



Creative  
Lancashire

**Conversations in Creativity**  
Explorations in inspiration

Pete Fowler • 30 January 2013



www.creativelancashire.org  
www.conversationsincreativity.co.uk

## Conversations in Creativity

---

At the end of 2011, Creative Lancashire with local design agencies Wash, Because Studio and JP74 launched Conversations in Creativity – a new network and series of events where creative's from across the principles, crafts and trades can explore how inspiration from around the world informs process.

## Who's Involved

---



[www.becausestudio.co.uk](http://www.becausestudio.co.uk)

---

**Wash**

[www.wash-design.co.uk](http://www.wash-design.co.uk)

---



[www.jp74.co.uk](http://www.jp74.co.uk)

---



Wayne & Gerardine Hemingway  
Lemn Sissay  
Jeanette Winterson  
Nick Park  
Dave Haslam





Artists & Designer

## Pete Fowler

Pete's art roams in the fields of music, illustration, toy design, print making, painting, commercial clients and more recently cross stitch embroidery. Some of his most recognisable images have been for the Super Furry Animals' albums, videos, merchandise and giant inflatable bears. His various Monsterism creations have spanned toy figures, apparel, CDs, stationary and more, gaining a world wide fan base.

As well as digital artwork he exhibits his original artwork in various galleries and spaces and currently has his first solo show for 4 years at the Wales Millennium Centre, running until the end of February 2013. Other exhibitions are planned for 2013 including a solo show at Beach in east London in August.

Recent projects have included designing 2 one off synthesisers for XL records, a Christmas campaign for O2 and a toy figure with the legendary British comic 2000AD.

Aside from his artwork Pete is one half go the cosmic smooth rock/deckshoe gaze music duo Seahawks, releasing music prolifically since 2010 and continuing to plot a similar course in 2013 with various remixes, records and CDs alongside DJing.

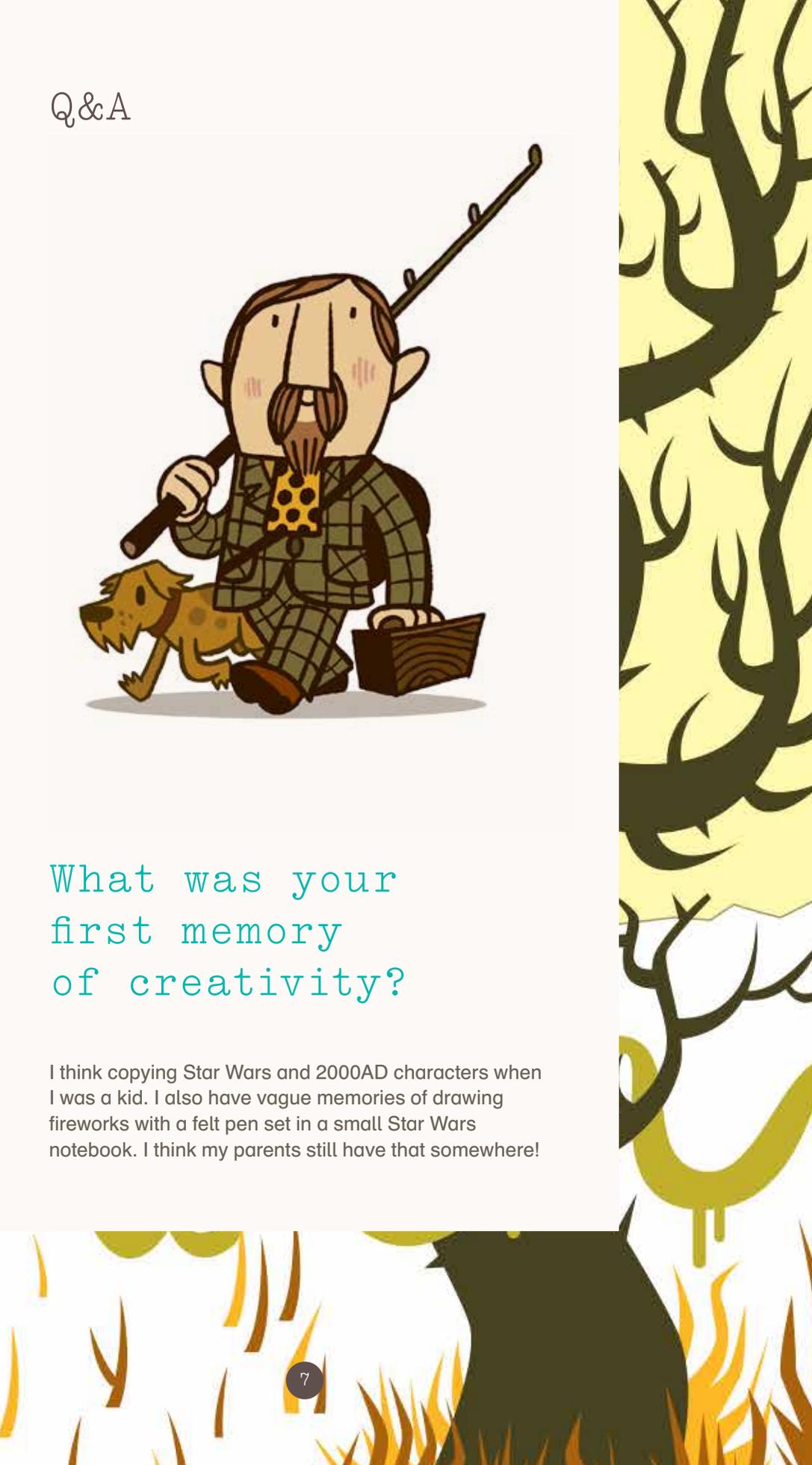


Q&A



What was your first memory of creativity?

I think copying Star Wars and 2000AD characters when I was a kid. I also have vague memories of drawing fireworks with a felt pen set in a small Star Wars notebook. I think my parents still have that somewhere!

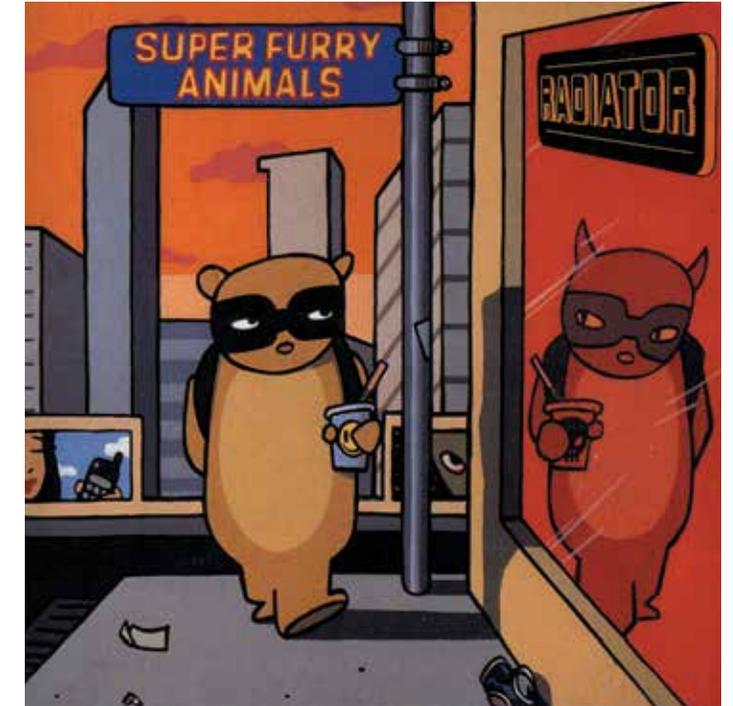
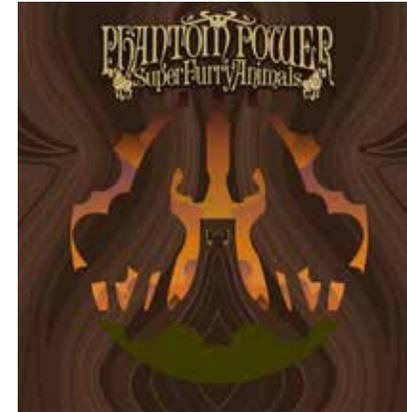


## What impact have big name clients had on your career?

A huge impact! I think one of the most important clients for me has been the Super Furry Animals cover art I've created since they're second LP back in the mid-late 90's. My artwork was up on bill posters on the street, magazine ads and the covers themselves.

Immediately a whole new audience were exposed to my work and a shared attitude with the band and myself help grease the creative process so in hindsight that was a crucial moment in my career so far.

I'm forever in debt to the band for coming across my work and getting Creation records, their label at the time, to get in touch. Other projects such as my advertising work for Kia and more recently for O2 has helped my work greatly, in terms of getting more clients and projects due to the exposure of my work.





Does your work develop thematically or is it more distinctive and random?

I like to think it develops thematically. I have a lot of ideas in my sketchbook that are sometimes quite different to my usual work and I'll find routes for them to flow into when the project or piece is right.

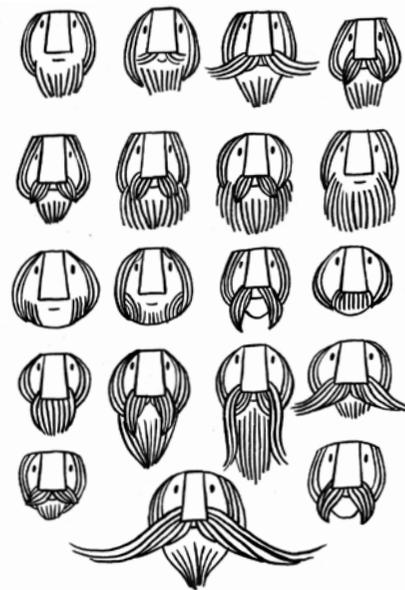
I have a visual vocabulary that I use throughout my work so I often pick up on these and incorporate them into my work, often tweaking them to fit. I try and let my work develop naturally, at the same time giving it a small nudge in the direction I want to go in.

How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

At the end of the day I'm doing my work for my own amusement and I can say without hesitation that I'm my own toughest critic so I'm always trying to push my work in directions that feel natural to me.

I always look back at what I've created but always try and bring new elements and ideas to it. I work in a variety of different mediums and I think it's this variety that brings a freshness to it, I hope!

As well as producing digital work I always draw, paint and sometimes sculpt so I think jumping around with these different modes of creation helps a lot.





What has been the biggest influence on your work?

Soaking up the stories and realising that practically anything can be done in a comic strip opened me up later to the possibilities of not only graphic art but art in general.

Wow, that's a tough question! I've had a few big influences over the years but as an overall influence I'd probably have to say my time reading comics as a child. I read the usual things like Beano, Dandy and Whizzer and Chips but when 2000AD came out I was hooked.

I had it delivered every week by the local paper boy and the Britishness of it really grabbed me as it was unlike any other comic I'd seen before. Punky with attitude and a sense of humour in places, it really caught my imagination and I started to copy the characters I liked (mostly Nemesis the Warlock) and used to regularly send them into the comic.

I think soaking up the stories and realising that practically anything can be done in a comic strip opened me up later to the possibilities of not only graphic art but art in general.

I'm only as good as my last drawing so that makes me strive to make more and more artwork that turns me on.

What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?

I think I'm hard wired to create so it's not something I have to psyche myself up for as it seems to flow quite naturally.

I think the more you create the easier it becomes to pick it up and turn it into a natural process. We all sometimes hit a brick wall when it comes to ideas or inspiration but I think having a body of work and regularly filled sketchbooks helps in terms of looking back at ideas and previous work to try and shake out the artist's block.

Also I truly believe that I'm only as good as my last drawing so that makes me strive to make more and more artwork that turns me on.





# Placid Casual

Artist pete fowler is going home to cardiff for his new show Oceans of Fantasy, where visitors can meet his latest creations, the synth people. He talks to johnny tucker, who finds that he's evolving his work into something more personal.

Pete Fowler is perhaps best known for his phantasmogorically, anthropomorphically populated semi-paradisical and somewhat utopian 2D and 3D worlds, but 'You know what?' he asks, 'I'm doing less monster-based work these days.'

But lest you think that this artist, also known for his long-standing creative relationship with Welsh musical maestros the Super Furry Animals, is hitting the straight and narrow, he describes his latest output as 'Seafaring synth people'.

Immediately open and friendly upon meeting him, you get the feeling he's a gregarious guy, but there's clearly this side to him where he has to escape to other

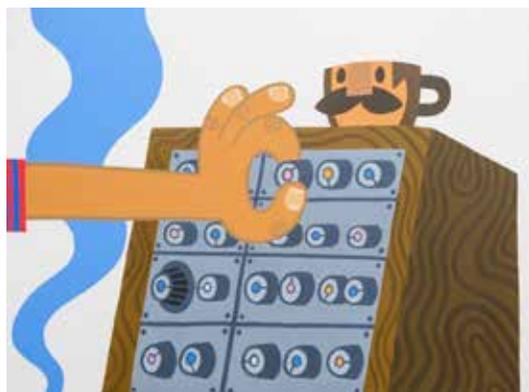
worlds, to those he creates within his head and shares through his work, or to his studio, where he mostly works alone. The first time I visited the studio, just under a decade ago, it was in a largely forgotten, seamy part of East London. For better or worse the area is now achingly hip, but the studio hasn't change a bit, apart from the evolution of the work that's on the walls and piled up with a sense of organised chaos on shelves.

When we talk he's just finishing off a large canvas, including two of the said seafaring, knob-twiddling Moog-men that will form part of a major new show opening this month at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff. Called Oceans of Fantasy, the show will be a pretty much a 50/50 mix of old and new. The older stuff will be looking back at collaborations with bands like the Super Furrries and more recently a video for The Horrors. It will also include the World of Monsterism, which saw the creation of a raft of paintings of fabulous creatures and a plethora of small toy creatures created for Sony, which now change hands on ebay for princely sums.

The new work will include his synth people, a mural created in situ and all soundtracked by some original music from Fowler. 'The older work is a thread to the newer stuff. My inspirations have been pretty consistent over the years, but of late I've got more into the ocean, and space and sythns,' he says. In fact he's even combined a 3D seafarer with two internet-bought synthesiser kits to create an instrument that visitors to the show can have a go on. Just a quick fiddle on this creation soon has you developing delusions of recording a Tangerine Dream-cum-Eno double album with gatefold sleeve.

Landscapes also feature in the new show, albeit occasionally Fowlerised with UFOs. In the past he's used landscapes as backgrounds for his World of Monsterism creatures, but now they are paintings in their own right. Incidentally, the new work on show will also be predominantly acrylic on canvas paintings with some 20 ink and watercolour works on paper.





Like most artists he's a prolific sketcher, 'filling up three books a month', but this year he discovered the iPad and it's had a big influence on him: 'I've totally fallen in love with it and particularly an app called Brushes, the same as Hockney uses.

'It's great, it's like a sketchbook only in colour and there are also layers and the magic undo button – a blessing and a curse. So I have been creating images very quickly and it has influenced my style both in illustration and painting.

'I went to the Hockney show [A Bigger Picture, Royal Academy] – he used the iPad and I loved it, but I wasn't sure about his images printed out. I think they should stay on the screen. The luminosity of colour on the screen is great. And using this as a creative tool has really made me think about how I paint.' He won't be showing any iPad work.

Fowler, who is 'Cardiff born and bred', is really looking forward to this homecoming, not having had a show in the Welsh capital since the late Nineties: 'It's really nice to go back and show, and doing it at the Millennium Centre is quite a big deal.

I think it will bring in quite a different crowd and the people who normally go there don't usually get to see work like this.' Don't, however, make the mistake of thinking that because his work has this fantastical edge, he's not completely serious and focused on the creation and quality of what he does.

He also now seems to be entering a more deeply personal phase, bringing together many elements of his life and love as well as how he has arrived at this point. That said, it is fun...

Article by Johnny Tucker

Reproduced by kind permission of Blueprint Magazine (Jan 2013)

## A selection of creative outings on the horizon from around the North West

**Thurston Moore  
& Michael Chapman**  
05.02.13  
Preston

The Continental will proudly be playing host to two seminal guitar players from different eras.

<http://www.newcontinental.net/>

**BCN:MCR**  
21.02.13 – 07.03.13

Five of Barcelona's best design and creative agencies head over to 2022 in Manchester to exhibit their work and talk about collaboration, creativity and cerveza.

[bcnmcr.co.uk](http://bcnmcr.co.uk)

**Creative Process #2**  
04.04.13  
Liverpool

Speakers from a range of creative backgrounds talk about their work and the inspiration behind it.

[creative-liverpool.com](http://creative-liverpool.com)

**The FutureEverything  
Summit of Ideas & Digital  
Invention**  
21.03.13 – 24.03.13  
Manchester

A one-off event that will showcase a wide range of digital innovation projects from artists and developers from across the globe.

[futureeverything.org/summit/conference/](http://futureeverything.org/summit/conference/)

