



> Jane stitching Nick Cave

never set out to copy a photograph. I'm always keen to create my own image.

"That picture of Amy Winehouse came out really well and it was then I discovered the delights of Instagram.

"It opens up the world market so at the click of a button my images can be in China or Australia."

It didn't take Jane long to realise that online fan forums will home in on anything relating to their idol.

The Amy Winehouse portrait duly went to a female fan in Texas.

"In general," she says, "I do who I love. I love David Bowie. He has so many looks that I could easily do 40 pictures of him. But I'm a working artist and I want to sell work as well as make it.

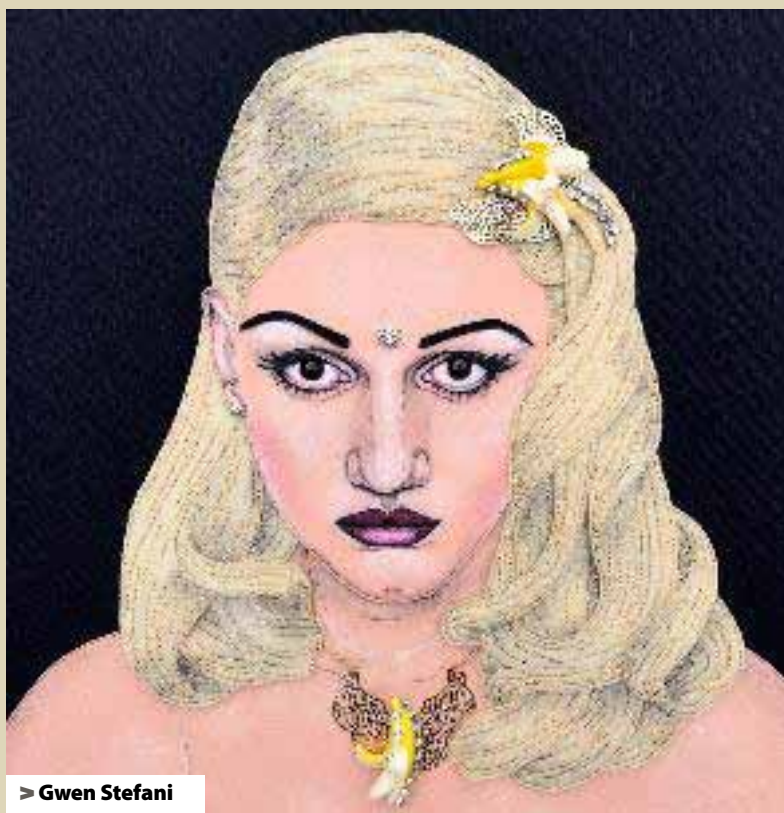
"You'd think if I did a lot of Elvis it would sell, but there's a lot of Elvis stuff out there. Sometimes I find a more obscure or cult artist will do better."

Nick Cave and Shane MacGowan fall into this category and were in the exhibition. The MacGowan portrait drew an appreciative response from his partner, who assured her Shane and his Pogues pals loved it too.

Jane is particularly happy with her portrait of Nicky Wire of Manic Street Preachers, which she describes as a collaborative effort. She portrayed him wearing a black jacket and invited fans to donate slogans and badges to jazz it up.

"I got stuff from Australia, Hawaii, all over. It's like a collective portrait. I feel it belongs to lots of people which is why it's not for sale."

People who idolise these performers would probably be gratified to learn that Jane likes to listen to the



> Gwen Stefani

music of whoever she's working on. She believes it seeps into the piece, not tangible like the stitching but there all the same.

Jane, the working artist with bills to pay, is keen to stress that she does take commissions.

Dolly Parton was a commission from the United States and, in what looks like something of a departure, she has been asked to do a portrait of the late poet Seamus Heaney.

She'll listen to his poetry when she makes that one, she supposes.

It could open a new sewing avenue of literary greats for when she runs out of pop stars - although that does seem unlikely.

Another place to see more of Jane's distinctive work is on her website www.janesanders.co.uk where you can also find out how to buy one of her portraits, or commission her to make one just for you.

Focusing on the good news to stay positive in crisis

Paul 
Benneworth

IT'S a difficult time to be writing a newspaper column. The coronavirus crisis has yet to peak, and every day brings sombre news of loss and sacrifice.

Everyone is suffering their own trauma in isolation while trying to keep some semblance of normality.

The crisis stress was amplified by the virus's slow but steady progress towards the UK.

Since January, it's been clear that its arrival was simply a matter of time, and the last two months have been a gloomy waiting game against the backdrop of emerging bad news and political inaction.

Although I am employed in Norway, my employers have been happy for me to work from home with my family in Whitley Bay. For the last two weeks or so, we've been actively socially isolating, as much to try to protect others as for our own health.

In these dark times, it's been wonderful to see how everyone in the region has been pulling together.

Even small things can offer comfort and reassurance as normality slowly recedes into distant memories, and my heart has been warmed by how we've responded as one to ensure we get through this crisis together.

The applause on Thursday night for NHS staff brought everyone on our street outside to acknowledge how dependent we all are on the devotion and sacrifice of NHS heroes. And seeing my neighbours' socially distant faces again after what seems like an age was a reassuring reminder at how seriously and effectively we've all been taking social distancing.

Here at the coast, social distancing has quickly extended to cars, and Whitley Bay Sea Front's usual of stream of traffic has slowed to a trickle.

The resulting peacefulness has made my permitted daily run with my son a moment of delight, with the soft light over the sea soothing my frazzled nerves.

Those isolating themselves depend on shopping delivery services so it's been great to see many regional local businesses opening or expanding their

home delivery services. We've had - and can heartily recommend - bread deliveries from Earth & Fire in Wallsend, fruit and veg from Hillheads Farms, meat from Nicholsons and coffee from Relish.

Although the individual items might be a bit more expensive, it's good to be helping reduce the pressure supermarkets face in adjusting to everyone eating at home all the time.

It's likewise great to be spending money with local businesses in return for delicious, high quality produce.

The same extends to local breweries and pubs who face a extinction after two decades of slowly building up a sophisticated local beer culture.

The Cullercoats Brewery and Nord Bottle Shop are businesses near to us showing ingenuity in branching out into home delivery in the face of this existential challenge.

And Northumbria Police have demonstrated once more that they are the Canny Cops, enforcing the new public regulations with a welcome light touch, their horseback patrols a welcome distraction for our children during confinement.

Their commonsense approach is helping spread the message we all must heed: essential journeys only and two metres distance means fewer people will die.

There's villains in the story but let's not dwell on them today, because we need good news stories to stay positive.

I am proud of the North East's collective response that bodes well for the future when things slowly start to return to normal.

When that happens, have a duty to remember and properly reward all those whose efforts made our lives in the coronavirus crisis more bearable, from the medics and police to the cafes, farms and breweries.

But that's something for another day, and until then, the very best to you and yours for getting through lockdown safely.

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