



In a recent issue, *DG magazine online* covered Studio Output's interior design for Seven, a small hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. Intrigued by their approach to this brief, we decided to take a closer look at the work done by this UK studio.

## Studio Output

Studio Output (SO) was formed in the UK summer of 2002 by three partners: Dan Moore, Rob Coke and Ian Hambleton. Dan and Rob had formed the senior creative team at another small design agency in Nottingham – in the UK's East Midlands – while Ian was a friend of theirs who had also been an occasional client. Feeling that it was time to branch out and try something that reflected their own values, Dan and Rob decided to go out on their own, with Ian looking after all of the non-design work.

(top, series)

Ministry of Sound, Saturday Sessions May - July 2008.

### A little history

Creative Director Rob and Art Director Dan are both originally from the suburbs of London. Rob studied a BTEC – the equivalent of a foundation but more vocational – in Design and Typography at the London College of Printing (now London College of Communication) and then moved up to Nottingham to study his degree. After graduating he started working for a friend at a local studio called Twelve:Ten. As the lead designer in a growing team, this was an exciting position, working quickly on a vast amount of club flyers and sleeves for small independent labels.

Around the same time, Dan had graduated from a Fine Art degree in Derby – Nottingham’s nearest neighbour – and started designing his own flyers when promoting and DJing at local clubs. He joined Twelve:Ten as a junior designer and quickly established himself as a brilliant all-rounder, and eventually the time came to leave and set up Studio Output.

Steve Payne, SO’s Senior Designer, joined the company in 2005 from another Nottingham agency, where he’d spent ten years working his way through the ranks from Junior Designer to Creative Director. At Studio Output, he has been able to work on more creatively rewarding work, offering him an outlet for his own brand of ‘creative weirdness’. Similarly, Stewart McMillan had been working on projects for ‘large yet dull’ clients at an events company before he joined Studio Output as Designer. Stewart began working in-house for SO at Ministry of Sound, and in June 2006 he joined Ian (Account Director) to set up the second studio in Clerkenwell, London.

### The work environment

The most unusual thing about the work environment at Studio Output is that it is spread across three sites; as well as the studios in Nottingham and Clerkenwell, there is a designer who is based in-house with their client Ministry of Sound who works with the internal marketing team under SO’s art direction to create all the campaigns required by the club and international tour schedule.

Management across the three sites aims for consistency, with the Studio Manager controlling the workflow via an online job-tracking system and constant communication about the status of jobs – an essential piece of organisation that allows SO to continue delivering to their client’s, and their own, satisfaction. The essential open dialogue policy

The nature of the work at SO is so multi-disciplined that the designers aren’t divided into layout, typography or illustration, but rather they are expected to be able to combine all of these elements to answer the brief in the most innovative way.

SO has never employed account handlers, which results in the clients having an open dialogue with the creatives leading the project, or even the designers doing the day-to-day work. ‘This helps both parties to gain an understanding of each other’s aims and gets rid of the misinterpretation you can get from a longer chain of communication,’ SO explains, ‘we can only do this by employing well organised people, who thrive on the challenge of creative thinking, for each position and keeping them on top of their game through regular brainstorming, training and teambuilding.’



(above)  
Ministry of Sound, Saturday Sessions May - July 2008.

**Creative collaborations**

In the past, Studio Output have always tried to keep their creative process in-house where possible, employing designers with a range of skills to handle any project. However, on a few occasions this rule has been bent where they have commissioned illustrators such as Jon Burgerman, or worked with motion artists like Up the Resolution. They also have a reciprocal relationship with interactive agency AllofUS, who helped SO with their website in return for helping to bolster their knowledge of print design. Now that it has grown to the 'right size', SO are now also looking at pulling in more specialist expertise on a project by project basis.

**Project highlight 1 - Bluu**

A few of Studio Output's stand-out campaigns are the work they have done for Bluu, BBC Radio 1, Seven and Ministry of Sound. The varied nature of the client's work reflects SO's versatility and ability to prove its design talent across media and design discipline. Studio Output's collaborative work with Macaulay Sinclair for Bluu, an exclusive collection of bars, restaurants and basements in London, Manchester, Nottingham and Glasgow, displayed not only how well the company can work together with other creatives but also on a package for a client including a coordinated identity, print campaign and interior graphic scheme.

**Project highlight 2 – BBC Radio 1**

BBC Radio1, one of the company's first clients, employs Studio Output on an 'ad-hoc' basis, following successful identity and marketing campaigns for One Live in Nottingham in 2002, and the more recent Miami Winter Music Conference and Radio 1 in Ibiza. Each project is assigned to one or two designers who will liaise directly with a corresponding member of the Radio 1 marketing team, in keeping with Studio Output's policy for an open dialogue between creatives.

**Project highlight 3 - Seven**

In a recent issue, *DG magazine online* covered Studio Output's interior design for Seven, a small hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. Inspired by Thai culture as well as a theme of a room for every day of the week, SO created a stylish graphics package which included textile design for the bed linen, but which was also applied to other fixtures and furnishings throughout the hotel. The strong thematic approach SO took to the design, along with the distinct Thai influence, are key to Seven's success in attracting young, professional tourists to the hotel.

**Project highlight 4 – Ministry of Sound**

Studio Output have been working with the flagship club since Spring 2005 when they were approached to pitch ideas for their London club and global tours; a relationship which has continued to flourish.

Keen to revitalise and reinvent their international identity, Ministry of Sound gave Studio Output a brief for their Summer 2005 Ibiza campaign. Studio Output responded by creating a series of images which allowed the recognised Ministry of Sound logo to appear in new locations, most memorably shaped by swimmers in a pool and in cloud patterns. After successfully helping the club to launch the new Friday nights concept 'Switch' and also develop a strong tour publicity campaign in 2006, Studio Output have most recently helped Ministry of Sound celebrate the return of summer in the UK with the bright and colourful Saturday Sessions Summer 2008 campaign.

**Up ahead**

Keep on the lookout for Studio Output's graphics work on an exciting (and at time of publication, hush hush) new game for the PlayStation 3, as well as new projects with the BBC's digital radio stations 1Xtra and Asian network.

[www.studio-output.com](http://www.studio-output.com)

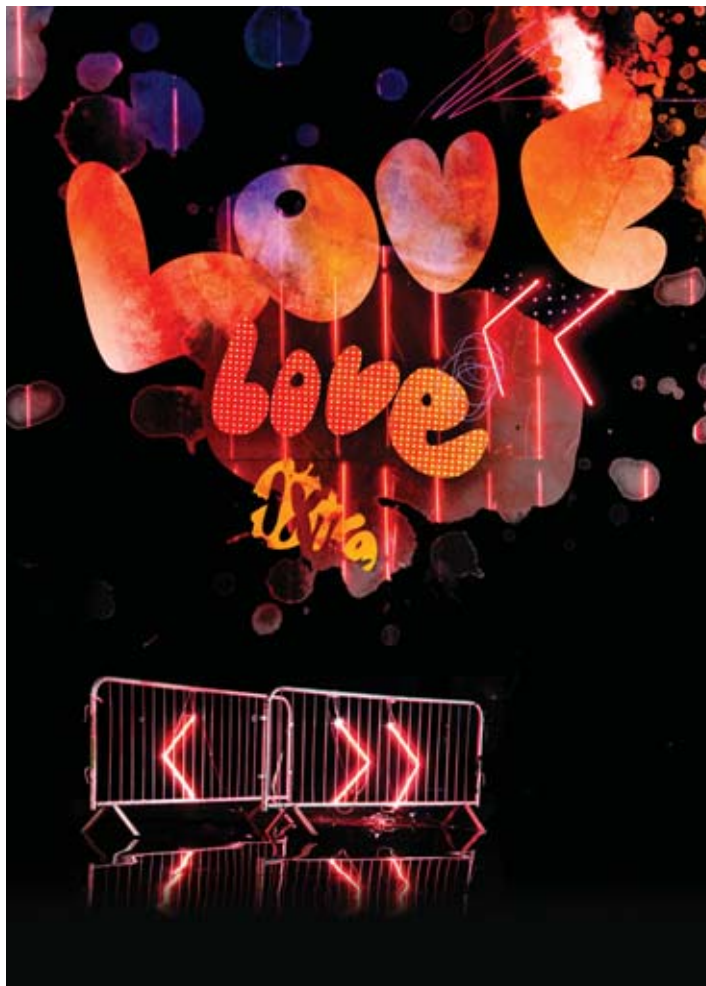
Kate McCurdy



Ju\$t Another Rich Kid, Fall/Winter 2008, garment designs.



Bluu Birmingham, interior graphics and print campaign.



(top, series)  
BBC 1Xtra, brand development.

(above, series)  
Ju\$ Another Rich Kid, Fall/Winter 2008, garment designs.