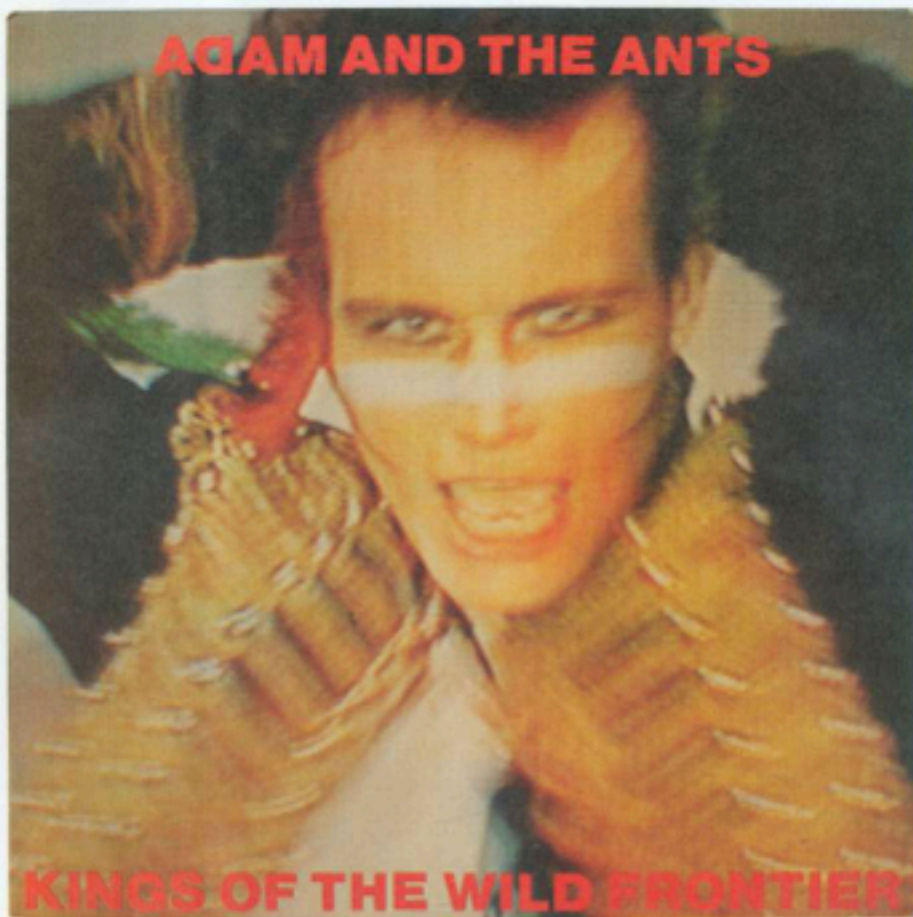


The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard



Adam and the Ants *Kings of the Wild Frontier* Epic 1983

Design by Jules and Adam Ant
Sometimes an image hits you with such force that the point of collision continues to reverberate across decades. It changes something about you, about how you think about who you are and who you might want to be. For both of us, in 1980, that image was Adam Ant frozen in a split-second video frame on the sleeve of *Kings of the Wild Frontier*. The album was one of the first records we each owned. Caught in a wicket, mid-dance move, jacket swinging and mouth wide open, this image and its saturated interlaced video buzz spoke to two seven-year-olds at opposite sides of the country. It spoke of the here-and-now, and of potential. And it proved something that we had secretly begun to suspect: that this stuff matters. That within a few short years we would define our identities and even choose our friends, like millions

of teenagers before us, through the tenets of music.

The visual plane always determines how we each receive and process an image. But *Kings of the Wild Frontier* somehow seems to defy being read as a two-dimensional image. It's not even a portrait. It's a performance, static but alive with the noise of video. Before MTV and before Adam became a Dandy Highwayman or a Prince Charming, that sleeve gave us our first connection with a mediated world – the hyperreal modern world inside the TV and inside our own heads. Music video was to become the unwitting framework for our daydreams. Fast forward a few years and the sleeve for *Your Funeral... My Trial* (1986) by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds updated this RGB visitation of Adam: Cave staring out to two teenagers through the now familiar video hum spoke of a new, more interesting potential.

It's almost 30 years since we last smeared a toothpaste-stripe across our

faces, but we still own the LP and it still gets a spin from time to time. Great music, and in fact some pretty bad music too, is forever tied to the moment it first gets to you; like a bookmark anchored to a specific place, person or circumstance, music is time travel. A few simple Burundi-inspired beats are all it takes to derail the conscious mind and the past comes flooding into the present. Leave the record playing and you can rest assured that you're only moments away from Spangles, Spectrum computers, Legs & Co and Captain Caveman. But the album sleeve triggers something different. Even though we now view it through a nostalgic haze – the frozen, jagged mesh of the surface now signalling VHS videotape and comes television screens – it's just as magnetic, and now we're able to see and read the surface.

As artists and video makers, we're excited about surface. We're always looking to disrupt how we read and experience the here-and-now. We're into the ways in which

visual languages can override reality and warp perception; whether borrowing the aesthetic of urban music videos to rework Vito Acconci's early video art with rapper Flax B, or recreating *The Crosses At Nogo* videotape through pointless and elaborate re-enactments and endless re-duping of the tape to achieve the same deterioration of surface.

Our work is constantly acting and re-acting – the present tense becoming a double-exposure of then and now. We couldn't know it back in the early 80s clutching that record sleeve, but this kaleidoscopic hallucination induced by the image's surface started a trip we're still on. □ Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard are visual artists and film makers. Their *Silent Sound* performance featuring Jason Pierce is at AV Festival this month; see *Out There*. The next three in their series of short films about Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds are included on the re-issues of *Tender Prey*, *The Good Son* and *Henry's Dream*, out this month on Mute