

Formato de Presentación Working Paper

Portadas musicales animadas: identidad visual y conexión emocional para artistas emergentes.

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Resumen

El consumo musical en plataformas digitales ha transformado la forma en que las audiencias se relacionan con los artistas, reduciendo la experiencia a una interacción auditiva y superficial. En este contexto, las portadas musicales —antes un espacio de expresión artística y conceptual— han perdido su capacidad de conectar emocionalmente con el público. Este proyecto busca recuperar esa conexión a través del diseño gráfico, la animación y la multimedia, desarrollando portadas musicales animadas que fortalezcan la identidad visual de artistas emergentes. A partir de una metodología cualitativa, con enfoque exploratorio, descriptivo y aplicado, se analizan las percepciones visuales y emocionales de artistas y oyentes jóvenes, identificando patrones simbólicos y estéticos que orientan la creación de prototipos animados. Estos prototipos se integran en una plataforma web interactiva que amplía la experiencia musical más allá del sonido, permitiendo al público sumergirse en universos visuales coherentes con la esencia del artista. El resultado esperado es una propuesta de diseño inmersivo que revaloriza la relación entre música e imagen, promoviendo una nueva forma de consumo más sensorial, significativa y emocional.

Palabras clave Diseño gráfico – Portadas musicales – Artistas emergentes – Animación – Multimedia

Abstract

The consumption of music on digital platforms has transformed how audiences engage with artists, reducing the experience to a purely auditory and often superficial interaction. In this context, album covers—once powerful spaces of artistic and conceptual expression—have lost their emotional impact on the audience. This project aims to restore that connection through graphic design, animation, and multimedia by developing animated album covers that strengthen the visual identity of emerging artists. Using a qualitative methodology with exploratory, descriptive, and applied approaches, this research analyzes the visual and emotional perceptions of young artists and listeners to identify symbolic and aesthetic patterns that guide the creation of animated prototypes. These prototypes are integrated into an interactive web platform that expands the musical experience beyond sound, immersing the audience in visual worlds that reflect the artist's essence. The expected outcome is an immersive design proposal that redefines the relationship between music and image, fostering a more emotional and meaningful digital listening experience.

Keywords Graphic design – Music covers – Emerging artists – Animation – Multimedia

Introduction

Currently, music consumption is characterized by immediacy and fragmentation, driven by digital platforms that prioritize the number of plays over the user's sensory experience. This dynamic has weakened the emotional bond between artist and audience, reducing the act of listening to a mere mechanical experience. In past decades, album covers functioned as a visual extension of the musical message — a graphic medium that conveyed emotions, styles, and narratives. However, in the age of streaming, this resource has been displaced by the miniaturization of the image and the loss of its symbolic value.

Given this context, the project proposes a creative alternative through graphic design, animation, and multimedia: transforming album covers into animated and interactive experiences that strengthen the identity of emerging artists and foster a deeper emotional connection with the young digital audience. The research, with a qualitative approach, explores the perceptions and emotions of artists and listeners to understand how dynamic visual resources can generate empathy and meaning. Expected outcomes include the design of animated cover prototypes consistent with the artist's visual identity, the creation of an interactive web platform for their dissemination, and the validation of these proposals through user testing. In this way, the project seeks to revitalize the relationship between music and image, offering a more immersive, emotional, and authentic digital experience.

State of the Art

Graphic Design Applied to Music Evolution of Album Cover Design

Today we live in a completely digital era, where album covers have transitioned from physical to virtual formats. However, this shift would not have been possible without the historical milestone of the 1940s, led by Alex Steinweiss, who at the time directed the advertising department at Columbia Records. Steinweiss marked a before and after in the history of graphic design and music by

creating and designing the first album cover, applying techniques from graphic design, illustration, photography, and typography.

His vision and persistence in giving covers a new purpose were so firm that, as it is said:

“en su empeño por iniciar este proceso volvió locos a una nada despreciable cantidad de directivos de Columbia que, ya abotargados ante la insistencia de su empleado, aceptaron financiar su extravagante capricho.” (Nebraska Music, s.f)

Thanks to this persistence, he managed to replace the traditional brown sleeves and bring to life *Smash Song Hits*, by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, performed by the Imperial Orchestra — considered the first album with a designed cover.

“El resultado ya es leyenda, pues una vez que el disco salió al mercado las ventas del catálogo de Columbia Records aumentaron un 800 % en pocas semanas.” (Nebraska Music, s.f)

For Steinweiss, each album was a blank canvas where he could shape a small work of art, experimenting with color, illustration, and typography. In his own words:

“Consideraba que aquello no era manera de envolver algo tan hermoso como la música. Me imaginaba carteles a color que enlazasen con el espíritu de cada disco en vez de aquellas bolsas-lápidas de papel o cartón.” (Cataldo, 2015)

From that moment on, graphic design became consolidated as a visual extension of music, adding meaning and context to the auditory experience. After its consolidation as an essential resource for giving visual identity to music, technological transformations opened the way for new expressive languages. What began with illustration, photography, and typography in physical covers evolved toward the exploration of digital and multimedia resources, where animation became an extension of the musical experience. Thus, the cover ceased to be a static object and transformed into a dynamic element that accompanies the listener in virtual environments.

Animation and Multimedia in the Music Industry

Animated Covers and Their Impact on Digital Platforms

Digital evolution has transformed the way music is distributed and consumed. In earlier times, the physical album evoked a world of emotions and sensations conveyed through its cover — it was like the artist’s calling card. As stated by (WIX STUDIO, 2022)

“En el auge del CD, lo abres y ves la portada y el pequeño folleto que contiene. Esas imágenes son como una rampa de acceso a la música. Cuando aparecieron los servicios de streaming, todo ese maravilloso contexto se reducía a hacer clic en la primera pista.” — Brook Linder, director creativo de Beck and Grimes. (WIX STUDIO, 2022)

Today, streaming platforms have reduced this experience to a small static square. To address this, multimedia resources such as animated covers emerged — particularly Spotify’s Canvas format, which adds 3–8 second visual loops to songs (Spotify for Artists, 2023).

According to Wix Studio (2023):

“Según una investigación interna de la empresa, las canciones con un lienzo tienen un 145% más de probabilidades de ser compartidas, un 20% más de probabilidades de ser agregadas a una lista de reproducción y los usuarios tienen un 9% más de probabilidades de visitar la página de inicio del artista.” (WIX STUDIO, 2022)

This turns Canvas into a branding resource, as it reflects the artist’s aesthetic, style, and emotions — generating greater engagement with the audience (Rexius Records, 2022).

The development of animated covers and interactive experiences in streaming platforms laid the groundwork for incorporating more advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and generative design. While animation bridged the gap between physical and digital realms, AI represents a new creative horizon that allows for immediate and experimental image generation. However, this leap also introduces ethical and artistic tensions, raising questions about authenticity and the conceptual value of album covers in the age of automation.

Current Trends and Future Possibilities

Artificial Intelligence and Generative Design in Album Covers

In recent years, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has radically transformed both the music and visual industries. Tools such as Stable Diffusion, MidJourney, DALL·E, and Runway enable the creation of covers, animations, and digital Canvases quickly and with visually striking results. Yet this phenomenon represents not only a technical advancement but also introduces ethical, aesthetic, and authorial tensions that contrast sharply with the practices of early pioneers in music graphic design.

While Alex Steinweiss viewed each cover as a visual interpretation of music — a synthesis of emotion, illustration, and concept — AI-generated covers tend to prioritize immediate visual impact over narrative or symbolic meaning. As (Bourton, 2024) points out:

“Las portadas de álbumes generadas por IA priorizan la viralidad sobre la creatividad, con el objetivo de captar la atención en feeds llenos en lugar de reflejar la profundidad o la esencia conceptual de la música que representan” (Bourton, 2024) (párr. 2).

Unlike the artisanal context of Steinweiss — where each piece involved manual experimentation with photography, color, and typography — today’s tools offer massive and automated access to visual creation. This generates a paradox: on one hand, AI democratizes production by allowing emerging artists with limited resources to create their own covers; but on the other, it deepens the gap between major labels and independent proposals. Large record companies can assemble teams of designers, programmers, and creative directors who control algorithmic aesthetics, while independent creators must rely on more experimental or limited solutions, often without technical mastery of generative models.

This contrast reveals a profound transformation in the designer’s role. In traditional labels, the cover was the result of collaboration between musicians, designers, and photographers; today, in many cases, AI becomes an “invisible collaborator” that replaces part of the conceptual process.

Immersive Design and the Consolidation of Visual Identity in the Digital Age **Visual Identity and Sensory Experience in Emerging Art**

The advancement of technology and the convergence of design, music, and digital interaction have given rise to a new aesthetic paradigm: immersive design — understood as a multisensory experience where visual, auditory, and even tactile elements merge to strengthen the emotional bond between artist and audience. As various studies point out:

“al combinar elementos visuales, auditivos y en algunos casos táctiles, las experiencias inmersivas facilitan la comprensión y retención de la información presentada. Esto es especialmente útil en contextos educativos y formativos”, (O-Zum, 2024)

This demonstrates its potential not only in aesthetic but also in communicative and pedagogical dimensions.

In this context, graphic design acquires an essential role, not only as a visual component but also as a strategy for digital positioning and communication. As highlighted:

“El diseño gráfico no solo mejora la apariencia visual de las estrategias de comunicación, sino que también desempeña un papel crucial en la optimización de las mismas para plataformas digitales. Los diseños bien estructurados ayudan a mejorar el SEO de las páginas web y perfiles sociales de los artistas, aumentando así su visibilidad y alcance.” (Clara Ares, 2025)

Thus, design ceases to be a mere aesthetic companion and becomes a tool for brand management and projection, directly influencing the dissemination and reception of the artistic message.

Moreover, in an environment oversaturated with images and stimuli, graphic design stands out as a key differentiating element in constructing an artist's visual identity. As noted by (Clara Ares, 2025):

“El diseño gráfico es una herramienta fundamental en la construcción de la identidad visual de un artista emergente. En la era digital, donde la imagen cobra una relevancia crucial, contar con un diseño atractivo y coherente puede marcar la diferencia en la percepción del público. Un buen diseño no solo capta la atención, sino que además permite que la propuesta del artista sea fácilmente identificable, lo que es esencial en un mercado saturado de opciones.” (Clara Ares, 2025)

Within this framework, the use of animated covers and dynamic visual formats not only responds to technological change but also constitutes a strategic resource for emerging artists, enabling them to stand out in a visually saturated ecosystem.

Immersive design and animated covers represent the natural evolution of the dialogue between art, technology, and communication. Beyond aesthetics, these resources make it possible to build meaningful experiences that strengthen the artist's identity and foster emotional bonds with their audience. In an increasingly competitive digital landscape, the challenge lies not only in standing out visually but in creating coherent sensory universes that translate musical essence into vivid, memorable, and authentic imagery.

General Objective

To develop animated musical covers that strengthen the identity of emerging artists and allow them, through an interactive web platform, to connect with the young digital audience through immersive and emotional visual experiences.

Specific Objectives

1. To establish how graphic design, animation, and multimedia transform musical covers into visual systems capable of authentically conveying the artist's message and strengthening emotional connections with the audience.
2. To design prototypes of animated and interactive covers that integrate motion, sound, and graphic elements, surpassing the limits of traditional static covers.
3. To develop an interactive web platform that brings together animated musical covers from emerging artists, offering the public immersive experiences that reinforce the emotional bond between them.

Methodology

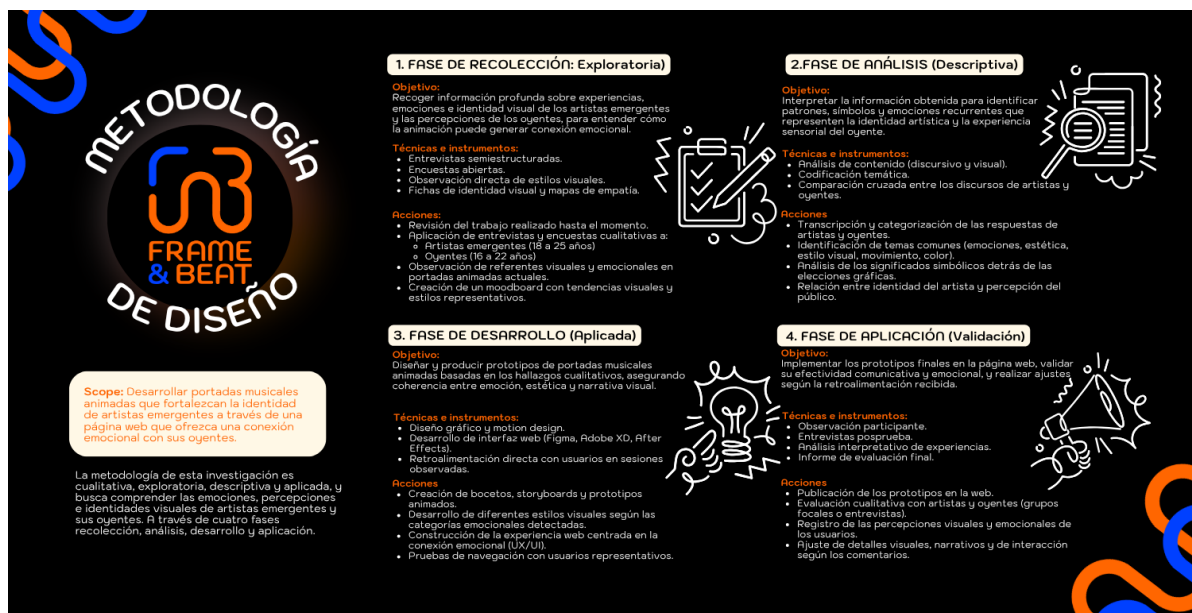


Figura 1. Metodología de investigación del proyecto Portadas musicales animadas e identidad visual de artistas emergentes. Elaboración propia (2025).

Expected Results

1. A deep understanding of the visual and emotional language of emerging artists and its relationship with young listeners.
2. Aesthetic and symbolic guidelines to guide the creation of animated covers consistent with each artist's identity.
3. Prototypes of animated musical covers that integrate motion, sound, and interaction to enrich the visual experience.

4. Development of an interactive web platform where artists can showcase their animated covers and connect directly with their audience.
5. Positive validation of the immersive experience, demonstrating an improvement in the emotional connection between artist and audience within digital environments.

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