

Student Name: Morgan Roberts

Student Number: 2404052

Programme of Study: Graphic Design

Module: ADDA4022/C Ways of Thinking

Tasks in the order I received them:

Task 1: Semiotic Analysis = 525 words

Task 2: Manifesto Writing = 475 words

Task 3: Practice-Based Writing = 556 words

For this assessment, I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to support me in structuring my submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to create text for my submission. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI for creative materials, such as images.

Task 1 – Semiotic Analysis

Semiotics is a term that has many different definitions, with various thinkers having contributed significantly to our understanding of the subject. One of these key thinkers is John Berger, who described semiotics as being the “relation between things and ourselves.” (Berger, 1972, p. 9). One other definition of semiotics is where “we make meanings through our creation and interpretation of signs”. (Chandler, 2007, p. 13). Using semiotic models of thought, I aim to decode this album cover and explain the reasons behind many aspects of its design.

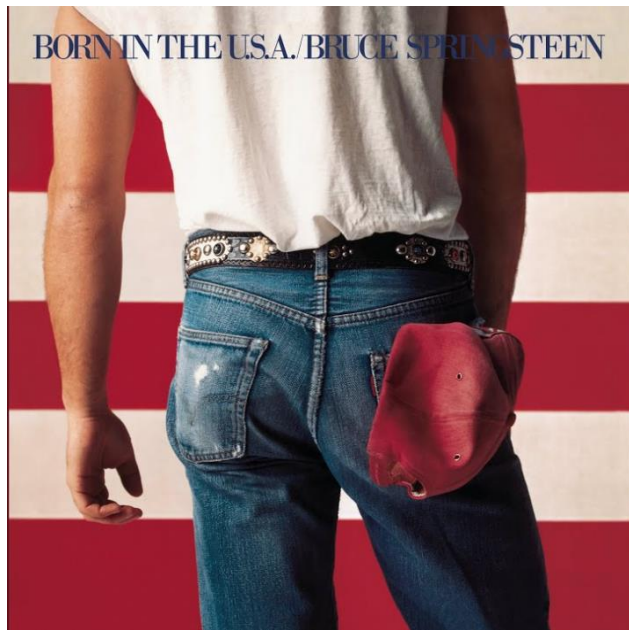


Fig 1, (Springsteen, 1984, *Born in the U.S.A. Album Cover*)

Born In the U.S.A. is an album released by the American musician Bruce Springsteen in 1984. The album cover features a behind shot of Springsteen in front of a red and white

striped background. The cover photo was taken by Annie Leibovitz, with the design work being done by Andrea Klein.

The design features the anchorage text “Born in the U.S.A./Bruce Springsteen”, giving the viewer an immediate understanding of what to expect. As stated by Barthes, “I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me.” (Barthes, 1973, p. 38). Simply, Springsteen, being one of the world’s most established musicians at this time, can use his name alone as a marketing symbol, which can draw increased attention to the album.

When we consider the rest of the design alongside the anchorage text, there are many other signs that play into the themes associated with the U.S.A.

Firstly, Springsteen is wearing a pair of Levi’s jeans, which were originally designed as a durable workwear item, and are a symbol of blue-collar workers and connect Springsteen to the working class, as well as reminding us of Springsteen’s reputation as the voice for everyday Americans. This theme is continued with the use of the red baseball cap, another item worn by workers, which further emphasises Springsteen as being someone the everyday American citizen can relate to.

We can also decode the photograph that features in the design. At first glance, it features Springsteen on a backdrop of the American flag, creating a sense of patriotism, especially when paired with the anchorage text, “Born in the U.S.A.” Additionally, when we consider Springsteen’s outfit collectively – blue jeans and a white t-shirt, we see an outfit linked to American cinema, to icons such as James Dean – who are often used to perpetuate the myth of the American dream. However, on the other hand, Springsteen has his back turned

to the viewer, which alongside the baseball cap being in his pocket instead of being worn, hints at defiance and a rejection of the patriotism the cover exudes at first glance.

Ultimately, Springsteen makes use of iconic American imagery to simultaneously praise and denounce the American dream. At first glance, Springsteen is clad in an iconic American outfit of blue jeans and a white t-shirt. This, paired with the American flag in the background create a strong sense of patriotism. Upon deeper consideration however, the cover aims to both align Springsteen with blue-collar workers while also acting as criticism of the sometimes-unjust patriotism shown by Americans, in addition to highlighting the feelings of those questioning what it really means to be *Born in the U.S.A.*

Bibliography:

American Songwriter & Alex Hopper (2023) *The Story Behind Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the U.S.A' Album Cover.* Available at <https://americansongwriter.com/the-story-behind-bruce-springsteens-born-in-the-u-s-a-album-cover/> (Accessed: 5 November 2024)

Barthes, R. (1973) *Le Plaisir de Texte*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Berger, J. (1972) *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation.

Chandler, D. (2007) *Semiotics: The Basics*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Rolling Stone Magazine & Kurt Loder (1984) *The Rolling Stone Interview: Bruce Springsteen on 'Born in the U.S.A.'* Available at <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/the-rolling-stone-interview-bruce-springsteen-on-born-in-the-u-s-a-184690/> (Accessed: 5 November 2024)

List of Figures:

Figure One: Springsteen, B. (1984) *Born in the U.S.A. Album Cover*. Available at: <https://americansongwriter.com/the-story-behind-bruce-springsteens-born-in-the-u-s-a-album-cover/> (Accessed: 5 November 2024)

1. Let Creativity Run Free
2. Fight Against Ignorance in All its Forms
3. Believe in Love
4. Without People, You're Nothing
5. Banks help us survive; the arts keep us alive
6. Find Inspiration in Everything
7. No Regrets, We Live, and We Learn
8. Honesty is The Best Policy

1. Fight Against Ignorance in All its Forms

Unfortunately, in the modern world, ignorance seems to be more prevalent than ever.

Large news companies are pushing their own agendas, and at times, it's difficult to know what to believe, and what not to believe. With conflicts going on in Gaza, Ukraine and in many other parts of the world, it's important to be on the right side of history, and to be educated on what is happening. It's vital that people don't remain silent, and that we speak up about injustices, against hatred and that we stand up for what is right. Nobody deserves to suffer, and it is important that we educate ourselves in world events, and on what is going on around us. If we all do this, we can move forward into a world without ignorance, a world where we are all one. At the end of the day, we are all human beings – and we should

all care for each other, regardless of political allegiances. “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance.” (Luther King Jr., 1973)



Fig 1, (Bernot, 2017, *Mexico City Protest Against Hate*)

2. Without People, You're Nothing

A quote from Joe Strummer, one that is all encompassing and reminds us that we are not alone in this world. The people in your life – your friends and family should mean more to you than any material object ever could - “Good relationships keep us healthier and happier. Period. (Waldinger and Schulz, 2022, p.18).

It also applies to politics and capitalism – all these corrupt politicians and corporations would have no power over anyone, if not for all of us giving them our money. Joe is a massive inspiration to me, both as a creative and as a human being and is someone who saw right to the heart of any situation. In 4 words, this quote reminds us that those around

us are the ones that truly matter, as well as reminding us that we, the everyday people, have more power than we think.

"WITHOUT PEOPLE,
YOU'RE NOTHING."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Strummer". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Fig 2, (Joe Strummer, 2019, *Without People, You're Nothing*.)

3. Believe in Love

A life filled with love is what I would call a successful life. Love is literally vital to the continuation of humanity – if it wasn't for love, I wouldn't have been born, and you wouldn't be reading this right now. People write songs about love; people make movies about love – it's something that's all around us. In life, you should strive to find love – to surround yourselves with those that you love, whether it be your family, your husband or your wife, your children or your friends. Life is always better when we share it with others. You should strive to love what you do, to live a life filled with purpose, to live a life that makes you happy. "Love is more a decision, and a decision that we have to keep making." (Bottley, 2023, p. 38)

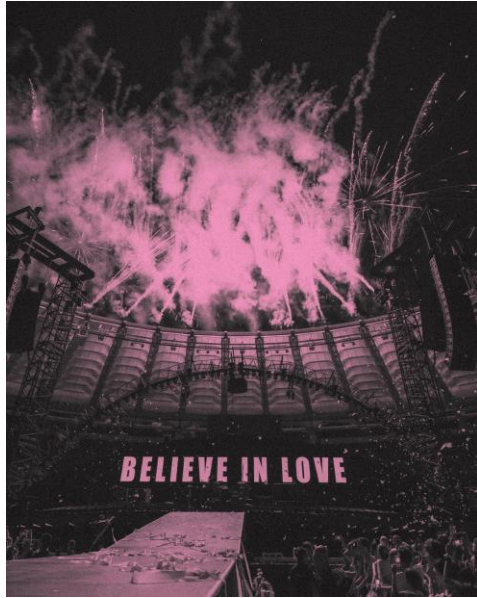


Fig 3, (Coldplay, 2024, *Believe in Love*).

Bibliography:

Bottley, K. (2023) *Have A Little Faith: Life Lessons on Love, Death and How Lasagne Always Helps*. London. Penguin Life.

Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten (2007) Directed by Temple, J. Available at: Apple TV (Accessed 08 November 2024)

King, M. L., Jr. (1963) *Strength to Love*. San Francisco. Harper and Row.

Waldinger, R. and Schulz, M. (2023) *The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Study on Happiness*. London. Rider Publishing.

List of Figures:

Figure One: Bernot, J. (2017) Mexico City Protest Against Hate. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/photos/grayscale-photo-of-people-in-the-rally-F16YG4WLlvk> (Accessed: 05 December 2024)

Figure Two: @JoeStrummer (2019) "Without people, you're nothing." JS [Instagram], May 7. Available from: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BxLCmj3APEi/?hl=en> [Accessed 03 December 2024]

Figure Three: @Coldplay (2024) *Show #146, Rome* [Instagram], July 17. Available from: https://www.instagram.com/coldplay/p/C9huuldomDU/?hl=en-gb&img_index=1 [Accessed 03 December 2024]

Task 3 – Reflective Writing



Fig 1, (*People Watching Tour*, Morgan Roberts, 2024)

The piece of work I will be writing about is a poster created by myself as a personal project after Sam Fender announced his UK tour for December 2024. As a lover of music, I often

find myself merging this love with my passion for design, and this piece was no different, especially seeing as I managed to get tickets for one of the shows.

Before starting the poster, I knew that I wanted to take inspiration from the album artwork for Sam Fender's new album – People Watching. The artwork for the single features a black and white image, on a white background with the text being in black. Immediately, I realised this would be an interesting design to create as we often use colour to highlight certain information in a design, however, without colour, your focus must shift to hierarchy, layout and other fundamentals of graphic design.

“The grid represents the basic structure of our graphic design, it helps to organize the content, it provides consistency” (Vignelli, 2010, p. 40). There was lots of information I needed to include on this design – such as a heading, tour dates and other text. I felt like a grid was an effective method for helping me to include all this information in a legible manner, with this belief being strengthened, with Drew De Soto stating, “a grid is what holds everything together.” (De Soto, 2011, p. 61.). When you've got lots of information you need to include on a graphic, you must ensure that the viewers eyes flow through the design in the desired way. This is why the grid is used – as you can see in my design, each element is allowed to breathe while still being connected to one another.

Since I created this piece recently, I haven't had much time to thoroughly reflect on it, but after doing so, I am rather proud of how I managed to incorporate all the information into the design without relying on the use of colour to make certain aspects stand out. Steve Jobs said that “design is not just what it looks and feels like. Design is how it works” (Jobs,

2003, p. 78). Which is something I had in mind when structuring this piece – it's all good if a design looks 'cool' but it's important that it functions, especially when it comes to something like a tour poster; they must be an effective advertisement for the musician.

However, on the other hand, perhaps the composition of the design is a little too simple.

The only piece of text that has a slight variation to it, is the indentation of "Tour 2024", which was right aligned rather than being left aligned like the other title text. Additionally, I could have been more experimental with the container for the image. I simply used a rectangle, when there may have been more interesting ways to do this, such as creating a custom shape in Adobe Illustrator to house the photo. Despite that, it could also be said that I succeeded in achieving a clean, effective design, with Don Norman stating that "good designs fit our needs so well that the design is invisible" (Norman, 2013, p. 11). I feel that my design matched the style of the album artwork, as well as displaying the required information in an easy-to-understand way.

Bibliography:

De Soto, D. (2011) *Know Your Onions: Graphic Design*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.
Jobs, S. (2003) 'The Guts of a New Machine', *The New York Times*, 30 November, p. 78.
Norman, D. (2013) *The Design of Everyday Things: Revised and Expanded Edition*. New York: Basic Books.
Vignelli, M. (2010) *The Vignelli Canon*. Baden: Lars Müller Publishers.

List of Figures:

Figure One: *People Watching Tour* (Morgan Roberts, 2024).