DRIVE! - full project description

Our love for the mid-to-late 20th century aesthetics remains prevalent to this day. A time of huge technological advancement, self-expression and the arts, and often glamorized for the stylistic phenomena of the time, we seem to constantly experience a sense of nostalgia – authentic or not. Paired with my interest in marketing, specifically the visual aspect, I created 4 different, yet thematically similar posters for *DRIVE!*

My appreciation for the varying looks of the decades from 1970s-00s inspired me to produce posters based around each era, all made with Adobe Photoshop and containing the vehicle motif, despite the obvious visual differences in color, style and typography. It recreates them entirely digitally, compared to the techniques of screen printing, stenciling or other media required during the time; the modern technology at hand makes it easy for us to generate a false image of the past. This reinforces, or contradicts the generalizations and glorification of past eras.

The conventions of this 'genre' of graphic design is also prominent in all 4 posters. A somewhat lazy or hollow message, of a motivational tone, is overlaid onto a symbol of materialism and 'drive' – a car. It pushes an idea of hope, like the 'American Dream' – which, while increasingly obsolete post-WWII, still exists to this day as a societal aim to reach the top. The neat and pleasant appearance of the cars and typefaces and color palettes attempt to present this concept of fulfilling an aspiration are made much less subtle when I place the pieces together, side by side. The cars are also a staple, as they were established inventions by the time, and are consistently reinvented (although still similar) throughout the decades. Obviously, its appearance is made clear by the title, representing the continual strive and hope of humanity.

However, my goal is not to paint a cynical, critical image – at least not entirely – as we collectively already realize the true motives of these propaganda-esque visuals. It calls back to an earlier time, the figurative 'good old days', while acknowledging the problematic aspects, and reflects on how this idea continually persists in the 2020s. I personally do not believe that appreciating, or being inspired by the style of the generations before us is a bad thing. Art, after all, relies on the manifestation of the past, and nostalgia is a powerful tool. It is still imperative to understand the historical context of the time periods, which may help us further appreciate why these forms of art were created in the first place.

I cited all my influences for each individual poster below:

70s
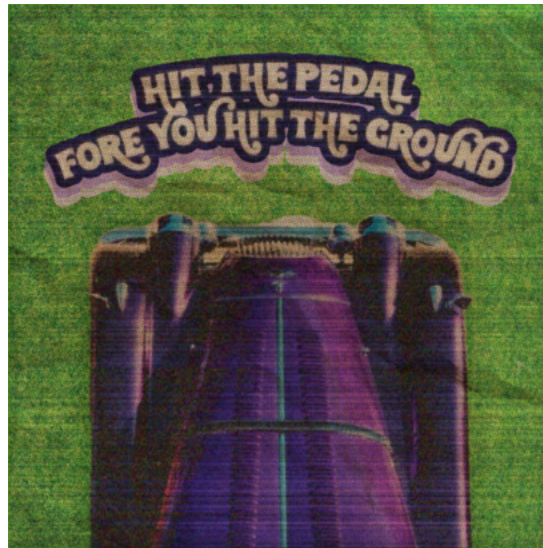
        The era of flashy and bold styles in fashion, decor, and most importantly cars, it also was the time when computerized media was almost at the forefront – but not yet. I was inspired by the psychedelic movement and typefaces – as seen from the font and grain to replicate the printed look, but still rooted in a more traditional, conservative looking backdrop, as the perception of that time period is quite mixed. The kickstart of the culture of self liberation and expression was increasingly exposed, yet it was a minority within a society that was beginning to emerge and progress.

Other inspirations include:
- _Starsky and Hutch_ (1975-79) – the iconic Ford Gran Torino (although not one used in the poster) reminds us of the stylistic focus of the time, and the show was a symbol of hope and entertainment for various countries throughout the 70s.
- Album art of the _Velvet Underground, Fleetwood Mac_ and _the Beach Boys_ – a compositionally simplistic but impactful approach, with a clear focus on a subject and text.
- Ongoing global political change – while known as a time of progressive ideological advancements, the fight for equality, protest against conflict and controversies still permeate the period. The toned down nature of the poster is unlike the results you see when you Google '70s design' – it was not simply a time of cheery harmony in the world, although it was trying to navigate itself to that space in some areas.
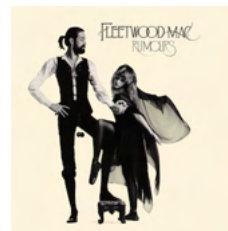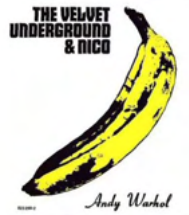
80s

The prevalence of computers skyrocketed around this time, and much of the nostalgia of VHS tapes, retro video games and emergence of colorized graphics are popular in a contemporary age, when this is expected. Perhaps it was the wonder of how foreign computers used to be that we fawn over in this era, influencing our love of 'synthwave' and 'retrowave' today. The icon of the sun and trippy, saturated colors serve as a reminder for the 80s, but a fully black backdrop brings up the seeming regression in the socio-economic landscape, marking a significant contrast to the technological innovations that occurred alongside, and perceived greed within the political spheres at the time.

Other inspirations include:
- Apple's Macintosh desktops – the launch of the original Mac in 1984, followed by several new iterations, captured the rapid evolution of technology, and its symbol of an apple bears huge similarities with the sun icon as well.
- Volkswagen Campervan – while this specific model was released in the 60s, the 80s were a modern revival (as per the 20-year rule / cycle that suggests trends are renewed and recycled every 2 decades). The decade further recontextualized 'hippie' culture, although it was criticized as more capitalistic and materialistic than its predecessors. Hence I added 'just don't fall!' as both wordplay, but also a pessimistic warning, as the countercultural movements of the past integrated to more commercialized and mainstream – as a look as opposed to a lifestyle.
- Nintendo Entertainment System – the console undoubtedly inspires us in the 2020s, with our love for retro gaming and for revolutionizing the home video game console market. The color palette of primarily red hues was based on the console itself, given its world-scale impact on families.

90s

As the Internet became extremely prevalent by the 90s, its style echoed the 70s, with a mix of 'grunge' and bolder, statement appearances. I juxtaposed the vintage car with an added screen print, halftone effect, over a crisp, vibrant background, and the typography was made clear and focal in the composition. By this point, the manifestations of previous occurrences throughout the 20th century were more obvious, since the century was heading to its end: the many period films from *Forrest Gump* (1994) to *Titanic* (1997) and the numerous fashion choices that encompassed more variety.

Other inspirations include:
- Album art of *Lush* and *Galaxie 500* – the color was specifically inspired by *Split* (1994), for its glaring red-blue album cover, and *Today* for its muddy brown cover (although from 1988, Galaxie 500 became more central in the 90s).
- Wong Kar-Wai movies – once again, for its color; the juxtaposing warm and cool colors are present in his cinematography, and the sense of nostalgia brought by the peak of Hong Kong cinema. [*Days of Being Wild* (1990), *Chungking Express* (1994), *Happy Together* (1997)]
- Varying fashion – the pure range of styles are seen in pop culture, such as Clueless – which has a focus on the fashion-centric youth and its revival of older preppy trends; the rise of hip hop with bold, statement and logomaniac looks; the grungy, anti-fashion fashion. This was all mashed together as a result, which made the poster slightly disjointed in a distinct manner.

   As I grew up during this period, the 2000s making a comeback in the 2020s marked as both highly personal and interesting. I find the movies and media more obviously commercial and almost tacky in some areas, just as how my parents did towards the 70s-90s. The digital age was at its verge and the fusion of previous decades continued to increase, so I made sure to include hints of all of the above within this poster: an old campervan, reference to the Fast & Furious franchise, saturated colors with imagery of the 'vintage' look, but of vastly higher quality.

Other inspirations include:
- Pop culture – The movies of the time period are encapsulated, especially with classics such as *Mean Girls* (2004), *Legally Blonde* (2001), referenced with the pink tones, and the rise of Wes Anderson, in regards to its overall color use.
- New wave of conservatism & the old – with the socio-economic challenges in the late 00s, a shift to the past emerged, so the rose-colored lens over the composition mirrors the reminiscence of society, as well as the minimalism as a result of the economic downfalls.
- Album art of *The Crash* and *Harlem* – *Melodrama* (2003) and *Hippies* (2010), at both ends of the decade, utilize different approaches to a minimalistic visual design. The plain but poised text with a blue background for the former, and a more messy, spontaneous look of the latter, are combined to echo the movements of the previous decades, just as how the poster echoes the other 3 (stylistic font, van, colors).