The cover was originally going to show the Beatles playing in a park. That slowly evolved into the final concept, where they stand amidst cardboard cutouts of their heroes. The band also originally planned on including Leo Gorcey, Gandhi, Jesus Christ and Adolf Hitler. Common sense kicked Hitler off the cover, the still-lingering bitterness of John Lennon’s “bigger than Jesus” comment eliminated Jesus and Gandhi got the boot over concerns that India wouldn’t print the album. Actor Gorcey requested $400 for his likeness, a decision he probably lived to regret.

The Beatles (1967, Apple Records)
Designer: Peter Blake

The album cover dates from 1939, when Columbia Records art director Alex Steinweiss decided his label’s offerings might find a wider audience with some added visual appeal. Since the very first Steinweiss design, an album of show tunes by Rogers and Hart, album covers have represented the apotheosis and nadir of graphic design, and have flitted all points in between. Last month, we asked our readers to select the best album covers of all time. In the age of the digital download, the album cover is sadly a lost art—which probably explains why 90 percent of the albums that readers selected come from the 1960s and the 1970s. These are the Top 5.

**1. The Beatles**

**2. Pink Floyd**
*Dark Side of the Moon* (1973, Harvest Records) Designer: Hipgnosis

**3. Nirvana**

**4. The Beatles**
*Abbey Road* (1969, Apple Records) Designer: John Kosh

**5. The Clash**

Spencer Elden, the naked baby on the cover, said he feels weird about his bizarre role in history. But what does this cover mean? “Kurt was intellectual and deep-thinking about his work,” says Fisher. “I must assume that the naked baby symbolized his own innocence, the water represented an alien environment, and the hook and dollar bill his creative life entering into the corporate world of rock music.”

Pennie Smith was snapping photos of the Clash at New York’s Palladium when she captured one of the most iconic images in rock history. Paul Simonon was annoyed by the relatively quiet audience, so he began smashing his bass guitar against the floor. Clash singer Joe Strummer loved the photo, but Smith tried to convince him it was too out-of-focus for the cover. The pink and green lettering of the design was an intentional echo of Elvis Presley’s 1956 debut album.
The tube map almost never made it out of its creator’s notebook. The designer was Harry Beck, a young draughtsman who drew electrical circuits for the Underground. Beck’s biographer, Ken Garland, befriended him in the 1950s, and before the designer’s death in 1974 he uncovered the story behind the creation of what Beck called “the diagram.”

“As a native of a small village in Devon and moving to London to study art, I found the metropolis impossible to navigate,” Garland recalls. “I would get on the tube and see Harry’s diagram. London suddenly made sense, and so I asked people at the college if they knew who the designer was.” Garland was told that HC Beck could be found at the London College of Printing, where he taught part-time, and he paid him a visit. They soon became friends.

Beck first drew his diagram in 1931—a difficult time to be working for the newly established London Transport Passenger Board. With money tight, the board’s employees could be laid off at short notice. Beck, then 29, had been employed as a “temporary” since he first started in 1925. While at work drawing an electrical circuit diagram, he had an idea: a new map that would raise the profile of the tube and attract much-needed new passengers, and that would make the system seem modern, quick, efficient—and, above all, easier to navigate.
Harry Beck was good news for the tube. Passenger numbers had
multiplied as he would a circuit board, and took it to the
publicity department. He told Garland: "Looking at the old map of the railways, it occurred to me that it might be possible to tidy it up by straight-
ening the lines, experimenting with diagonals and evening out the distances between stations."

"He was modest," recalls Garland. "He'd quietly taken the diagram to them and said: 'You may think it's not possible to read. The lines snaked all over the place. The first map, 

posters, now part of an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, were
the crucial face of a pioneering public transport campaign for coherence and efficiency that also included station architecture, train interiors — and Harry Beck's map.

Beck embarked on a letter-writing campaign to take back control of his life's work. It was fruitless. London Underground accepted no argument that the current map was influenced by his work; or that it was an inferior design.

When Beck fell ill, his piles of sketches were
beaten the day's schedule and asked passengers for comments. One of the publicity
idols, but head of the publicity department. "According to
Garland, Beck had become known in the publicity department for being "difficult" when it came to the diagram, and there were moves to remove his stewardship.

Beck's London Underground map has been
reproduced in a consumer item
more times than can be counted — and often in some unpredictable ways. Here are a few desirable examples:

- Miles Black and John Barker, 1947
- Maxwell Ashby Armfield, 1915
- Frederick Charles Herrick, 1927
- Edward McKnight Kauffer, 1930
- Alan Rogers, 1930

POSTER PARADE

More than a million were in circulation within six months of being commissioned. Wall maps were next: Beck was paid a further five guineas to produce one. But for something that is so recognizable as a piece of "trademark" art, Harry Beck was not, according to Garland, part of the modernist movement that was sweeping through the psyche of painters, sculptors, other designers and filmmakers of the period. "He was not influenced by contemporary art," says Garland. "He knew little or nothing about it."

"The diagram," as Beck insisted it was called, was a lifelong obsession. As new routes were added, Beck would tinker with his design. He was constantly seeking to improve its clarity, and when the publicity department realized they had a hit on their hands, he had to fend off "helpful" suggestions from tube bosses.

"For the best part of 30 years, his home was turned over to the
front room would often have a massive copy spread
out on the floor for Harry to pore over. His wife,
Nora would find, when making their bed, a pile of
scrubbed notes under the pillow that Harry had
been working on in the middle of the night."

But in 1959, after nearly three decades of working on the diagram, he was unceremoniously dumped from the project. Garland explains: "Harry went one morning to his local station and there on the wall was a diagram that was not done by him. It was devastating. To add to the insult, he thought it was a crude and ineffective version of his own own diagram. It was signed by Harold F Hutchison, not a designer but head of the publicity department."

According to Garland, Beck had become known in the publicity department for being "difficult" when it came to the diagram, and there were moves to remove his stewardship.

After World War I, striking modern posters began to transform the
stewards.