

Visual Revisions: Sweet Charity Group's 1980 – 1984 Album Covers

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ABSTRACT

An album can be evaluated using a variety of different approaches. Making record covers with artwork that is visually appealing and captivating is an approach that has shown to be incredibly effective. As a consequence of this, the purpose of this study is to analyze the influence that visual modifications have had on the album cover of Sweet Charity Group. During the course of this research, a comparative methodology was applied to investigate the album covers of five different albums: Pelarian (1980), Sejuta Wajah (1981), Penunggu (1982), Batu (1983), and Koleksi Sweet Charity (1984). An examination of record covers was carried out in order to ascertain the visual approach that architects and designers most frequently employ. Without a shadow of a doubt, the subfield of visual arts has seen substantial transformations, particularly with regard to the influence of visual components. Visual components will be used to evaluate and judge the outcomes of the chats as well as the results. Ultimately, the researchers came to the conclusion that photography, color, and typography are three essential elements that have the potential to impact the design of album covers.

Keywords: Album Cover, Visual Revisions, Photography, Color, Typography.



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1 INTRODUCTION

The emergence of rock music in the mid-1980s had a favorable impact and began to acquire popularity in Malaysia with the release of Sweet Charity's first album in the early 1980s. An album cover denotes a compilation of songs that have been recorded by an artist or band without any original composition or alteration of the music. Album covers have various functions in the realm of musical composition. The album cover serves as both a protective layer for the content and a visual representation for marketing purposes, attracting viewers and promoting the product. Producers must meticulously assess the present circumstances, particularly in the realm of music art, as it serves as a wellspring of inspiration for album cover designers.

Album covers have a significant impact on client attraction and purchasing choices. Visually captivating album covers function as a potent means of communication among the publisher, the artist, and their customers. Salziana Ibrahim (2020) argues that record covers are highly effective in communicating content to society. Designers adeptly create these covers to ensure the audience can

readily comprehend the content and see visual imagery that functions as packaging for products such as phonograph records, cassette tapes, or compact discs. The album cover is an exceptional work of art, featuring a meticulous graphic design and deliberate selection of visuals that successfully communicate a specific and all-encompassing message. Photography is a universally understood mode of communication, encompassing numerous variations and countless artistic approaches. Photographic methods in visual creation can effectively communicate information, evoke emotions, provide documentation, and showcase beauty. Norhaslinda (2018) argues that photography possesses an omnipresent, worldwide, and long-lasting influence.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Record albums have been around since the 1920s, when album covers were made to look like picture albums. In 1938, Columbia Records hired Alex Steinweiss as their art director. Steinweiss became famous for coming up with new ideas for record covers. Eventually, "album" came to mean a 12" LP record that was played at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM. By the 1950s, this style for albums was the standard that most people used. By taking this method, artists could show how they felt and what they were thinking through both music and art. In the 1960s, the music business grew a lot, giving artists the chance to show who they were through both their album covers and their songs. Psychedelia came on the scene in the middle of the 1960s, and albums like *"The Psychedelic Sounds of the 13th Floor Elevators"* by the Zombies, *"Odessey and Oracle"* by the Beatles, and *"Sgt. Peppers"* by the Beatles were very complicated. Beginning in the late 1980s, artists like The Smiths started to find their own style by using photos on the covers of their albums. (Evans, 2010).

Malay recordings from the 1980s are decorated with names such as P. Ramlee. The album cover design is distinctive, including a classic aesthetic and a crisp visual presentation. The album cover draws significant inspiration from album covers originating in western countries, while also incorporating distinct elements that reflect a definite Malay aesthetic. Analysis of trends from the 1980s reveals that photography is the predominant medium used for record covers. Thus, the artist's music style and genre are strengthened by the careful consideration of the shooting composition and the selection of suitable clothing colours. While the album cover may be seen as a form of packaging, it successfully communicates the atmosphere and idea of the artist's music to a certain target demographic. It is a form of artistic representation that differentiates one category of music from another, while simultaneously showcasing the individuality and distinctive style of the artist or musician. Hence, the album cover ought to be seen as a visual depiction of photography. Even now, several individuals still highly regard album covers as cherished artifacts, not just for their emotional significance but also for enhancing the enjoyment of listening to music.

A cover album might create a favourable impression by arousing curiosity and wanting to go more into the product. The pictures displayed on album covers exhibit a wide range of forms and techniques. The artistic appeal of many forms of creative contribution, such as photography, graphic design, illustration, typography, or the combination of images and words, enhances its charm as an art. The design approach of the album cover is contingent upon the production variables of the album and the designer's proficiency in properly conveying their ideas for approval. (Mustapha, 2017).

Individuals evaluated a man's worth by assessing the dimensions of his record shelf, the calibre of his collection, and the level of meticulousness he exhibited in maintaining it. The acquisition and exhibition of a vinyl record or album cover provided insight into the proprietor's identity. The individual's choice of sleeves indicated their affinity for either the Stones or Beatles, their preference for listening to Dylan or Donovan, their admiration for Elvis or Cliff in the rockabilly genre, and their inclination towards Pink Floyd or Doors in the stoner genre. The album cover holds immense cultural and historical significance. The band's global record sales propelled the artwork to achieve worldwide recognition as a symbol for the band and its music. (Evans, 2010).

3 METHODOLOGY

By utilizing a suitable research approach, the researcher can systematically and efficiently acquire all the essential information, streamlining and improving the analytical process. Despite the availability of alternative research methods, the researcher has opted to utilize comparative studies in order to determine the pattern of visual revision in Sweet Charity Group's album cover from 1980 to 1984. The comparative studies research approach begins with the researcher completing structured observations and questionnaires and concludes with semi-structured interviews.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Structure Observations

The primary objective of this study is to identify patterns and aesthetics in the album covers of Sweet Charity Group between the years 1980 and 1984. The examination and study of the structure were carried out with a specific focus on the use of images in five album covers: *Pelarian* (1980), *Sejuta Wajah* (1981), *Penunggu* (1982), *Batu* (1983), and *Koleksi Sweet Charity* (1984).

4.2 Questionnaires

Table 1 shows that 44 individuals completed the initial questionnaire. Students enrolled in the Photography and Creative Imaging program were provided with a questionnaire to get initial input on the album cover of the Sweet Charity Group from the years 1980 to 1984. 88.64% of individuals are aware of the Sweet Charity album cover, while 11.36% refuse or disavow it. Nevertheless, a majority of 79.55% express satisfaction with the album cover of Sweet Charity, while a minority of 20.45% report feeling unsatisfied. Out of the 44 respondents, 41, or 93.18%, agreed that photographs have a significant impact on album covers, while 6.82% disagreed. Photographs have been shown to play a significant role in the formation of album covers.

Table 1 The proportion of 44 Photography and Creative Imaging students who participated in a questionnaire to gather preliminary feedback on the Sweet Charity album cover

Questionnaire	Yes	No
Are you aware of the Sweet Charity album?	88.64%	11.36%
Are you satisfied with the selection of photographs used in the Sweet Charity album?	79.55%	20.45%
Do you believe that photographs have a significant influence on album cover?	93.18%	6.82%

4.3 Semi-Structure Interviews

In this research, a semi-structured interview was conducted with Mr. Mustafa Ahmad @ Tapa, a Malaysian album cover designer. This approach aims to collect valuable data regarding the alterations made to the album cover photographs of the Sweet Charity Group. The focus is specifically on five album covers: *Pelarian* (1980), *Sejuta Wajah* (1981), *Penunggu* (1982), *Batu* (1983), and *Koleksi Sweet Charity* (1984). The semi-structured interviews had a duration of around 1 hour. Both organized and unstructured interviews are components of the semi-structured interview process. The researcher prepared a list of questions to ask during the interview session. The researcher posed supplementary inquiries during the interview session to get further information.

5 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Research Analysis

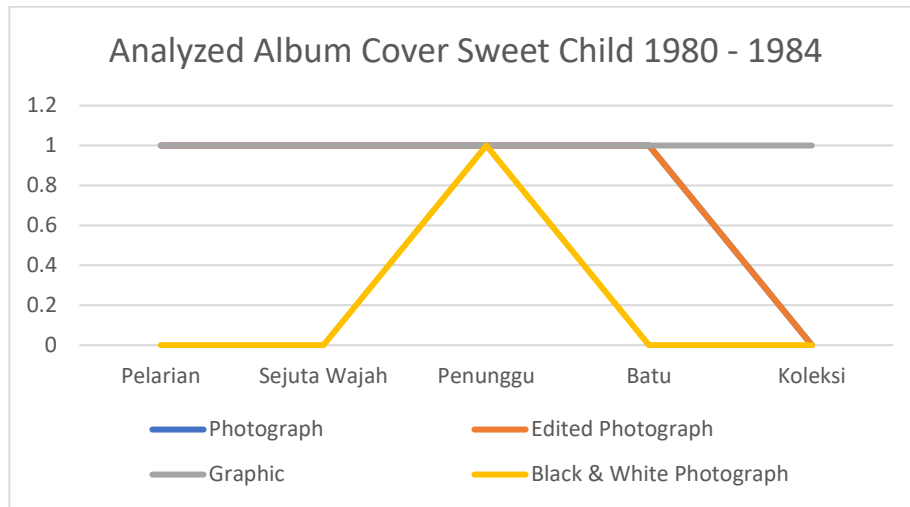


Figure 1 Analysis on album cover of Sweet Charity in year 1980 – 1984 to assemble element implement on the album cover

Based on the analysis in Figure 1, the researcher concluded that changes in the album cover are due to the change in the year and the acceptance of fans in terms of different social years. Social change is based on a specific year; it's essential to consider significant movements and shifts in societal norms and values during that time period. For example, consider the research on Visual Revisions: Sweet Charity Group's 1980–1984 Album Covers.

5.2 Result

Table 2 The compilation of album cover Sweet Charity in year 1980 – 1984

				
Album Pelarian, 1980	Album Sejuta Wajah, 1981	Album Penunggu, 1982	Album Batu, 1983	Album Koleksi, 1984

The band Sweet Charity produced the albums *Pelarian* (1980) and *Sejuta Wajah* (1981), as depicted in Table 2. The analysis of the *Pelarian* and *Sejuta Wajah* album covers demonstrates that the predominant element is photography, specifically highlighting the visual representation of the members of the musical ensemble. The comprehensive portrayal of promotional images, showcasing the members of the band, has rapidly gained widespread recognition, and has become a symbol of the lasting impact of Sweet Charity. The cover has sparked several adaptations and tributes and remains an enduring symbol of the band's impact and cultural importance. Nevertheless, the musical group Sweet Charity employed the technique of portrait photography for their album covers *Penunggu* and *Batu*, released in 1982 and 1983 respectively, as depicted in Figure 2. The study concluded that the Sweet Charity album covers of *Penunggu*, 1982, and *Batu*, 1983, utilize portrait photography for three specific objectives. Firstly, for establishing a personal relationship. Portrait photography enables artists to establish a personal connection with their audience by prominently featuring their image on the album cover. This can facilitate fans in establishing a more profound bond with the music and the artist's

persona. Furthermore, in terms of visual depiction, Portraits have the ability to graphically depict the themes, feelings, and message communicated via the music. The expression, posture, and setting of the photograph can offer contextual information and provide a deeper understanding of the mood conveyed in the album. The third aspect pertains to the manifestation of artistic creativity. Portrait photography offers artists a platform to creatively express themselves.

Photographers can be engaged to collaborate in order to capture the desired artistic vision and effectively communicate the individual's individuality through visually captivating means. Portrait photography for cover albums is a diverse and impactful choice that enables musicians to develop their brand, connect with their audience, and express themselves creatively. Ultimately, the album covers of *Koleksi* 1984 exclusively emphasize the utilization of visual imagery. Graphic design involves the integration of multiple effects that can lead to a diverse range of visual appearances. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the problem of arranging variables in order to improve the control of visual elements when utilized in a composition. The visual composer includes various visual elements, including color, direction, size, proximity, and form.

6 CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of visual alterations on the album cover of Sweet Charity Group during the period from 1980 to 1984. According to the study's data analysis, conclusions, and discussion, it is indisputable that photography serves the central role on the album cover. It is well acknowledged that compelling images has the ability to attract attention, arouse the curiosity of potential listeners, and motivate them to explore the music further. A compelling photograph can function as a powerful marketing instrument, captivating individuals and stimulating curiosity in the album.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest declared for this paper.

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