



# Steinweiss: The Inventor of the Modern Album Cover

By Kevin Reagan, Steven Heller

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**Steinweiss: The Inventor of the Modern Album Cover** By Kevin Reagan, Steven Heller

## Music for the eyes: The inventor of album art

*“I love music so much and I had such ambition that I was willing to go way beyond what the hell they paid me for. I wanted people to look at the artwork and hear the music.” —Alex Steinweiss*

Alex Steinweiss (1917–2011) invented the album cover as we know it. In 1940, as **Columbia Records’** young new art director, he pitched an idea: Why not replace the standard plain brown wrapper with an eye-catching illustration? The company took a chance, and **within months its record sales increased by over 800 per cent.**

Over the next three decades, **Steinweiss made thousands of original artworks for classical, jazz, and popular record covers for Columbia, Decca, London, and Everest;** as well as logos, labels, advertising material, even his own typeface, the Steinweiss Scrawl. His daring designs, gathered here in all their bright combinations of bold typography with modern, elegant illustration, revolutionized the way music was sold.

The book includes **Steinweiss’ personal recollections and ephemera from an epic career,** as well as insightful essays by three-time Grammy Award-winning art director/designer **Kevin Reagan** and graphic design historian **Steven Heller.**

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#### **Review**

"I love music so much and I had such ambition that I was willing to go way beyond what the hell they paid me for. I wanted people to look at the artwork and hear the music." - Alex Steinweiss

#### **About the Author**

The father of record design is Alex Steinweiss, who in 1940, at the age of 23, single-handedly invented the album cover. He made thousands of classical, jazz, and pop covers for Columbia, London, Decca, and Everest and his modern designs graced the packaging, logos, and covers of dozens of distilleries, film studios, and magazines; earning him an AIGA Medal and the Art Directors Hall of Fame lifetime achievement award.

Kevin Reagan is a triple Grammy Award-winning art director, also honored by the AIGA, Print, and Communication Arts. As former art director of Geffen, MCA, and Maverick, he designed packages for Madonna, Beck, Sonic Youth and many others. He lives in Los Angeles.

Steven Heller is the co-chair of the School of Visual Arts MFA Designer as Author Program. For 33 years he was an art director for The New York Times, and currently writes the "Visuals" column for The New York Times Book Review. He is the author of 120 books on graphic design, illustration, and satiric art.

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