



Eric Fischer is an artist, graphic designer and U.S. Navy veteran who has worked in the design field for nearly 20 years. He is currently a creative director for a manufacturing company and also works as a freelance designer in his spare time. He is a life long, unapologetic and die hard Cleveland sports fan.

While he currently lives in Atlanta, Eric was born and raised in Cleveland. And while you may not have heard of him (yet), if you have been to a Cleveland Browns home game this year you've seen his work.

When the opposing team has the ball and it is third down, the theme song from the movie *Halloween* plays over the speakers at First Energy Stadium and an image of Michael Myers in Cleveland Browns face paint flashes on the scoreboard.

Eric designed the image for the Browns and he graciously agreed to sit down for a virtual Q&A about the design process, how he connected with the Browns and a few other topics.

Q: How did you come up with the idea for a Michael Myers mask?

Eric: I cannot take any credit for the idea. Dustin Fox of 92.3 The Fan and the *Bull and Fox Show* in Cleveland is the genius behind the idea. Any avid listener to the *Bull and Fox Show* will know that it was an idea that Dustin had. He is a huge fan of the *Halloween*

movie and made the suggestion to use the

Halloween

theme music to pump up the crowd. The idea took foothold and the Browns started using the theme music to pump up the crowd noise on third downs this season.

Then, around Oct. 1, Dustin contacted me via Twitter and simply asked if I would mind creating him a new avi. He asked if I could make Michael Myers' face to look like a Browns helmet. Well, as a big fan of both the radio show and the Browns, I was all too happy to oblige. I sat down one night and just started sketching out ideas for the design and eventually just completed it. I sent the design to Dustin and then it just took off from there.

Q: Take us through the design process; how do you go about creating something like this?

Eric: The creative process is different for every creative person. I'm a perfectionist. On a project like this, I just try to meet or exceed the client's expectations. In this case I researched images of the character Michael Myers and found ones that I found to be the most visually striking. He's a dark and brooding character, and I wanted that to be expressed in this illustration.

After I find suitable reference images, I literally just start sketching. I typically sketch on paper or in one of my design programs. For this project, I used both Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator, but I have no preference. I usually do what feels best at the time and it's fairly arbitrary. Once the process is started, it really just flows. Whatever direction my pencil takes me, I just go with it and then tweak it at the end or scrap the whole thing.

The Browns mask was one of those rare projects for me where it just went well from start to finish, and I liked the final product without much alteration.

Q: How did you connect with the Browns?

Eric: After I sent the image to Dustin, it went viral. (At least throughout Cleveland circles) My Twitter feed went crazy and I started seeing my image pop up everywhere after Dustin changed

his avi. I then received an e-mail from Dustin, where he simply stated “I forwarded this to my guys at the Browns,” and through some Twitter direct messages tells me “Kevin (Griffin) from the Browns said he’s interested in having you do some work for them” (Editor’s note: Kevin Griffin is Vice President of Fan Experience & Marketing for the Cleveland Browns.)

The very next day, I received a tweet from Kevin complimenting me on the illustration. That evening Mr. Griffin’s associate contacted me by e-mail asking for permission to use the image on their video boards. After a few brief exchanges, I released the image to the Browns.

In the days since the initial release of the original image, they contacted me again, this time asking to have the “entire face.” As you can see from the image, the original was just half of the face as to look as it was coming from the shadows – [much like the Halloween movie poster](#) . In all, I actually created three separate images for the Browns, and they have used two of them to my knowledge.

Q: How has it been working with the team on this?

Eric: Surreal. And this is coming from someone who grew up in the shadows of the Browns headquarters in Berea. This by far has been my best experience off the field with the Browns. It even trumps using their facilities during our high school playoff chase as a junior and senior at Berea High School way back when.

Q: How cool is it, as a fan, to see the team use your work?

Eric: It is beyond words. I’m not going to lie. My dream job has always been to work in the marketing department for any of my Cleveland teams. Life has taken me down other paths, so I never really pursued that avenue. Just knowing that I have some small connection to the Browns, a team I hold so near and dear ... it just solidifies my love of this team even more, which is something that I wouldn’t think was even possible. To be able to point to the video board anytime you hear that *Halloween* theme music and say, Hey, I did that; yeah, it’s pretty cool. I am honored and proud to be able to say that.

I really hope the idea catches on with fans and I sincerely hope the Browns choose to continue to use my image. They have my permission. The response to the illustration as been nothing but positive and it really has taken on a life of it's own.

Q: Wait, you live in Atlanta, have you actually had a chance to see your work in action?

Eric: Ha-ha! Not yet. Family and my day job keep me from making it home very often. I have family and friends that have shared pictures and videos taken from the big board. It's not the same as seeing it live and in person, but I do my best to imagine being there. Everyone that sees it tells me that it looks great in person. I hope to be able to catch a game later this season ... but I really hope the Browns continue to use it.

Q: Have you done any work for other sports teams?

Eric: Not directly and nothing of note or anything to do with on the field of play. A company I used to work for was a partner of the Jacobs Group when Dick Jacobs owned the Indians. We worked on miscellaneous projects for the Jacobs Group that occasionally included the Cleveland Indians.

Q: While it is cool for a professional team to use the work from a fan of the club, there is the risk that a franchise is trying to get something for nothing. The Dallas Mavericks are currently running a contest where they [ask fans to submit a uniform design and if they team uses it the designer will get "bragging rights."](#) As a professional designer, how do you feel about that practice?

Eric: Professional teams have long preyed on the fandom of their fans. The Mavericks example is a great one, as is what happened when the Baltimore Ravens had to change their logo due to a dispute with a fan over their original logo design origins. With regards to our own Brownie Elf, it's not clear if Dick Dugan, the man credited with creating the character, was ever compensated for what would eventually be linked forever with the identity of the Browns.

Professionally, I despise the practice of taking advantage of fans. Our time is valuable, and as a

professional I know the amount of time invested and what the value is. Most teams either have internal art departments or pay thousands to design and marketing firms to maintain and promote their image. They know the costs associated with it very well. From a business standpoint, I understand it. If you knew you could get something for nothing, most of us would do this as well. Part of me also thinks that if your on-staff professionals cannot develop and come up with better ideas, then you have the wrong people employed.

But I would like to be clear about the Browns use of my illustration. The Browns were very professional in their approach and their request to use my work. I agreed to let them use the image even though I was not compensated for its use. I do not want to mislead anyone to think otherwise and I want it to be clear that it was my decision to allow it to be used. From my standpoint, the free publicity and the ability to have it as part of my professional portfolio is satisfactory. I can honestly say I do not feel the Browns took advantage of me at all.

The Browns have a fantastic design department that is more than capable of the same things I do. I think the illustration I did for Dustin is just a special situation, one where the response was very positive and the idea grew organically. They aren't using the image for profit, so I am more than OK with my decision.

Q: Switching from design to the actual team, what do you think of the Browns so far this year?

Eric: Can we have another quarterback change please? No, I'm kidding.

I had very high expectations this season. Starting out of the gates at 0-2 didn't help at all but sitting here today at 4-5, and nipping at the heels of the Bengals, makes me feel much better about thinking this team could finish around .500 with an outside shot at one of those wildcard spots. I think we can realistically be 9-7 to finish the season and I would be ecstatic with a finish like that. If Jason Campbell can stay healthy and in the game, and if our defense continues playing like a Top 10 defense, I really like our chances of being one of the surprise teams this season.

Q: We've been through numerous rebuilding plans since 1999; do you think Joe Banner and company finally have the right formula?

Eric: The Trent Richardson trade was a shock to the system, but that quickly wore off when we ripped of three straight wins following the trade and he hasn't produced for the Colts one iota.

After that trade and the response by the team, I think for the first time in many years that the right people are in place. I think Coach Rob Chudzinski has the ability to remain on the sideline for many years, and as long as we retain our talent and our good assistant coaches, there is no reason why the Browns won't be a top tier team in the seasons to come and being able to maintain that status. That may sound like an overly optimistic Browns fan, but I really do try to keep grounded in my thoughts. I've been burned one too many times before.

Q: Who will be the Browns quarterback in 2014 and why?

Eric: I reluctantly think it will be Brian Hoyer. I believe the Browns will draft a "franchise" quarterback, but unless he lights the world on fire throughout OTAs and the preseason, I see no reason why we shouldn't allow Hoyer the opportunity to see if he can continue what he started. I also wouldn't mind letting a quarterback develop on the bench. We Cleveland fans haven't had great experiences with rookie quarterbacks learning trial by fire.

Thanks again to Eric for taking the time to talk with us. Eric would like to thank Dustin Fox, the Cleveland Browns and the Pumpkin Patch Browns Backers. You can follow Dustin Fox on Twitter ([@DustinFox37](#)) and listen to his daily radio show on 92.3 The Fan in Cleveland weekdays from 2-7 p.m. on the *Bull and Fox Show.* (@BullandFox)

Also look for a limited edition T-shirt featuring the Browns mask illustration exclusively through

the Pumpkin Patch Browns Backer group. The T-shirt is available online at www.pumpkinnation.org or at the group's organized tailgate parties and functions. You can follow them on Twitter at [@PumpkinNation](https://twitter.com/PumpkinNation)

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