

# On the Cover...

Dennis KEELEY

## Photography in the Music Industry

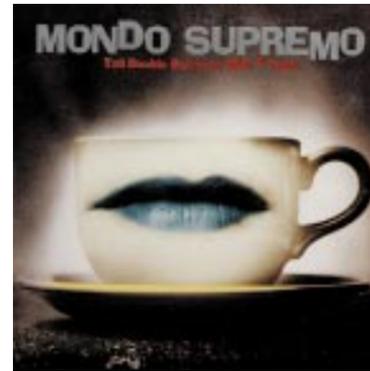
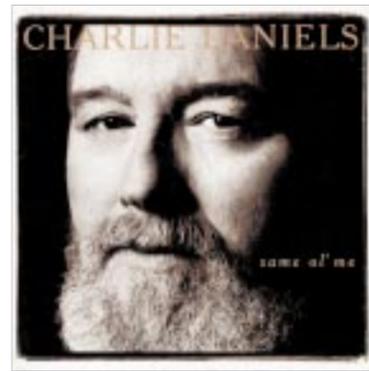
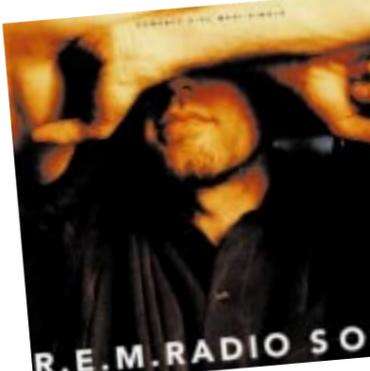
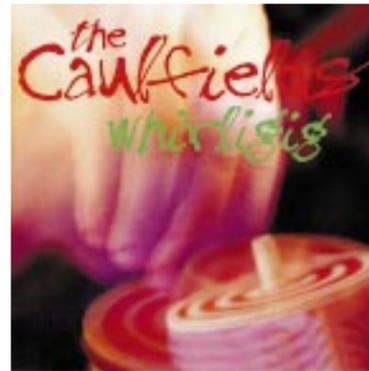
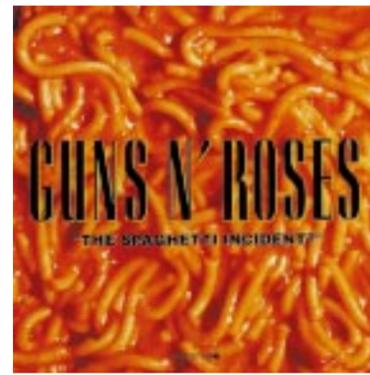
Photography and music are not such strange companions. Both are disciplines that have immediate impact and long lasting memories. Both are driven by inspiration and are art forms that both affect and mirror our culture and society.

When I bought my first record, the pictures that were on the front and back were as important to me as the music on the disc. As I listened to that music with my ears, I looked with my eyes at images that I felt the artist approved of and shared with me. The pictures were a visual counterpart and produced in me what I felt was a deeper understanding of what I was hearing. I have believed since then that photography, graphic design and music combined in packaging can make for a significantly richer experience in a listener's life.

If all that was required for CD packages was just any picture to go on the front of the box then anyone with a camera would be able to make them. Artists with cameras make those pictures. The trick or gift or mystery (call it what you like) is that when it works, the picture that differentiates one CD from another is crucial in conveying identity, culture, style and emotion to the listener before he or she even plays the CD. Sometimes, the photographs can be, in an odd way, more entertaining and important than the music inside.

Photographing musicians or making the powerful images that accompany the music in packaging is one of the best jobs in photography. Notice I said the word "job." Working with musicians, managers, art directors and product managers can be trying. One sometimes feels like a psychologist or a politician. The schedules, budgets and contracts are all obstacles to be worked out before the first picture is taken.

Having said that, working with artists and musicians can be one of the richest and most rewarding experiences in this world. When working under the right conditions, inspiration, collaboration and mutual respect can produce a result that negates all the frustrations of the process.



all images © Dennis Keeley

Photography, like music, is technically dependent but aesthetically centered. The marriage of art and technology can really be a thing of beauty. Once the scheduling and budgetary issues are worked out with the management and record company, the process of making art that goes with music begins. I try to make a photograph that expresses my personal style in its execution. I try to give form to ideas that the musician and I have discussed in meetings. The bottom line is that what I do is create a picture that they recognize as possessing certain qualities that enhance and align with the music they have made. Unable to be articulated, defined or proven but perceived as making an undeniably strong statement about the artists and/or their music.

## the assignment

5" ↑

5" →

This photograph can be a portrait, an event, a landscape, an object, a performance or a combination of many elements. There aren't a lot of fixed rules other than it must work as a square, i.e. 5"x5". It can explain, question or challenge what it accompanies. My favorite CD covers work just as well separated from the music. They are their own art.

Dennis Keeley (self-portrait at left) has been working as a photographer for more than 20 years. His clients include Warner Records Group, Sony Music, A&M Records, and Geffen Records as well as many entertainment related publications. He contributed photographs to the book Rolling Stone's "Images of Rock and Roll" 1995 Little, Brown & Co. and over the years worked with Neil Young, Tom Petty, REM, Tina Turner, Aerosmith, Elvis Costello and most recently produced the cover art for Sarah McLachlan's "Surfacing." His work has been exhibited in numerous shows, he teaches workshops and has photographs in private collections. He continues to work and live in San Pedro, CA where he can be reached at: [artrouble@earthlink.net](mailto:artrouble@earthlink.net)