incredible Grateful Dead piece, a large poster.



Grateful Dead by Alton Kelly

There are nine Justin Hampton pieces in the collection, including some of the best work this artist has ever done, including this killer poster for P.J. Harvey.



P.J. Harvey by Justin Hampton

In fact, the Hampton pieces are one of the highlights of this set. And there are some very tasty pieces by Lynne Porterfield and Mark Arminski.

There are more than 60 pieces by artist Alan Forbes, almost all signed and numbered editions, most in small quantities.



The entire PCL series is distinguished by high-quality printing, on good stock, and properly registered. As mentioned, many are signed and numbered, perfect for collectors. I was amazed at how many of these posters are large or above average size.

ArtRocks PCL series is only now starting to catch on with collectors, so each of us has a foot in the door on this low-priced series. Most are still available and at affordable prices. Check out the thumbnails for this series elsewhere on this site and see for yourself.

BGF - The New Fillmore Series

by Michael Erlewine

The original Bill Graham series ended in early July of 1971, with two additional concerts, one in June of 1972 and another in June of 1973. That was the end of the original scene at the Fillmore West. In March of 1988, some 16 years after the original Fillmore series ended, Bill Graham re-established weekly shows at the Fillmore Auditorium. The venue was temporarily closed by the San Francisco earthquake of 1989. After Graham's death in 1991, the building was restored to its present condition, and shows continued. This series, which is verging on 600 posters at this point, has been going ever since. These posters, as were the original BG series, are handed out to patrons at the end of each show. This series is often called the "New Fillmore," or simply the BGF series.

Robert Earl Keen by Christopher Peterson

Today, in late 2004, the BGF series is still going strong, even though Bill Graham Presents was first sold to SFX, and later to Clear Channel. As of this writing, there are more than 622 posters

in this series, making it one of the two longest runs of posters in existence, the other being its companion venue BGP (Bill Graham Presents), boasting more than 325 events. Either of these has outrun any of the classic sets, like the Family Dog and the original BGs.

Kenny Wayne Sheperd by Chris Shaw

For the most part, all of the BGF posters are 13 x 19 inches, and flawlessly printed on good stock. The list of artists would be too long to warrant printing here, but include masters like: Alton Kelley, Amacker Bullwinkle, Chris Shaw, Christopher Peterson, Chuck Sperry, Craig Howell, Frank Wiedemann, Harry Rossit, Jim Phillips, Joel Elrod, John Howard, Jonathan Hess, Randy Tuten, Rex Ray, Ron Donovan, Steven Cerio, Winston Smith, and many,

many others. All of this under the eagle-like aegis of artist and producer Arlene Owseichick.

Shuggie Otis by Scott Idleman

This series can be purchased at WolfgangsVault.com.

There are so many posters in the series and it has been going on for so long that, only recently, have collectors really attempted to assemble a complete collection. At about 1000 posters, this is no small feat. This is a huge number of posters, so many that one person can't even lift them all! The band list alone runs into the many hundreds of names. Paging through them, which I just did, is like taking a trip through modern music history. It took hours too.

The art in these series ranges far and wide, from awesome stop-you-in-your-tracks pieces, to the witty and humorous, the in-your-face, and an ample amount of average pieces. Some lousy pieces too.

There is enough material here to keep an art gallery in rotation virtually forever.

This is, to the best of my knowledge, a complete set of the BGF: New Fillmore posters.

Craig David by Arlene Owseichik

This series may be purchased at WolfgangsVault.com