

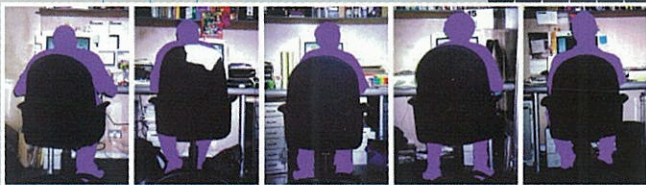
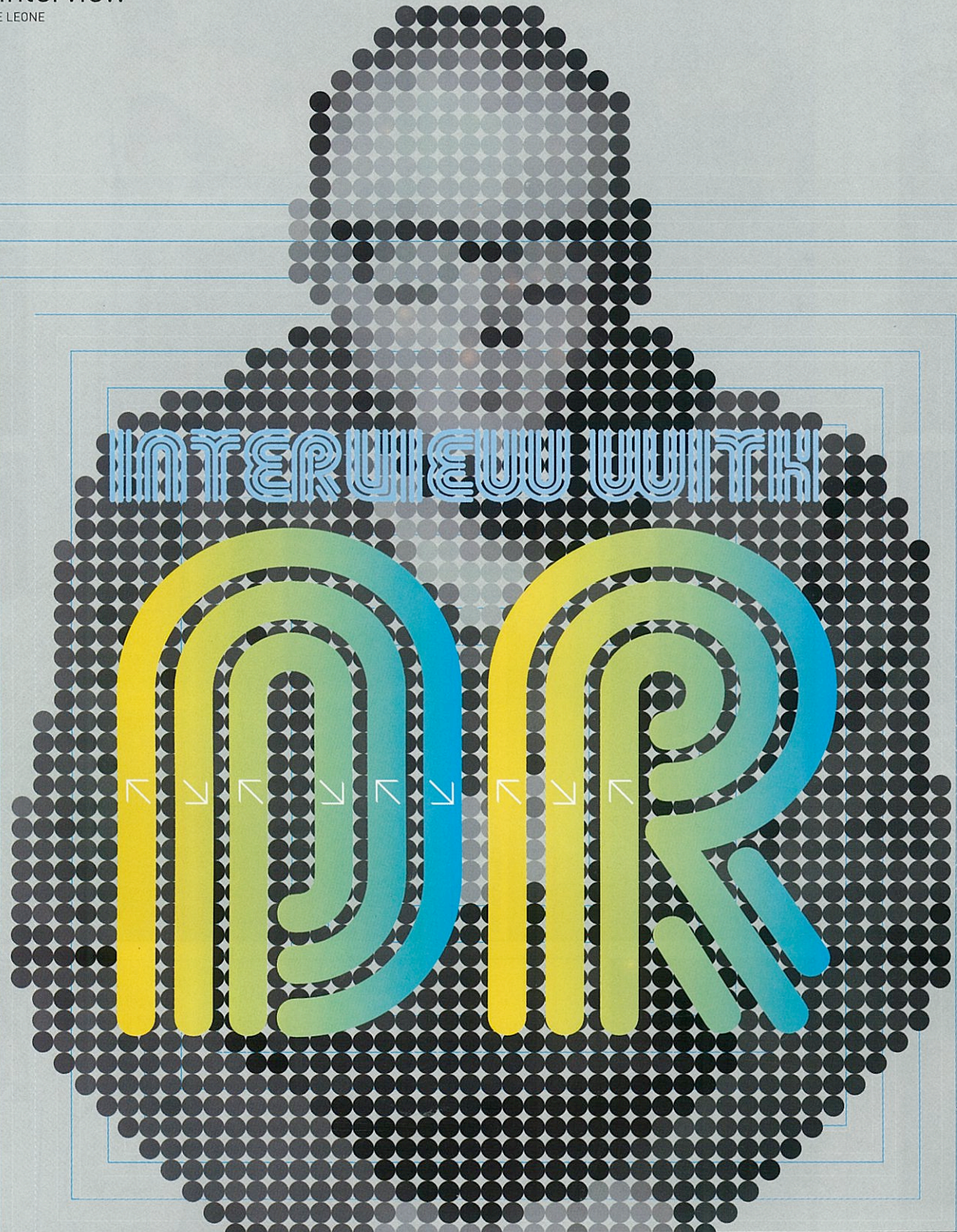
# 005.interview

BY SABINE LEONE

design agencies who profess to be "free-thinking ideas companies" unconstrained by convention, rules or client whim are a dime-a-dozen these days. A few even consider themselves to have fashioned a unique subculture reverently admired by today's young, upcoming talent. But none can lay claim to the worldwide cult following engendered by The Designers Republic.

Shrouded in mystery, The Designers Republic remains to many a creative enigma, referred to in hushed tones behind the G4 screens of its competitors. Revered for its pure creative genius, the company has assumed an almost god-like status among today's hottest young designers, representing to many the ultimate utopia of complete creative freedom.

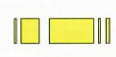
So, what exactly is it about DR that has created this unprecedented admiration? The answer lies in the company's unique approach to design, which is a blend of traditional and modern techniques, resulting in a style that is both timeless and cutting-edge.



## DEMON DESIGNERS OR BANANA REPUBLIC?

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**IdN: What inspired the founders to start tDR?**

tDR: To communicate. To create. To have a laugh and get free records. We were bored with what we were doing and fancied a change.

**IdN: What is your current role within the company?**

tDR: Director, Art Director, Designer, Minister for Disinformation.

**IdN: How many employees does tDR have?**

tDR: Secret Seven.



**IdN: Who was your first major client?**

tDR: MCA Records. FON Recordings. Epic Records. Virgin Records. Four commissions on the same day for two people with no idea what they were doing or how they were going to do it.

**IdN: Did tDR start out as a pure graphic-design studio or have you been involved in various media from the start?**

tDR: The Designers Republic started as an ideas company using graphic design as a means of communicating those ideas to provoke dialogue with an unseen audience.

**IdN: How have you grown the company over the past 14 years?**

tDR: tDR has grown organically with demand; there has never been a business plan. The difference is that now more people know about what we do — and we are intelligent enough to make that work for us. tDR's "progress" is a game. tDR's "work" is serious. We want to be successful, facilitate world peace and help old people.

**IdN: What is tDR's creative philosophy?**

tDR: Brain Aided Design. To communicate. To provoke a response. To create a dialogue. To ask questions, not provide answers. To learn. To entertain. To make a difference.

**IdN: What skills/qualities do you look for in a designer?**

tDR: A brain and the knowledge how to use it. An individuality compatible with the tDR philosophy.

**IdN: Do the creatives you employ specialize in one area or do you prefer to employ people with skills across multiple disciplines?**

tDR: Design or Die. Communication by any means necessary. The work we do is defined by the interests of the people at tDR at the time. tDR does not employ people to satisfy the demands of clients. The Designers Republic, as a unit, comes first. The client wins because the design is better than they can imagine.



**IdN: tDR is much admired and respected throughout the industry. How do you keep the company at the cutting edge of design and how do you combat growing stagnant?**

tDR: Cutting edge is a term applied to our work; we are cutting edge by self-definition. We do what we do, we see things differently and we have low boredom thresholds.



**IdN: What percentage of your work comes from which medium?**

tDR: tDR is essentially a group of graphic designers capable of applying its ideas to any medium. In the past it was, intentionally, almost exclusively design for print — that's where our interest lay. Now we are interested in expanding our means of communication. At the moment, our time is divided approximately 35 percent print, 25 percent consultancy, 20 percent web and 20 percent other (motion graphics, etc.). This is how we choose to divide our time. It is also important to understand that due to the nature of our client relationships we are involved in many different areas of design with each client. We provide them with an inclusive creative service. Invest in Good Design!

**IdN: What advice would you give young aspiring designers wanting to break in to the industry?**

tDR: Think for yourselves. Question everything. The client is always wrong.

**IdN: You have also started a project called "The People's Bureau for Consumer Information". What is it all about?**

tDR: tDR has a mail-list of over 9,000 people regularly contacting us for information and to buy limited-edition tDR merchandise including T-shirts, mouse mats and a series of A3 poster versions of original exhibited works. The People's Bureau for Consumer Information gives people the opportunity to contact us directly for general information and products and/or to be on the mail list to receive regular tDR propaganda.

**IdN: You distribute a document called "The Designers Republic — Truth And Lies". What are the lies?**

tDR: Uh-Oh! I love my Designers Republic! Yeah? What is it? Talent Borrows, Genius Steals and Shit Copies. Popped ArtCustomised Terror Toons. Department Store Cathedrals and Safe Sex Supermarket-Somas. Piracy on the Hi-Tech. Watch the Skies — The People's Bureau for Consumer Information. Pixilated Multinationals. Computer Malfunction. Chip Disinformation. Bladerunning Newspeak. Fast History. Mutoid Realism versus American Expressionism. Global Slang for the Common Man. Technology: the Myth and the Religion of Design or Die. All it takes is four hundred and fourteen million, nine hundred and seventy-nine thousand and two hundred seconds. Wise up: think for yourself. ☑



Founded by ex-punk/philosophy major Ian Anderson and Honolulu-born Nick Phillips in 1986, The Designers Republic — "tDR" to those in the know — has only seven members, is located "North of Nowhere" and has a website that is frustratingly devoid of any information.

For a company that is barely visible on the geographical world map (but who said creative utopia was easy to find?), these guys have certainly made an impression on many of the globe's largest corporations. With an extensive client list that includes MTV, Ministry of Sound, Adidas, EMI/Parlophone

Records, Issey Miyake, Swatch and Warner Bros Records, tDR has attracted so much attention that *Emigré* Magazine devoted an entire issue to the company.

So, what exactly is it about tDR that has created this unprecedented admiration? We spoke with founder Ian Anderson in the hope of gaining some insight into the company's continued popularity among clients and creatives alike.

