

**m** ARTYN Lambert defines his job as a freelance graphic designer: "My work ranges from doing crappy little

logos through record sleeves to 32-page magazines from cover to cover. But I enjoy doing record sleeves the most."

Martyn has been working for 18 months and living in London for about a year. Prior to that he attended Bradford Art College where he did a degree in illustration. "Basically that was a waste of time," he reflects. "Like, the environment's good - three years doing not much at all, having a good time - but once you leave college it's like starting from scratch, finding out what the world of art's all about. The college I went to didn't teach you anything about magazine work, it was all geared towards advertising agencies and things."

Initially Martyn wanted to go into animation, and he actually learnt how to produce three minute films from start to finish. Then he decided he would rather

make a living out of straight illustration and set off for London to canvas record companies, magazines and book publishers. He got his first break through the *New Musical Express*: "I thought a lot of the illustration in the *NME* was really shit, so I just did a load of things on spec and took them in..." Then came a cartoon strip for *Flexipop*, a calendar, and then record sleeves for Rough Trade.

Now he has four regular sources of employment: Rough Trade, for whom he mainly does sleeve design, catalogues and advertisements; Y Records, doing all their advertisements and posters; also Statik Records, and various magazines and poster mags, the latest being the David Bowie pull-out poster mag.

Martyn doesn't object to what he considers the boring aspects of the job, such as letterheads, logos and advertisements. Rather, he sees it as subsidising the more enjoyable side of his career - actually designing something for a specific band. He's noticed, however, that although he got pretty

much of a free hand in the beginning when designing record sleeves, nowadays the artists seem to be demanding more and more. But this doesn't bother him to a great extent: "It's nice to sit down with a blank page - but then again what you're designing has to fit in with the mood of the band or artist. For instance, the Sun Ra album which I've just designed. He's a pretty cosmic guy you know, claims he comes from Mars and all that, so you're kind of limited, you're presented with a pretty clear idea of what a Sun Ra album should look like."

Martyn says his designs are fairly derivative: "Everyone gets their influences from somewhere. I used to be really into Dada and Cubism, and Performance Art, which I did at college, so I use that to a certain extent in my designs. I mean, everything's derivative of something. Show me any art cover and I'll tell you that to some degree it's been taken from so-and-so. No-one can come up with a completely fresh idea,

it's just not possible. Like music..."

Martyn is well aware of the constant need to change so that the designs don't become stale. He is already moving away from the rather complex Cubist designs of last year, typified on the Positive Noise single and album sleeves, but it's like he says: "When I applied for NGA membership the guy said 'look, there's virtually no freelance graphic designers over the age of 35-40, because you just run out of ideas'. I suppose that'll happen to me one day."

Looking on the bright side, however, there are still a lot of outlets and sources of inspiration Martyn has yet to explore. He's going to New York shortly to see what's happening over there independent-wise: "New York's choc-a-block full of designers," he surmises. "But there's so much shit coming from there, it's just a matter of confidence to get in and get your work across." Confidence is one thing Martyn Lambert is certainly not lacking.



## MARTYN LAMBERT

Martyn Lambert: left, from top to bottom - design for a compilation album, School of Dance; sleeve for Lora Logic album; inner sleeve for Shriekback album, Care.

