

Before the Roars

Solutions

Designing for bands is one main reason many graphic designers get into the industry. When the opportunity to create debut album artwork for exciting Cardiff punks Solutions, naturally I jumped at the opportunity!

The album revolves around a fictional character; a self appointed superhero and all round 'good guy' who always seems to have his good deeds thrown back in his face. The artwork needed to depict the character as a punk kid in skinny jeans and daps, with a 'Batman and Robin-esque' mask and ripped cape. He would be centre-stage, head in hands and surrounded by the hustle-bustle of city life carrying on around him.

With this strong art direction from Nicky (guitar, lead vocals and songwriter), and a clear style to emulate based one of my previous illustrations [1] (Becoming the Bull), I worked up a quick sketch [2] and got cracking.



I found the skinniest punk I knew (thanks Ethan...), took some photographs of him in the pose I'd discussed with the band and began to work up a detailed vector illustration [3] – adding in the ripped cape, hairstyle and mask using artistic licence as I went along!



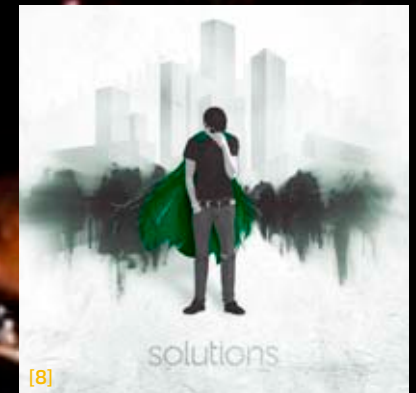
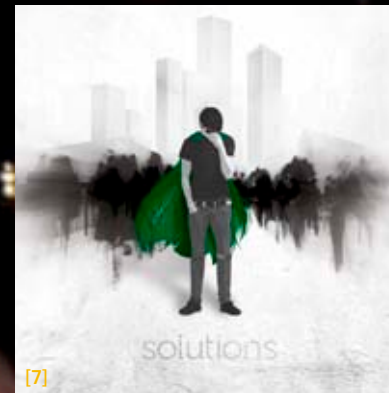
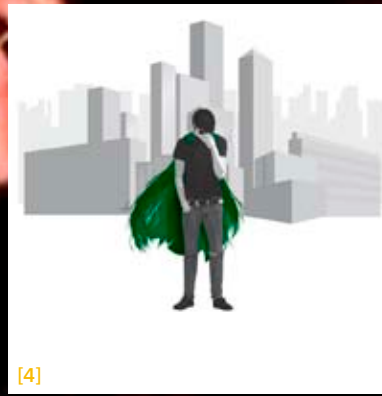
[3]

I then created some basic cityscape graphics for the background and imported these into Photoshop along with the vector character [4].

To create the feeling of the character being in the scene but a million miles away at the same time, we wanted to show or imply a crowd of people moving around him. I purchased a suitable stock photograph and, blending several copies, placed it behind the hero [5].

Adding my own texture photography and using masks to blend the cityscape into the background, the artwork started to really take shape [6]. I then manipulated the crowd scene to give more movement and carefully blended it out to the background at the edges, before adding the band name in a customised but very simple typeface at the bottom of the page [7].

I added a green hue to the background which tied the elements together and with a few more tweaks the artwork was completed and approved [8].





With the album initially only being released digitally I felt it was important to ensure that the artwork would work at quite small sizes so it would be clear on an iPod (other MP3 players are available...). The band were really pleased with the final result [9] and full sleeve design was then produced in print for the CD release in January 2010.

"Honestly, this is pretty much exactly how I always imagined the cover to be, ever since I penned the words to [Solutions song] Mary Anne in fact... to say I'm stoked would be the understatement of the year... I'm over the moon. It's brilliant."

NICKY WILLIAMS, FRONT-MAN AND SONGWRITER, SOLUTIONS



[9]