

Case Study

#1

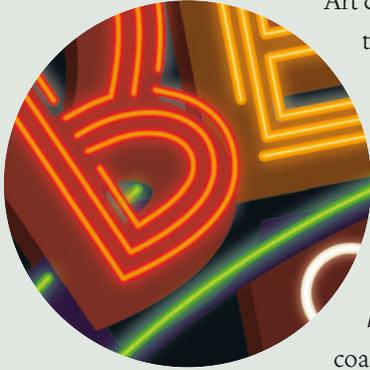
MICHAEL DORET:

SIGN *of the* TIMES

an Excerpt from
ADOBE MASTER CLASS:
ILLUSTRATOR ILLUMINATED

by
Barbara Obermeyer & Ted Padova

The Project



Art director Lane Wurster, for Mammoth Records, was familiar with Doret's work and thought he would be perfect for the job of creating CD packaging for the Squirrel Nut Zippers, a band who performs swing music. Doret, in turn, was a fan of the band and their previous CD covers, all of which sport a vintage look and feel. The art director gave Doret a few guidelines. He wanted a roadside neon sign look—like those advertising roadhouses, honky-tonk bars, or old motels from the 40s and 50s. In fact, there would be an animated component to the illustration—an animation on the enhanced CD and a *lenticular* (picture with plastic coating that gives the effect of motion) special edition CD package. He also wanted the package to be highly typographic. Vintage and typographic? Two words that warm Doret's creative heart.



“Adobe Illustrator is the perfect program for me to achieve what I visualize in my head. The one addition I want is the ability to secure native Illustrator files with password-protection permissions.”

—MICHAEL DORET

The Steps

Step 1: Exploring concepts. Doret's first steps were to sketch out some concepts. His initial idea was to use a playful strip tease theme with the name of the CD in the middle and the stripper on either side (**Figure 13**). He thought it would be great to have the woman appear in neon in alternate poses of dress and undress (**Figure 14**). The art director loved the idea, but the female member of the Squirrel Nut Zippers band was adamantly opposed to the idea, so it was scrapped.

Step 2: Nailing the concept. Doret then came up with the idea of a crazed character, dubbed “King Leer,” as the focal point, with lettering around him. Doret made some rough sketches and showed them to the art director, who loved the new direction.

Step 3: Developing the main character. Doret, who grew up in Brooklyn, was a frequent visitor as a child to Coney Island in the 50s. There were three amusement parks there that were built at the turn of the century—Dreamland, Luna Park, and Steeplechase-The Funny Place. While Dreamland and Luna Park burned down in the 20s or 30s, Steeplechase survived. “The logo for Steeplechase was this leering face of a guy with a huge grin (**Figure 16**). I have had this image in my head ever since I was a child. I thought something along those lines would be good for the CD



Figure 13



Figure 15



Figure 14



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 21

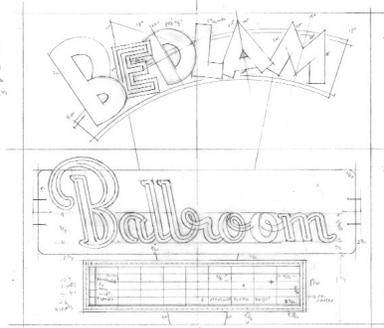


Figure 24



Figure 25

illustration. A demonic, cartoony, smiling face to symbolize bedlam, craziness, and madness. It seemed to fit (Figure 17).” Doret then played with the face, making it progressively rounder, more geometric, and less naturalistic (Figures 18 and 19). Since he knew there would be some animation to the illustration, he developed King Leer in two poses.

Step 4: Tightening the comps. Eventually the two poses evolved into a placid King Leer who yanks on the chain of the neon sign, turns it on, and gets zapped. The zapped King Leer is winking and grinning, and his hat and monocle have flown off. Doret tightened up the comp for King Leer (Figure 20), as well as for the typographic components (Figure 21).

Step 5: Creating the tracing scans. For his final sketches, Doret added, as he always does in his illustrations, measurements and angles for all of his elements. “All of my work is geometrically related, so precision is necessary,” says Doret. He then scanned these sketches into Photoshop and saved them as TIFFs. Doret calls the scans of his final sketches “tracing scans” because he uses them as templates in the Illustrator file.

Step 6: Starting the Illustrator files. Doret created a new 11-by-8.5-inch CMYK file in Illustrator. He then placed the main lettering tracing scan on the bottom layer (Figure 26). Next, he added not one, but four layers of guidelines to ensure proper placement and alignment of his elements (Figure 27). Doret hid and showed these guides as needed.

Step 7: Starting King Leer. Doret usually starts with the most difficult elements first, which in this project was King Leer. He created a new 11 by 8.5, CMYK Illustrator file in which to create the King. “I find that it is easier in a complicated illustration with so many elements to draw things in separate files and then copy and paste them into the main illustration.” Doret imported the three tracing scans for King Leer and placed them each on a sublayer under a Templates layer. He placed each tracing scan on top of the other to ensure proper alignment for the animated version of the illustration (**Figure 28**). Doret then added his essential guidelines layer. He also created what he calls a safety layer, which consisted of a black rectangle that he could display when creating elements such as white glows. “I usually have several safety layers where I put type before converting it to outlines. I also add shapes before applying pathfinder commands or strokes and converting them to shapes. It makes editing later much easier.”

Next, he created a new layer for what he called Base Leer—the dark, shadowy image of King Leer, which would be under the neon versions, akin to the metal sign under the neon tubes. He displayed only the tracing scan for Base Leer (**Figure 29**) by first creating a circle with the Ellipse tool for the Head. He then created a shape with the Pen tool for the left ear and copied and reflected it using the Reflect tool for the right ear. Doret is a die-hard mouse aficionado. “I don’t use a stylus and pressure sensitive tablet like a lot of other illustrators. I guess I just started with the mouse and got used to it. It is all I use.”

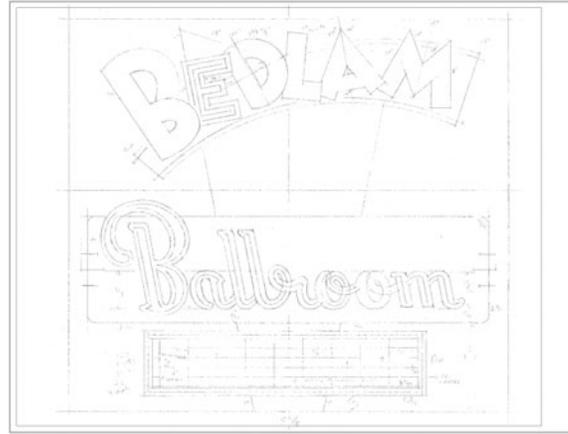


Figure 26

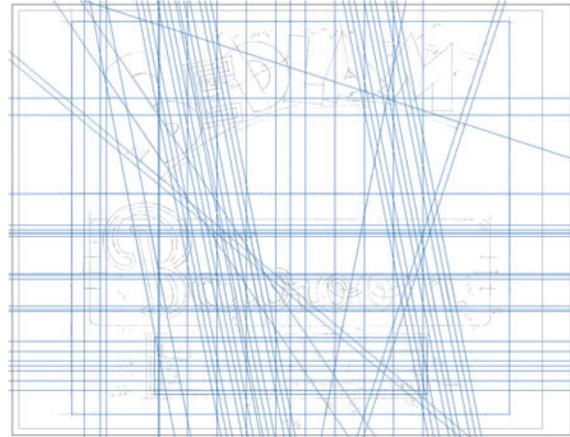


Figure 27

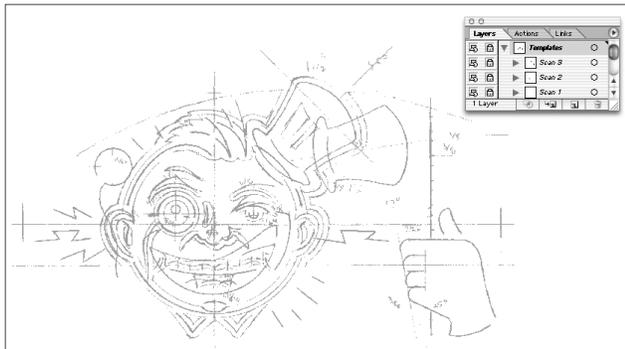


Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30

Next, he created the highlight for the top hat (**Figure 30**). Doret selected all of the elements and used the Add to shape area command in the Pathfinder palette to unite the separate elements into a single shape.

Step 8: Creating Base Leer. Using the Ellipse and Pen tools, Doret created the shapes for the detail elements of the Base Leer. Again, he used the Reflect tool to create the collar, ears, mouth, nose, and chin shapes, first drawing one side and then copying and reflecting to produce the opposite side. He also applied the Add to shape area command to these pairs of elements (except for the ears) to unite them into single shapes for each. He created the holes in the monocle, collar, and hat by making the shapes with the Ellipse and Pen tools and then using the Subtract from shape area command in the Pathfinder palette.

Step 9: Creating Placid Leer. Doret then continued on to what he called the Placid Neon Leer layer. On a sublayer, using the Pen tool, he drew Leer's shocked face in 4-point strokes of Pantone (PMS) 3125 CVC. He then set the Opacity of the strokes to 12% in the Transparency palette to create a ghosted effect (**Figure 31**). On another sublayer, he created Leer's placid face using 4-point white strokes, to which he applied a 2.0-pixel Gaussian Blur Effect. This created a neon glow effect (**Figure 32**, shown against the safety layer for display purposes).

Step 10: Finishing Placid Leer. On another sublayer and, again, using the Pen tool, he drew another copy of placid Leer, using a 4-point stroke. He applied a process gold color to the strokes, which he mixed using the CMYK color sliders (**Figure 33** top). On the last sublayer for this layer, Doret created another copy of placid Leer, using a 2-point white stroke. These two sublayers viewed together create an unlit neon tube effect (**Figure 33** bottom). The entire layer is shown in **Figure 34**.



Figure 31

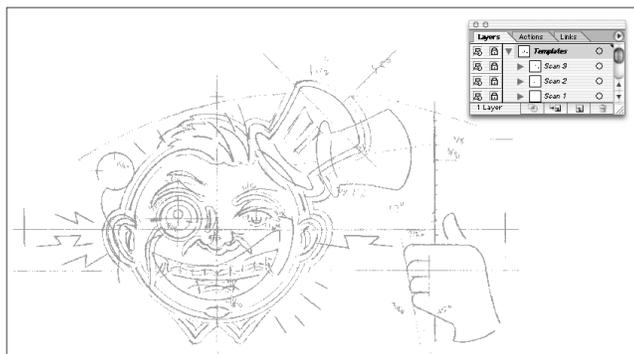


Figure 32

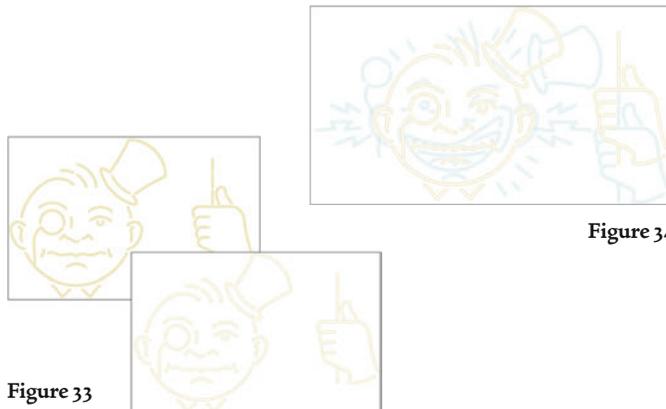


Figure 33

Figure 34

Step 11: Creating Neon Leer. This layer, called Neon Leer, required several additional sublayers. Doret started by copying the gold colored, placid Leer from the previous layer. He set the Opacity of the strokes to 12% in the Transparency palette. Next, he created another sublayer, which consisted of a copy of the face elements of the aqua colored, shocked Leer from the previous layer. He changed the stroke color to PMS 369 CVC and applied a Gaussian Blur Effect of 2.0 pixels. He copied the monocle, collar, hat, and hand to another sublayer, while he copied the shock marks to yet another sublayer. He gave the strokes on both sublayers 2-pixel Gaussian Blur Effects and colored, using the process gold and Pantone 3125 CVC that he used earlier.



Figure 35

Step 12: Finishing Neon Leer. Doret created three more sublayers. Again, using a copy of the shocked face, he applied a 4-point stroke of PMS 369 CVC on the first sublayer. On the next sublayer, he applied a 2-point process light-green colored stroke. On the third sublayer, he applied a .5-point stroke of PMS 389 CVC. The effect of the three sublayers together is one of a neon tube (Figure 36). Doret repeated the process for the shock marks, using white and PMS 3125 at 50% and 100% (Figure 37). Doret finally added two last sublayers, which contained the monocle, collar, hat, and hand. He created the sublayers, using a 4-point process gold stroke and a 2-point white stroke to produce the same neon tube effect created on the Placid Leer layer (Figure 38). The total King Leer illustration appears in Figure 39.

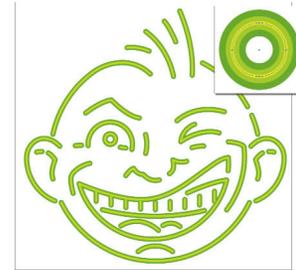


Figure 36

Step 13: Creating the base Bedlam lettering. Doret copied and pasted the King Leer art into the main Illustrator file and then moved on to the base Bedlam lettering. Using the Pen tool, he drew each letter of Bedlam separately, based on the angles



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40

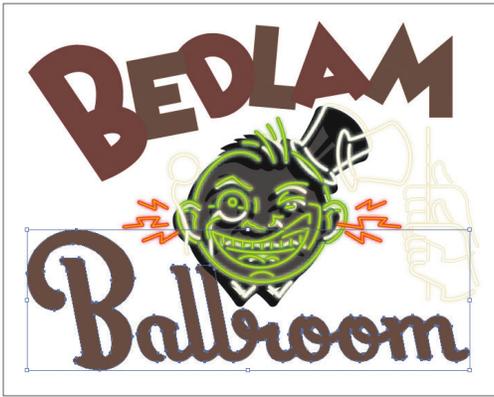


Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43

noted on the tracing template. “When I am creating angles, I like to repeat the angles. It provides synchronicity and symmetry.” He filled the letters using a process burgundy and brown, which he mixed using the CMYK sliders in the Color palette and stored in the Swatches palette.

Step 14: Creating the base Ballroom lettering. On the same layer, Doret created the base Ballroom lettering, using the Pen tool. He filled the lettering with the same process brown he used for the Bedlam lettering.

Step 15: Creating the dimensionality. To create the drop shadows for the base Bedlam and Ballroom lettering, Doret first made a copy of the separate Bedlam letters and then united them using the Add to shape layer command in the Pathfinder palette. He then used the Direct Selection tool to tweak the tops of the letters to give more of a sense of dimension to the lettering. He filled the shadow with a process black. He copied and pasted the Ballroom lettering and filled it with the same process black. Doret created a safety layer and put copies of the Bedlam shadow, Ballroom lettering (and later the Squirrel Nut Zippers type) on the layer in case he needed to use them for revisions.

Step 16: Drawing the background. The last element Doret added on this layer was a background behind the lettering. Using the Rounded Rectangle and Pen tools, he created two separate shapes, filled them with a process dark-blue, and placed them behind the base lettering and shadows. He then duplicated the shapes, filled them with a darker blue, and placed them on the very bottom to act as a drop shadow.

Step 17: Producing the Bedlam neon lettering. On a new layer, Doret created the neon Bedlam lettering, using the same methodology he used with King Leer. He created the initial paths of the lettering with the Pen tool, using a stroke of .5 points. He then grouped the strokes, made a copy, pasted them in back, and applied a weight of 2 points. He repeated the process, creating two more strokes of 4 points and 6 points. For the 6-point stroke, he applied a Gaussian Blur Effect of 3 pixels. He colored each set of strokes with varying shades of process yellow, red, and green, which he mixed using the CMYK sliders in the Color palette and stored in the Swatches palette.

Step 18: Producing the Ballroom neon lettering. On a new layer, Doret repeated the process with the Ballroom lettering.

Step 19: Creating the ghosted elements. Next Doret created a layer that contained copies of the Bedlam neon lettering and the shocked King Leer. He set the opacity of these elements to 12% in the Transparency palette.

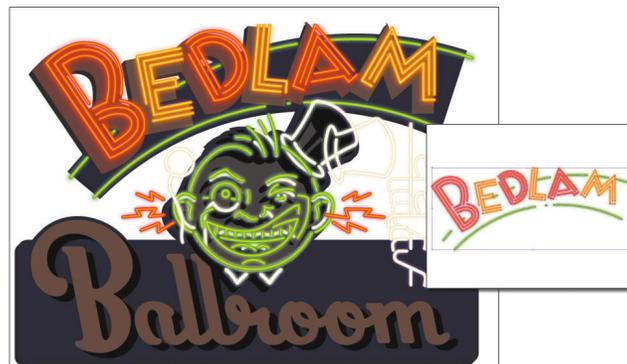


Figure 44

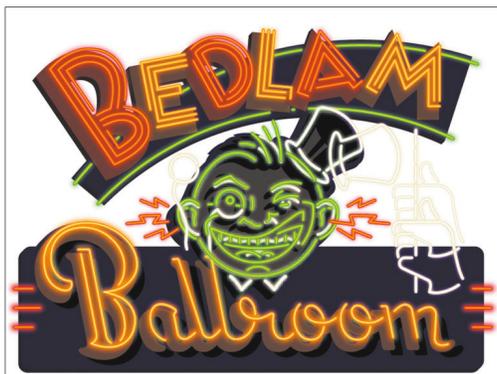


Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47

Step 20: Drawing the Tonite lettering. Using his tracing scan as a template, Doret created the Tonite lettering, using the Pen tool and filling the paths with the same process black used in earlier elements. He created the lettering in a separate Illustrator file and copied and pasted it into his main illustration.

Step 21: Creating the illuminated panel. After creating a second copy of the Tonite lettering and coloring it with a process red with an 86% Opacity, Doret drew two rectangles with the Rectangle tool to create the frame of the sign. He tweaked the rear rectangle with the Direct Selection tool to create a bevel in the corner, and then filled both with two shades of process brown. Next, Doret created another rectangle for the illuminated panel. He chose Object > Create Gradient Mesh to create a rectangular gradient mesh in the panel. He applied various shades of process light-yellow to the mesh patches to create the illusion that the panel was backlit. “I wanted the panel to display different densities, as though some light bulbs were brighter than others.”

Step 22: Finishing the illuminated panel. Doret created a series of 1-point process black strokes with the Pen tool. These strokes created the grid over the illuminated panel. Next, he added a series of small circles that he created with the Ellipse tool. He then made a copy of the circles, pasted them in back, and applied a 3-pixel Gaussian Blur Effect (Figure 49). He divided the entire set of circles among six layers so that circles would appear to move

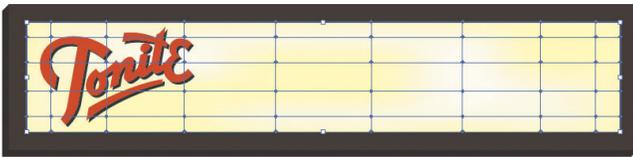


Figure 48

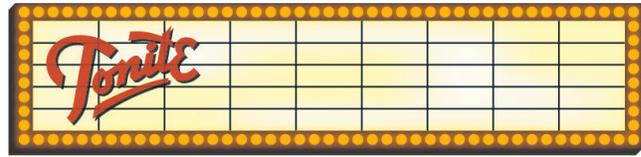


Figure 49



Figure 50

around the marquee in the animated version of the illustration. Doret finished the panel by adding the Squirrel Nut Zippers type. He created the type, in process black, using Franklin Gothic. He then converted the type to outlines. He moved a few of the letters so that they wouldn't be perfectly aligned and used a number 7 in place of the letter L. He also substituted a lower case d, which was rotated, for an upper case P. He then filled the E, U, and p with a process brown that he created using the Color palette sliders, and set the Opacity to 90% in the Transparency palette.

Step 22: Adding the background. The last element to be added was the background. Doret simply created a rectangle and filled it with process black. He then created a polygon with the Pen tool and filled it with a process burgundy. He made a copy of the polygon, tweaked the corner to create a bevel for dimension, filled with a darker shade of the process burgundy, and sent it behind the first polygon. After creating crop marks and then placing his signature in the bottom right corner, Doret was finished with the main illustration.

Step 23: Creating the animated GIF. To create the animated version for the enhanced CD, Doret selectively hid and displayed certain layers. He then chose File > Save for Web and saved the image as a GIF (bedlam01.gif). He repeated the process, hiding and displaying various layers each time until he created 12 separate GIFs (four GIFs are shown in **Figure 53**). He then built an animated GIF using GIF Builder. See the animated version of the illustration at www.michaeldoret.com/doret/artwork/bedlamcd.html.

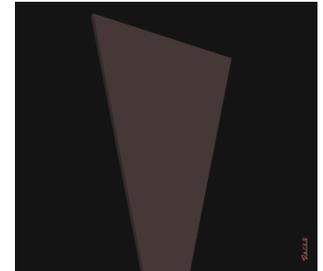


Figure 51

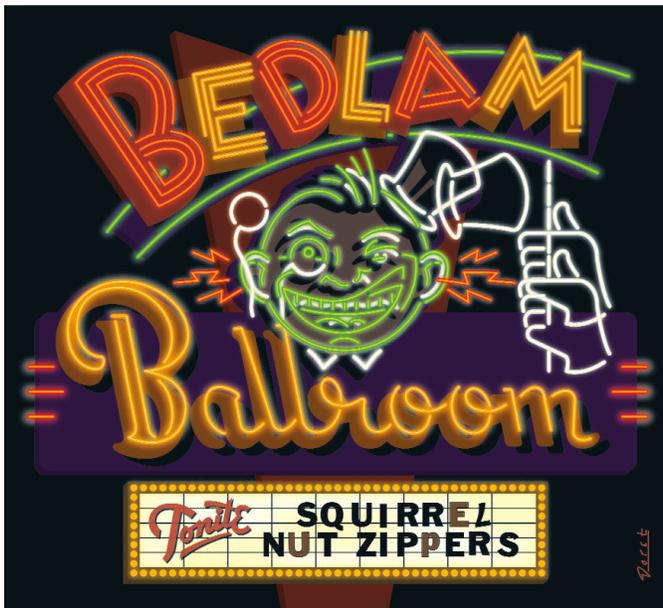


Figure 52



Figure 53

Step 24: Sending it to the client. After getting approval from the client, Doret burned a CD containing the illustration and animated GIF files, and delivered it to Mammoth Records. Mammoth used the illustration for both a regular CD cover and also for a limited edition lenticular CD package, which gave the cover an animated feel. As an offshoot of the CD packaging, Doret created supplemental illustrations for T-shirts (**Figures 54 and 55**) and concert-tour banners (**Figure 56**). The Bedlam Ballroom CD Package was nominated for the Best Recording Package for the 44th Annual Grammy Awards.



Figure 54



Figure 55



Figure 56

**The following pages were
excerpted from the book**

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