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**I.D.**

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SPECIAL  
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**RIDE ON**

*Design and  
Technology  
Innovators  
Catch the Crest  
of the Wave*

## MARGO CHASE

● Margo Chase's logos are the sort that are painstakingly scratched into the surfaces of desks by students during boring classes. It's not just that many of her subjects – who include Prince, Madonna, Paula Abdul and Elvis (no less) – inspire devotion in their followers; the calligraphic flourishes of Chase's pen have a quality that seems to trigger imitation.

Studying for a pre-veterinary biology degree at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Chase found graphic design by mistake, thinking that the classes might take her into a career as a medical illustrator. After graduation, with a portfolio full of bone drawings, she moved to Los Angeles and took a paste-up job that a friend begged for her. A subsequent stint at a book publisher gave her a basic schooling in type specification, layout and pacing, while her admiration for illuminated manuscripts and her mother's calligraphy hobby motivated her to begin hand-lettering. Her strong, illustrative letterforms turned out to be a considerable asset amid the competitive design-for-entertainment scene, and record-cover commissions were quickly followed by band logos and movie posters, including *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Expanding her operation to six people, Chase has ensured that the calligraphic bent to her print work is maintained, even sending one of her employees to classes. "Understanding how a broad pen works tells you a lot about traditional letterforms," she says.

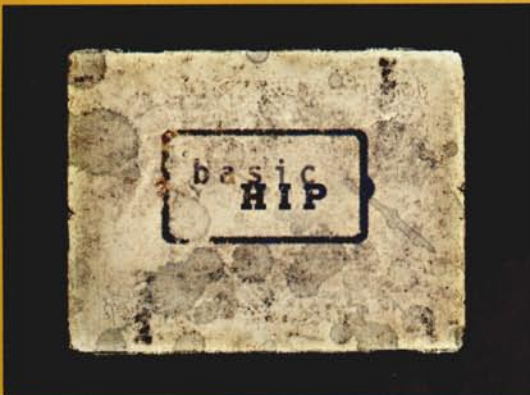
You might conclude that Chase has earned recognition by excelling in the task of investing myth and heraldry into the pop iconography of Tinseltown. But she is wisely unwilling to be cornered as a kind of graphic goth, and has lately sunk her talents into new media areas – including Web design and motion graphics – for the TV channel ESPN and the in-house TV unit of Billboard Live, a new club on Sunset Boulevard. Web sites, she says, "are frustrating and cool at the same time," offering navigational and planning challenges and hideous restrictions. "My work is inclined to be dense," she says, "so I've had to tailor it back, and learn to cut down and be spare."

Judging by Chase's flair for simple, expressive graphic gestures, evoking, as she puts it, "the message beneath" the commercial punch, the Web's low bandwidth and TV's low resolution will be a minor hurdle. Few other designers could credibly claim as influences the band Dead Can Dance, the writer William Burroughs, the photographer Joel-Peter Witkin and the psychiatrist C.G. Jung and come up with forms as distilled and elegant as Chase's. The charmingly chintzy Las Vegas-revisited appeal of her Hard Rock Hotel Web site is an indication of that potential. In a few more years, students may be copying Chase's logos onto their digital desktops.

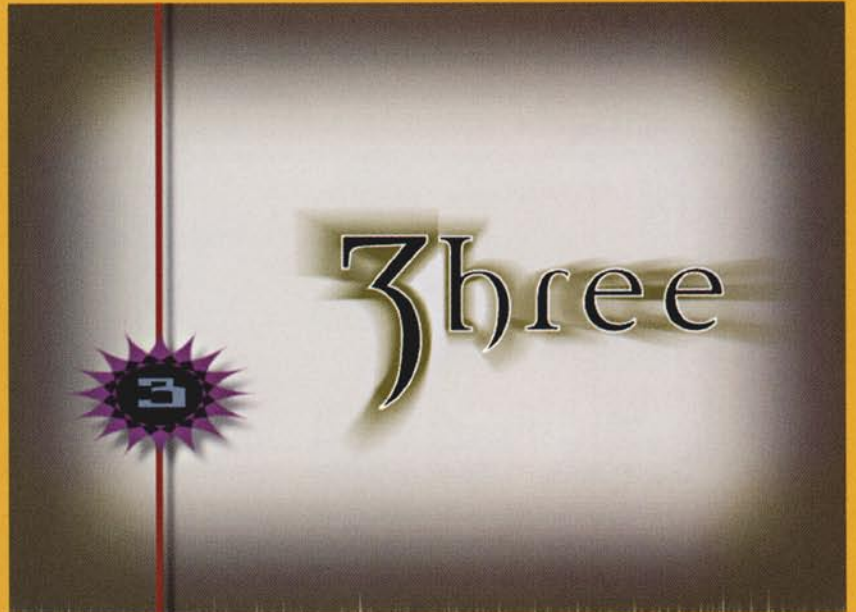
PETER HALL



ETHAN HILL



Above and right: Chase's promo reel features the studio's own Tribe and Envision fonts, animated in a countdown (above right) and fly-through of the alphabet (right). "Basic Hip" (above) is an organically typokinetic illustration of a sixties "mockumentary" track on Beat jargon.



Firm: Margo Chase Design  
● Location: Los Angeles ●  
Age: 38 ● Staff: 6 ●  
Education: Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo ● Place of origin: Santa Barbara, CA  
● Greatest achievement: "Jumped out of an airplane and landed on my feet" ●  
Car: Jeep Grand Cherokee