

**Alex Steinweiss:  
Inventor Of The  
Modern Album Cover**

★★★★

*Taschen*, £650

ISBN 9783836508438,

422 pages

**Super-costly archive of the  
first interesting LP sleeves**

Alex Steinweiss is justly remembered for the way he brought Columbia's records out of themselves. He managed to make Beethoven look like Pink Floyd, Xavier Cugat like a Disney film, and Louis Armstrong like Kanye West.

From the late 40s, Steinweiss worked with countless magazines, packaging agencies and record labels, trademarking his "Scrawl" – a typography that screamed its era. This was one of jazz, pastel colours and bold shapes effortlessly placed in a 12" x 12" square. His invitation from Columbia president Ted Wallerstein to design a paperboard LP container for his company in 1948 led to a fruitful and long-lasting partnership. If you've ever wandered into a vintage vinyl shop – even just a charity shop – you'll recognise his work. He's believed to have designed over 2,500 sleeves, and still gives talks and exhibits today, at the age of 93.

Taschen's book is, of course, stupidly, prohibitively expensive to most, but it's still lovingly put together. The sleeves are the stars, but wonderful factory line-style photos and evocative shots of Steinweiss with his lifelong beau, smoking cigars, always wearing suits, fills it out in style. Right, we're off to Oxfam to source some originals.

*Jake Kennedy*