

**RADICAL**

**ARTIST**

**DIALOGUE**

# **RAAD**



**ISSUE 1**



**LIFE MOVES**



## **Can you introduce yourself?**

Hey, my name's Dan. I'm a Trinidadian-British musician and artist living in Bristol. I grew up near Reading but moved to Bristol around 2015/16. Some of you may know me from Callous Records, Hollow Life Records or a couple bands I've been in, most notably Perp Walk.

## **You put out design work under the name Life Moves, where did the name come from?**

The same place most of the names for any of my projects come from to be honest - song titles. Life Moves specifically is a Goodtime Boys song which features on their full length, Rain, and an EP they put out shortly before called Things I Still Don't Understand. The name started out pretty superficial but the idea of life moving past you too quickly and scrabbling to catch up to it has become something I think about a lot. It causes me a lot of anxiety as I get older.

## **How did you first get into art and design?**

I've been fucking around with a cracked version of photoshop since I was like 10 years old, making Enter Shikari themes for my Bebo page. I had a really slow progression from there to where I am now, I kind of gave up taking art seriously after a disappointing result for my art GCSE, but started to pick it up again when I moved to Bristol and started playing in bands, and particularly when I started Callous Records in 2017 and was doing all my own branding because I couldn't afford to pay anyone else to. My skill level has really picked up in the last 3-4 years though, and my output has really increased in the last year. It's not been long that I've been taking it seriously really.

## **Have you done any kind of formal design training or are you self taught?**

I've just graduated from a Drawing and Print degree at UWE Bristol earlier this year. The work I was creating for my degree was a bit different to what you'll see on my instagram page though, it was much more 'fine art' illustration focused. I take a huge amount of

no.19 / @lifemoves.png \ september 25, 2023

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inspiration from German renaissance printmakers like Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach, but the work I'm putting out these days and particularly the commissions I get within music scenes are typically more graphic. I'm also a huge typography nerd and nothing is more my shit than hand-drawn type and logos, but this wasn't something I could really do much of at uni because my tutors didn't really know how to mark that type of work.

Most of the techniques I'm using and the style of work I'm putting out is all self taught though. I think the biggest benefit of doing an art degree for me was being able to spend 3 years just making art and focusing the majority of my time on that instead of working some dead end job, not so much the actual curriculum or that formal side of it. To anyone who's wondering if a creative degree is worth it - If you want to go into the fine art world and have critics and galleries take you seriously, or if you're planning to work for someone else at a design firm or something similar, a degree is gonna go a long way. If you just want to get better at art? Force yourself to do it 20+ hours a week. Formal training in and of itself is worth a lot less than just putting the hours in.

**Do you have a go to for inspiration? Other artists, music, film, writings etc.**

Other artists and designers mainly. This can be risky for sure because you don't wanna rip people off, but about 95% of my media consumption is just music and the artwork that comes alongside it via record covers, tour posters and merch, so there's not really anywhere else for me to get my inspiration from. I try and mix ideas from the designers who inspire me and I'm starting to figure out my own niche more and more as well, so I hope no one feels like I'm just copying their work, and I do try hard to make sure every piece I put out is my own. My favourite designers at the moment are Piper Ferrari (who also plays in Roman Candle, one of the best current screamo bands around), Get A Real Job Kid (who also plays in Out of Love, one of the UK's best soft punk bands) and Reece Thomas (who plays in a few projects, my favourite of which is High Dive, a soft slowcore solo project). There's a ton of really sick design work coming out of South East Asia at the moment too, largely attached to the amazing punk, hardcore and screamo scenes out there.

Fr3lan and Sianoms are 2 designers well worth checking out, they're really driving the whole aesthetic of the hardcore scene surrounding bands like Spy, Gel and Bib.

### **What are some of your other creative projects outside of Life Moves?**

Too many to go into any detail to be honest haha. I've managed to get my live bands down to just 2 at the moment - I play guitar in Perp Walk and I do vocals in TENSION. Both bands are pushing that North American / South East Asian brand of silly-walk hardcore and I think we're doing a pretty good job of nailing that vibe! I'm also involved in a grindy metal band called Chewing Glass Collective, though I rarely play live with them, and I have a slew of recording projects. Some highlights from this year are a slowcore/screamo solo project called Old Pride, an album I did with some of screamo's most prominent musicians under the name Bitter Pill, a fastcore record I did vocals on under the name Grindstone, and the long awaited release of my fast hardcore band POOR's debut album. I also ran Callous Records from 2017 until earlier this year, and I still run Hollow Life Records which I started in 2018. I'm always looking for new projects to get involved in though, so hit me up if you think I'd be down.

### **You recently put out a record titled 'Poor'. That was a few years in the making, what took so long?**

This project has a bit of history to it. I wrote around 12 songs for it immediately following the 2015 general election as a way to express my anger at the state of UK politics. I released a demo in 2018 after spending some time putting a band together to play live. It took ages to get that going cause the songs are so quick, hardly anyone I knew could play them haha. We had a few false starts getting the band going properly for a number of reasons which also meant we never got another release together, and when COVID hit that was kind of the nail in the coffin in terms of POOR as a live band. Once that happened I decided to just record the entire catalogue of songs and put them out so I could put the project to rest properly really, but it took a while to get it all recorded to a standard that gave the songs justice. It's finally out now though, with some incredible

artwork by my friend Reece Thomas, and the reception has been pretty good for a band that essentially hasn't existed since 2019.

**Do you predominately work digitally with Life Moves? What sort of process goes into your work?**

Most of my work I'm using a combination of digital and pen drawings. All my logo work is hand drawn, I've got a huge stack of bits of paper with logo iterations and mockups and stuff. I always finish things off digitally though, especially as most of my work is commission based and so I need to be sending digital files off to clients in the end anyway. It also makes it so much quicker to clean up the minor mistakes and do things like texturing or adding certain details like precise outlines and that kind of thing. I'll never go fully digital, it's just not for me, but that combo of digital finishing techniques and hand-drawn imperfection is working really well for me.

**You do a lot of design work for bands, merch, record covers etc. What are some of your favourite projects you've worked on?**

This is a hard one, I've had a ton of cool projects to work on this year! It's been really great working with Uncertainty because I've done all of their artwork and their logo so far, it's been really cool to help them create a consistent visual brand, and they're all good mates too which is an extra bonus. I did an rpg style world map for CHPoint/S2K earlier this year which is something I've dreamed of doing since I was a kid, and it's been a blast getting to use Perp Walk as my personal outlet and getting my bandmates to just ride with me on a lot of design ideas haha. I've been really lucky too though - Almost every single project I've been commissioned for has been something I've been stoked about from the get go, so every one has been a blast, and the ones that haven't been quite so much my style have pushed my boundaries and taught me something new as well.

**Your political leanings definitely show through in some of your work, what would you say is the relationship between your art and your politics? Is it an outlet, does it inspire you?**

I'm definitely a lot less political with my creative outlet these days

no.44 / @lifemoves.png \ october 21, 2023

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than I used to be. Especially with doing POOR a couple years ago, and revisiting the album this year, it took a toll on me being so heavily involved in the state of UK politics. It's only ever getting more and more important to speak out about a growing number of issues, and if you can to donate to causes, raise money, protest and get involved in activism, but I've realised I don't have the mental resilience to be as involved in it all as I used to be, and taking care of your mental health is so crucial. I still try and use my platform to speak out about social justice though, especially considering my identity and background. These days I'm just a bit more focused on the issues I do speak out about, and I think a lot of that comes from the people I've become friends with over the years and the specific prejudices and violences my friends have to face in order to just exist.

**What role do you think design plays in politics as a whole? Do you view it as a useful vehicle for activism?**

People often don't realise how insanely crucial design is in so many aspects of the modern world. Politics and activism couldn't exist without design - you can't sell an idea or raise awareness about an issue without a mechanism to grab people's attention, and to hold onto that attention. Design is such a vital tool for activism, and it can often be much more powerful than other forms of communication. A picture says 1000 words, right? It's all too easy for someone to brush over a conversation about calves being taken from their mothers in dairy farms, but if you put together a striking enough visual of the horrors that take place in those same farms, people will start to pay attention. With social media these days it's also become such an easy way to share information. We're all familiar with the infamous instagram infographic, and in many ways those can be a bit detrimental, but the ease of spreading information online via a single image has changed the way we can get involved in various kinds of activism.

**You're currently doing a 365 project, how's that going? How do you keep the motivation for a project like that?**

It's going pretty well so far! For those who are unfamiliar, a bunch of designers started doing this project where you challenge yourself

to design and publish a poster every single day for a year. It's all focused around forcing yourself to stay in a creative headspace every day, to push through creative block, and to get into better habits in terms of your creative routine. Most designers I've seen do it have also set themselves some kind of boundaries to focus the project a bit more - I decided to have every poster combine digital texturing and destructive editing techniques with hand-drawn typography.

To start with I kind of had no idea what to do in terms of aesthetics, where am I getting images from, where am I getting words or phrases from, all that stuff. I've started to lean into my usual inspiration and I've been lifting a lot of songs titles and lyrics and stuff like that for the words, and then trying to create an image that matches the vibe. I've also realised that less can be more, and I've stopped trying to make every poster so drastically different from the last. I'm rinsing the fonts Futura Extra Bold and Decision Making at the moment, they're a really nice combo and Decision Making really lends itself to being hand-drawn over and accentuating all these different bits of the type. It's got some great ascenders and descenders for all the typography nerds out there.

Motivation wise I haven't really struggled yet, but I'm only ~45 days in, so I'm sure I'll reach a roadblock soon. I think I'm just really excited to be able to say at the end of it that I pulled it off, so I make sure I get something out every day otherwise I can't say that. If you look at the dates on each poster you'll notice I haven't actually made one every day, but I'm trying to get ahead of my posting schedule by making 2 a day every now and then, and if I miss a day later on I'm already ahead so it still averages out.

**A lot of your recent work focuses on quite heavily distorted type, design that pushes the bounds of legibility is something I really enjoy, do you ever find you have to reign it back at all?**

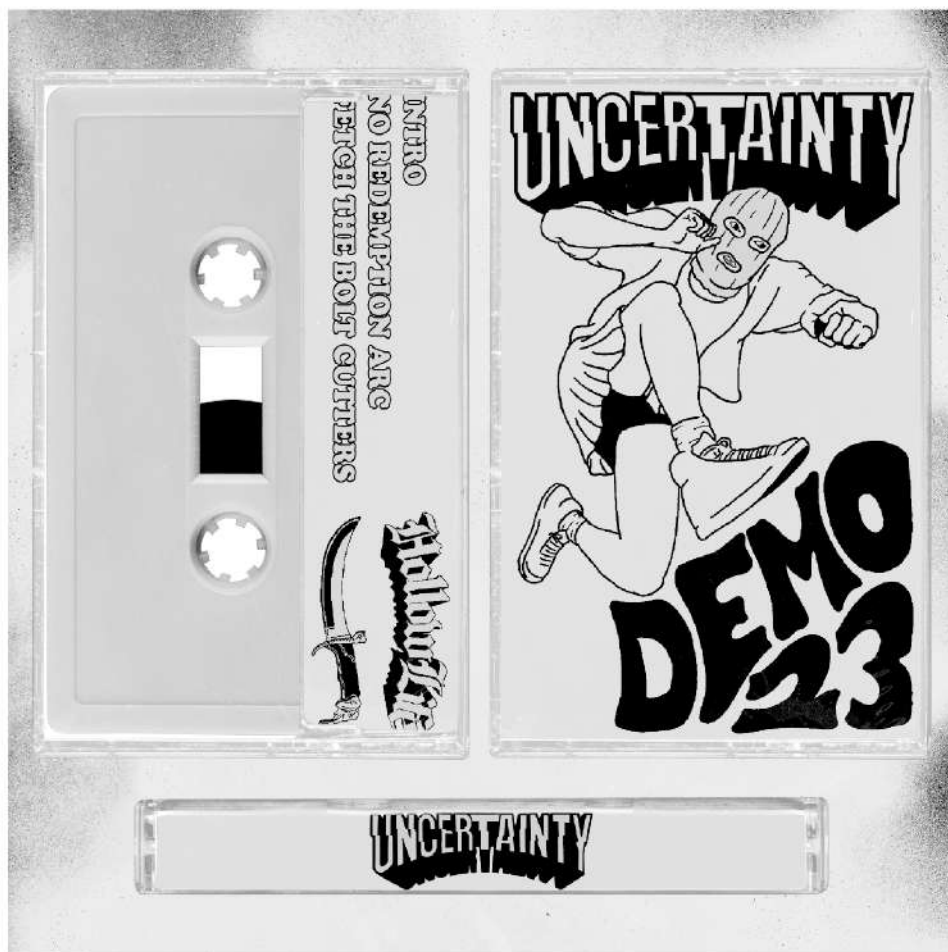
I'm huge into fucking with the legibility of type. Pushing letterforms into each other, flipping them around, playing with symmetry, all of that is my shit for sure. I'm captioning every post for the 365 project with the full text so I feel like I can push the bounds of legibility pretty hard and if someone can't read the poster, they can

read the caption instead and try and figure out where all the letters sit. I haven't really pushed things that far with these posters though, definitely not in comparison to some of my logo work, so I'm excited to see where the rest of this project takes me and how far I go, and I'm sure there's gonna be some revisions where I pull things back a bit for the sake of legibility haha.

Outside of the poster project though I'm definitely gonna be making some ridiculous works. Unreadable, symmetrical band logos drenched in goop and webs are my favourite things to work on!

### Anything else you'd like to add?

I'm currently taking commissions and I'm unreasonably flexible on pricing. Drop me a DM, let's make something cool together!.



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